THE NEGLECTED CANON: THE USE OF SPEECH IN COMPOSITION COURSES

by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the only ones who were able to really know what these past two years have been and helped me through this graduate school adventure by serving as physical reminders that insanity is the norm: Kevin Kelley, Katie Garland, Rob Ware, Beth Goldner, Andrea Oyarzabal, Chelsea Pierce, Kate Peterson, Amanda Fehrer, Aidan Riordan-Buell, Lacey Daley, Peter Tiernan, Lyn Urutani, Zeke Hudson, Linda Smith, Kathryn Bowen, and Samantha Sturman. Especially Kevin.
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ABSTRACT

All college students are required to take basic courses in certain core subjects; this includes the universal requirement of composition. In composition instruction, the rhetorical canons of invention, arrangement, and style are the only skills taught in most writing programs. However, there are two other canons, both related to public speech: memory and delivery. This thesis will focus only on the canon of delivery and defines it as speaking in person before an audience of any size.

The ability to communicate through speech is no less important than the ability to communicate through writing. However, the education system, both collegiate and secondary, has placed very little emphasis on speech instruction beyond voluntary courses and clubs and the occasional presentation in class. Only a small number of students have the ability to speak intelligently and engagingly about their ideas without a script, even though it is a skill that will likely be needed across just as many if not more job fields and life paths than writing.

In addition to my hypothesis that public speaking is wrongfully neglected and in need of reinvigoration, I also hypothesize that speaking in depth about one’s ideas before writing them will have a deepening effect on the student’s understanding and ability to express himself or herself in writing. In order to research this hypothesis, I conducted a study using my English 101 class for one semester. I infused as many public speaking opportunities into the course as possible in order to give them more exposure to the
experience than they would normally have in a composition course. In order to measure any effects this had, I conducted a question and answer survey and a short answer survey where they described their current feelings about public speaking as well as some background on their public speaking experience before the course. These surveys were administered at the beginning of the semester and then again at the end in order to measure any change in confidence or skill levels. The results I collected from my students in the form of surveys and end of semester reflection essays supported my hypothesis of improvement in confidence and attitude toward public speaking.
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INTRODUCTION

While reading a chapter titled “Performance” in the text *Lingua Fracta* by Collin Brooke, I was introduced to the idea of the neglected canons of delivery and memory. Traditionally, there are five canons identified by the Romans: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Brooke cites John Trimbur and Kathleen Welch as commentators on the consolidation of the five canons into three within the classroom. *Lingua Fracta* is a text that explores how digital media offers new ways of viewing and using the classical rhetorical canons, “acknowledges the changes that the canons must undergo in the context of new media” (xii) and then gives them new names to match their new functions. Brooke does devote a chapter to the neglected canon of memory; however, it was his ideas about delivery that caught my attention. For instance, delivery had been “renamed … to distinguish [its] manifestations in new media from our more traditional understandings.” The purpose being “to help us resist the tendency to restrict the canons to their traditional meanings” (xvii). Delivery’s new title under Brooke’s heuristic is performance or the way information is presented or “delivery as medium and delivery as circulation” (xvii). He explains how the format in which information is delivered to an audience is the new use of delivery and that discussions of delivery can now take place without first prefacing it with a “bemoaning of its neglect” (170). His chapter went on to say that delivery now with the context of medium and circulation of content could also mean file formats and the visual rhetoric of a website. His definition
includes the traditional notion of delivery and expands it to include the new media of our age.

Brooke’s objective is to update and recontextualize the classic rhetorical canons for an age when writing is rapidly moving to an online platform. I will concede that appearance and format are a new part of this canon thanks to the digital age in which, when compared to the days of ancient Greece and Rome, very little information is given orally; however, I feel that the need to provide instruction and practice with public speaking should not be edged out even when the choice of media and circulation becomes a part of delivery’s definition. It is easier to control the appearance of the digital information that we present to the internet world than it is to control our body language, immediate word choice, actual tone of voice, organization of ideas as they spill forth from us, appearance of confidence and therefore credibility, clarity of mind, and awareness of the audience that is literally in front of us. If delivery or instruction on public speaking was going to be eradicated with the onset of the digital age, then theater would have died out with the invention of films and television.

I would like to argue that the neglect of its instruction is a mistake on the part of our society and educational system. First, I need to explain what my definition of public speaking is and how it will be envisioned throughout this work. Public speech for the purposes of this study is speaking to anyone beyond oneself: any time a person needs to translate their inner dialogue into outer dialogue. The first piece of evidence towards the neglect of the canon in its original context was the difficulty I experienced with finding scholarly articles that discussed public speaking’s benefits. Most seemed to accept public speaking as a necessary evil and would skip over whether or not it was beneficial and get
right to how to improve one’s public speaking abilities or how to better teach it, or even more popular, the topic of anxiety of public speaking. It was even given an acronym – PSA – signifying its frequent use. Public speaking has evidently been shelved into a specialty subject that is often only accessible to students through an extracurricular club after school or required by select majors rather than given a blanket requirement for all students the way that composition is. However, students are still required the perennial in-class presentation that largely produces mediocre results and is not nearly frequent enough to provide the practice needed for the long-lasting improvement that will aid students in their future careers and lives.

I hope to fill the gap that exists in the conversation of public speaking’s relationship to writing and critical thinking. It is my belief that if students were given the opportunity to frequently speak their ideas aloud before an audience rather than allowing their insubstantial thoughts to be gathered in an ethereal jumble in their minds before putting them out on paper that the quality of students’ analysis, organization, clarity, and originality would be affected.

This is the hypothesis; however, I am mostly just curious about whether or not there would be an effect if students were able to speak before an audience more often. I want to investigate whether or not it is a wrongful neglect or if it simply has become outdated and unnecessary. I sincerely doubt the latter will prove true because of experiences from my own life as a result of an education that neglected the canon of delivery.

Throughout my years as a student, I was grateful for the lack of emphasis on public speaking because I felt that my skills were particularly weak – which is an
indication that I and others like me are in especial need of instruction and practice. My research so far has indicated that those who seek out speech instruction in the form of speech courses or clubs already possess a propensity for the skill and wish to further enhance it, while those who are sorely in need of instruction avoid these optional offerings. I always felt frustrated by the experience of speaking publicly because I knew that I could organize my thoughts and choose my words much better if I had the privacy of my mind and page to work it out. With digital technologies, we have that privacy. However, that hasn’t prevented me from having to (unimpressively) present a project to a room of interns and publishing executives where only my spoken words, nervous mannerisms, and scattered thoughts were apparent, instead of my hours of work at the privacy of my desk. I have attended countless job interviews where my entire potential must be demonstrated in a few brief spoken responses. I still must contribute orally in my classes where on more than one occasion my train of thought has broken because I become overwhelmed with the knowledge of all the attention being focused on what I am saying. Then, there are the minor instances of explaining my concerns quickly in phone calls to unseen strangers and professionals, speaking with professors or colleagues, and negotiating with store clerks and bank tellers.

The ultimate example has to be when I became a freshman composition teacher. Up until the time that I graduated from college, I was still nervous about five minute in-class presentations, and now I was expected to conduct an entire class for an hour three times a week, and more than that for the semester when I taught two classes. After months of practice, I no longer want to vomit at the thought of it, but I still find myself stumbling over words and unable to think clearly about ideas that I know I understand
perfectly. I learned the hard way that just because I have comprehended a lesson, I am not necessarily prepared to talk about it. I have learned that it helps to write out my words before speaking them; however, it is not a perfect solution because I don’t have the option of reading my masterfully articulated lesson to students; writing and speaking are two different genres that require different language. While writing crystallizes the knowledge slightly more than winging it, I still feel as if the ability to speak clearly and convincingly without notes is a muscle that has the potential to be strengthened yet has never had the motivation for me until now.

I will begin with an overview of the history and nature of rhetoric and the specific canon of delivery. I will then explain, based on my reading about the subject of public speaking’s neglect in the classroom, how public speaking aids in the workplace and life in general, and how speaking affects the thought processes, and then I will present evidence that it may potentially influence and deepen students’ writing abilities. I will examine the results of a study I conducted of my own with my freshman students – a group notorious for PSA – and observe what, if any, effects there are on their writing or thought process. I hope that this work will lead at least to consideration of the inclusion of public speaking in the general education curriculum either through the composition classroom or a course of its own.
CHAPTER ONE: PUBLIC SPEAKING AS AN AREA OF WEAKNESS IN OUR CURRICULUM AND CULTURE

Introduction

It’s no secret that composition has familial ties with rhetoric. Composition instructors still use the original rhetorical canons developed by Aristotle when rhetoric was still an almost exclusively oral tradition. That is, they still use most of the rhetorical canons. Invention, arrangement, and style are still very active parts of composition pedagogy. It is memory and delivery that have fallen by the wayside. As Collin Gifford Brooke says in *Lingua Fracta*, “invention and style remain central concerns for scholars in rhetoric and composition,” and “despite occasional attempts to revive them, memory and delivery stand as nearly vestigial canons, little more than reminders of rhetoric in a different place and time” (29). When the canons were formed, nearly all communication, and certainly the most important addresses, were delivered orally, so it stands to reason that rhetorical instruction would include skill sets that aid with the speech act. Brooke explains that these canons’ neglect began “once rhetoric shifted from an art of oral presentation to scriptural, written and printed texts” (29). However, John Fredrick Reynolds counters in *Rhetorical Memory and Delivery* that “rhetorical memory and delivery have always been important” and is “convinced that much might be at stake where memory and delivery issues are concerned.” Reynolds argues that “there can be no complete rhetoric without a consideration of all five of its canons. All of them… are
necessary for a full understanding of a communication act, whether is it written, spoken, electronic, or some combination of any of all of these” (vii).

Reynolds further asserts that while these canons of speaking “change form” with the “interiorization of writing,” “the split between the oral and the written is not as convenient as many commentators would have it” (19). Reynolds makes a bold statement here that writing and speaking may be distinct skills, but they are still intertwined in a manner that should not be dismissed by composition instructors. The skills still need each other to realize their full rhetorical potential and learning one can certainly aid the other; however, learning one skill does not automatically equip students to practice the other.

The idea of the skills’ distinctness is backed up by John T. Morello in "Comparing Speaking Across The Curriculum and Writing Across The Curriculum Programs" when he says:

speech products differ in time, medium, and relationship from written texts. As the saying goes, “a speech is not an essay on its hind legs.” Processes by which people create writing and prepare for speaking are different; differences can form the basis of a new set of teaching approaches geared to the oral domain. (110)

This reasserts the argument that learning one skill (writing) does not prepare one to practice the other (speech) because the thought processes involved and the factors considered are different. Just because a person has been taught to communicate with words through writing does not mean that they now know how to communicate with those same words through speech.

The art of speaking needs to be taught. What is meant by the above quotation is that writing is not speech instruction nor is writing the only communication skill that
needs the close educational attention that writing receives. This is one fact that school boards need to understand before they will institute speech in their curriculums, as pointed out by Mina G. Halliday in *Communication Is Getting It Together*: “‘speech is learned, and because it is learned, can be taught.’” Too often people feel that once you learn to talk, you have mastered communication skills (16). In the textbook *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*, John F. Wilson and Carroll C. Arnold also explain that we learn to speak “unself-conscious[ly]. So naturally enough, we take our speech habits for granted until something happens that makes us see our talk is not producing the effects we want it to. Then comes the sense that ‘communication has broken down,’ and that sense is not rare” (10). When communication breaks down, that is when we become aware of oral abilities, or lack thereof, and that is when it is too late to learn the skills necessary to try a different avenue for this audience.

It’s generally acknowledged that students need to learn how to arrange their ideas thoughtfully and transfer their thoughts from inner speech to physical print. Why is this need to write deemed more important in mass university required courses than the need to speak? Both skills require transferring thoughts from inner speech to outer communication; however, speech is not given the delay that writing receives where the communicator can pause, think over their words carefully, engage in trial and error, and revise. With speech, they have one shot to communicate an idea immediately and well. This should make speech more in need of instruction and practice, not less. As Demosthenes said, the three most important canons of rhetoric are “Delivery, delivery, delivery” (as cited in Kessler 95)
Just because a person can write well, doesn’t mean that the battle is done with communication. Speaking and writing are connected despite their differences in process; Kathleen E. Welch in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse* supports the assertion that “Orality and literacy need to be considered together because they worked together….Their deletion by us ignores the orally based rhetoric that was the foundation for writing” (97). The foundation of composition pedagogy is the direct descendent of an ancient pedagogy for speech instruction. Composition has lost touch with its roots.

**Public Speaking as an Area of Weakness in Our Curriculum and Culture**

As recently as 2006, Kathleen Yancey has asserted that the ignoring of oral instruction actually does a disservice to writing as well: “by and large people’s rhetorical effectiveness is hamstrung because of their weakness in the area of delivery” (25). Then, in 1992, it was noted that:

scholars in the discipline of Speech Communication have discovered an alarming lack of advanced (and in some cases basic) competence in oral communication among the citizenry of the United States. Vangelisti and Daly (1989) reported the results of a national assessment which tentatively concluded that between 15% and 20% of the population of 21 - to 25-year olds have significant problems with routine communication. The authors suggested that this level of incompetence may well forecast an even greater lack of communication competence in more complex speaking tasks. (Strohmaier 32)

The solution proposed to this apparent blind spot in students’ education was for:
pedagogical tools to facilitate the development of relevant skills…to create feasible techniques for translating scholarly knowledge into a usable form for those who need it in everyday life…Communicators must be exposed to diverse, real-life communication situations, and they must be given direct experience in coping with those contexts. (32)

In other words, students need to be able to take what they learn in an academic setting and know how to transfer that knowledge into real-life usability. They also need to be able to communicate in a variety of real-life situations and the best way to learn that is by actually receiving experience communicating in those settings – not just talking or reading about it or creating pretend situations in the classroom. Schools that have implemented oral communication across the curriculum programs have done so “based on observations by business and education leaders that college graduates do not possess adequate written and oral communication skills” (Cronin and Glenn 362). This is because “except for students majoring in communication, most undergraduates take at most one course emphasizing oral communication skills; therefore, most non-speech majors have little or no opportunity for structured practice with competent evaluation to refine and reinforce their oral communication skills” (362). In fact, according to James Morello, “just over 50% of the colleges and universities require an introductory speech course for all or most of their students” (101). I’m sure a person would be hard pressed to find a university that doesn’t require an introductory writing course. I am unable to find statistics to support this assertion; however, Margaret Baker Graham in “Reinventing First Year Composition at the First Land-Grant University” points out that “first year composition…is often the largest undergraduate program” (19). In addition, at Brown
University, they take pride in their “open curriculum” where students are free to design their own university experience because there are no core requirements – *except* for a strict two-class writing requirement (Fennessey). This habit in the university curriculum structure of requiring writing and next to no speech instruction and practice may be one of the reasons that Harry Overstreet in *The Mature Mind* said:

> In no area of our maturing… is arrested development more common than in the area of communication…. The person who is mature in his communicative powers is noted as an exception to the rule. The person who is immature – halting, clumsy, obscure, rambling, dull, platitudinous, insensitive – is the rule. (as cited in Halliday 18)

There just might be a correlation between scholars’ and employers’ observations of the average person’s lack of speaking competency and the lack of attention paid to speaking instruction in the university.

**The Role of Technology**

A common belief about speech’s current role in society is that the advent of the digital age where people more often than not communicate through email and social networking sites, is that oral delivery is not as high a priority as it once was. In reality, speech has been in danger since the advent of the printed word and its neglect has been bemoaned as far back as Plato: “If men learn this [writing], it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; …calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance” (as cited in Martin 91). However, paradoxically, the internet is actually causing speech to return in greater presence to our culture: “performance has assumed
more importance in the era of secondary orality than it as for many centuries” (Welch 153). In fact, the reassertion of orality in the twentieth century in the form of the electronic media – a phenomenon that Eric A. Havelock describes as “the reawakening of the oral spell after a long silence” (as cited in Welch 3) – makes the study of the inclusive theories of classical rhetoric even more pressing than it was before the large changes in consciousness and culture brought about first by the telegraph, then by film, video, computers, and other electronic forms of discourse.

Not only are speaking abilities just as important as they were before the dawn of the internet, it is arguably even more important. Oration was rightly deemed very important when presidential candidates would travel around the country speaking to large crowds of voters. Then, in 1978, Dwight L. Garner wrote, “When the president addresses the nation through radio and television, he talks to more than a hundred million Americans” (1). This is a much larger audience than the ones the public figures in the days before technology were schooled to address. In 1993, John Reynolds stated that “critics of Ronald Reagan never tire of pointing to his strongly oral style and polished, subtly emotional delivery that exemplify rhetorical perfection in the age of television” (149). The age of television has certainly not passed. And now we have the World Wide Web. In the present day, these addresses are now posted online for the entire world to view – not just once, but an unlimited number of times – for generations to come. And this doesn’t just apply to political figures. Any video posted online, regardless of social status of the subject, acquires an immortality unlike anything humans have ever known.

In public speech education’s heyday, only those present were influenced by a speech. That Miss America contestant who royally flubbed her interview didn’t just do so in front
of the judges, audience, and fellow contestants; she performed poorly for the whole world and posterity to see. The need to teach people how to speak fluently and with composure has not passed because of technology. Welch supports this by reminding her readers that:

Walter Benjamin, in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” explores the idea that electronic media enable oral discourse to gain power that it had not had in pre-electronic eras: permanence… In secondary orality, the dynamic of the spoken word is not only powerful, it is lasting. We have returned to a state of interdependence of oral and written discourse. With the technology of secondary orality, the spoken word and the written word are empowering each other in ways that previously were not possible. (161)

The nature of our technology now makes oral delivery an even higher priority, not a lower one.

For many theorists, the solution is to revise the classical canons to fit into modern day media. For instance, in *Lingua Fracta*, Collin Brooke says:

that individual canons have changed over time is not a controversial claim….

Chapters 3 through 7 of this book suggest fresh ways of thinking about the canons, going so far as to rename them for the context of new media but these revisions of transformations are not intended to replace the canons’ classical formation. Rather, they are offered as new layers of dimensions, speculative amendments to terminology that has a long, albeit checkered, history. (43)

Here Brooke seems to argue that delivery is not necessarily neglected; it has just acquired new outlets as rhetoric and technology have evolved. That it has a wider application as “medium.” And I can agree with that. Visual rhetoric is a legitimate field. There is a
standard format in terms of font, text size, margins, and spacing. I concede that these are arguably part of the canon of delivery. However, Brooke’s argument leans on the notion that because these concepts are taught and given frequent attention, the canon of delivery is not neglected. He is okay with the fact that the speaking aspect of delivery is still neglected. And this is where we differ. Because I am not okay with it. It was actually while reading Brooke’s chapter titled “Performance” that I was introduced to the idea of the neglected canons. “Delivery” in particular. In this chapter he explains how the format in which information is delivered to an audience is a new use of delivery and that discussions of delivery can now take place without first prefacing it with a bemoaning of its neglect. His chapter went on to say that delivery now could also mean file formats and the visual rhetoric of a website. And he is not alone in this belief. Reynolds also writes:

Rethinking delivery simply requires that one see equivalences between oral, written, and electronic *pronunciato* and *actio* – analogies between voice/gesture and layout/typography, for example – something that composition specialists focused on technical and computer-assisted writing have been doing with considerable ease for some time now. (4)

Brooke also cites Welch’s stance that the “canon ‘is weakened if it refers only to the gesture, physical movement, and expression that so many commentators have dismissed it as limited to.’ Welch insists that delivery does not vanish with the shift from orality to literacy, but rather changes” (174).

Our society still hungers for immediacy in communication. Welch says:

This technology gives the fifth canon of delivery the urgency of simultaneous communication. The lag time of print seems to disappear. I write “seems to”
because electronic discourse in the majority of its manifestations appears to be “live” but in fact is stored on film or tape. The immediacy of this appearance, the attractiveness of the liveness, is part of the performative power of the symbol systems of secondary orality. (161)

The need to speak articulately will most likely follow our students wherever they go, and unless they have sought out the instruction, they are going off into the professional world unequipped with the one skill that presents more than their ideas, but their entire selves to the flesh and blood public.

**Immediacy**

There is still nothing more powerful and persuasive than a physical being before you. The first step away from a predominately oral culture in which most communication was delivered by person to person contact was the use of printed words. Now in this technological age we have dozens of different ways to contact our fellow men other than face to face contact. However, it is still seen as poor form to break up with someone, deliver bad news, or have a serious conversation over instant messaging, text, email, Facebook, or over the phone instead of facing up and doing your own dirty work. Anything other than physical presence during these difficult conversations is considered to be cowardly and disrespectful.

My argument is that there is no replacement for the immediacy of human presence during performance regardless of the technological advances that our society reaches. The closest we’ve come to is most likely video chatting; however, I’m sure there isn’t a soldier overseas who wouldn’t say that as wonderful as it is to have that technology, they would rather speak to their loved ones without a computer between
them, even if they couldn’t physically touch. They still aren’t in the same environment, breathing the same air, experiencing the same environment. Speech communication’s power doesn’t lie simply in the words that are said:

Part of the power of the spoken is its immediacy, the directness and intimacy of the connections between speaker and hearer, the physical continuity between the emitted and the received sound waves, the anatomical inflexions of voice that carry subtle emotions simply inexpressible in mere words communicated literally.

(Reynolds 151)

Speech is still an important skill – and writing doesn’t replace it. H. Smith, author of *An Outline of Man’s Knowledge of the Modern World* explains, "The unhappy confusion between language and writing continues to be universal among all literate people. This universal confusion between speech and writing is today the principle obstacle to a clear understanding of the nature and function of language" (as cited in Morello 110). If we restrict language to print or give students the impression that the written word is the most important use of language communication and give them a lopsided education language-wise, we are handicapping students and overlooking all the possibilities for expression. As Morello says above, pretending that speaking and writing are the same thing and believing that teaching one skill is essentially teaching the other skill than we are showing a poor understanding of the purpose and power of language. As Rob McCormack says, “Language must be language in action” (3). Students need the opportunity to taste the words in their mouth, hear them in their own physical voice, feel them in their hand gestures and facial expressions, and see them reflected in the audience’s reactions.
Even ancients:

theorists devoted little energy to the topic of delivery, and this lack of attention
has often been replicated in modern scholarship, which has tended to focus more
on the literary aspects of the surviving texts than the performances derived from
them….however, elements of performance and showmanship were crucial to the
persuasive effect of much of Cicero’s oratory…. Indeed it was a live performance
– not a written text – that most Romans would have experienced oratory, an
important fact to bear in mind if we want to understand the full impact of Cicero’s
speeches. (Dominik and Hall 6)

Cicero is regarded as one of the greatest orators of all time; however, we can only
experience his work through reading it. But it is not through the words on the page that he
became a great. Why do we shell out hundreds of dollars for concert tickets when we
could listen to the same music for free? For the performance. For the experience.
Because, as Walter Ong explains, “primary orality is ‘empathetic and participatory rather
than objectively distanced’” (as cited in Reynolds 24). We prefer to talk to a person on
the phone rather than a robot because we feel that we can communicate with them and
appeal to their empathy. We prefer to meet impressive people in person rather than watch
or listen to a recording of them or read their work because we can participate in the
interaction. And why is watching something live on TV more exciting than a prerecorded
program? Because it’s happening right now. Immediately. Walter Ong pointed out that
“The new orality has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its
fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment. Secondary
orality promotes spontaneity because through analytical reflection we have decided that
spontaneity is a good thing” (as cited in Reynolds 148). In Plato’s “indictment of writing” he expresses a concern with delivery saying that writing has a “strange quality” like a painting:

…for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say one and the same thing. And every word, when once it is written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it…. (Brooke 33)

Much like how Morello expressed that “language must be language in action,” Brooke explains that “Plato contrasts the written word to the ‘living and breathing word’ embodied in his dialogues. Although he would have his readers believe that this contrast is an essential one, it is more accurate to describe it as a difference between oral and written deliveries” (33). Take argument for instance. Absolutely, one can present an argument on the page. Absolutely, a reader could write and publish a counterargument. However, the speaker cannot respond to rebuttals as immediately as with speech. He can only respond in the quiet, private, and delayed environment. There is a different skill involved with having to defend oneself immediately that is more difficult than writing, is neglected in formal instruction, and yet still holds an important place in society. Richard Lanham refers to Ong’s statement that text is “‘contumacious.’ It won’t change its point of view. You can argue with a printed text but you can’t change its mind. Literacy can record oral argument but it cannot engage in it” (20). Without verbal discussion, as Ong says “The rhetorical approach to life – the way of Isocrates and Cicero and Quintillian
and Erasmus, and of the Old and New Testaments – is sealed off into a cul-de-sac…

Thought becomes a private, or even an antisocial enterprise” (as cited in Lanham 20). We have retreated into our separate corners where we can safely and without presenting our physical selves to an audience, formulate an argument without seeing our opponent and with the comfortable cushion of time to allow us to carefully choose our words. This is a different skill than what Isocrates and Cicero practiced and taught. What they engaged in was a different skill than written composition.

Speech instruction’s revival is needed because no matter how much we write or create ways to avoid speaking face-to-face, society still seems to have a demand for the immediacy of performance. Even though there are movies, we still go to the theater. Even though there are records, CDs, and mp3s, we still go to concerts. Even though we can write a rebuttal to an argument, we still want to respond verbally. Who hasn’t shouted at a prerecorded program on TV? We still hunger for immediacy in our interactions and need to be able to participate in them.

Why Public Speaking Is an Important Skill

Before I begin expounding on the necessity of public speech as a skill in our world, I need to first reiterate what I mean by public speech. First of all, in the speech textbook *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*, it is qualified that “speaking publicly may or may not involve speaking to large audiences” (Wilson and Arnold 5). It basically means speaking to anyone beyond oneself. Anyone with whom you would need to translate your inner dialogue into outer dialogue. Another definition with the same sentiment is “any speech where someone is given responsibility for maintaining communication over a certain period, while someone else or some group assumes the role of a relatively quiet
Once again, public speech could be anything from lecturing a room of hundreds or instructing a single person. The main difference between public speech and conversation is that “in conversational settings no one in particular bears responsibility for creating and maintaining interpersonal relations through speech” (8). The crux of the definition seems to lie wherever the responsibility does. If one has a responsibility to speak, the pressure is on in a way that it is not in a light conversation between friends. For instance, in situations where “a tacit understanding has somehow evolved that Mr. X or Ms. Y will talk. Such a situation could even occur during an interview. It is in that moment of obligation that Mr. X or Ms. Y feels differently. He or she is ‘on’ now” (8).

Another instance that would be considered public speech is in “communicative argument and explanation – processes no social person can avoid using constantly” (6). Josh Compton points out that speech can happen “in small group discussions, question and answer sessions, brainstorming, debates, formal presentations, impromptu remarks, demonstrations, one-on-one inquiries, oral defenses, panel discussions, interviews …and public speeches” (253). It may be that speech is often overlooked in the disciplines because of the misconception that speech is only a “stand and deliver” operation. Seen through that view, then yes, it is less likely to be a necessary skill for every university student. Compton continues that if “we don’t reach this shared understanding, this wider view of what it means to do speech, we are limiting speech in the disciplines. By restricting speech to public speaking, we are limiting the discoveries about speech we can make together” (253). Take the student, for instance. Wilson Snipes reminds that the “student’s learning is related to the student’s daily life….And in that daily life, talking
has a far greater importance than writing, gestures, and other symbolic expression. …We know the student is a composer; all we need do is listen to his conversations” (201).

On the first page of Idea to Delivery, Dwight Garner writes that “as important as writing [is], speech is the most commonly used method of communication. It is essential to us in all areas of our lives. Even the written word is presented, explained, discussed, and evaluated through the spoken word” (1). Not only is it more frequently used, it is used by nearly every profession, regardless of rank or field. Wilson and Arnold explain to speech students in their textbook how frequently and often unconsciously we use public speech:

It goes on all about us. We all participate in it, sometimes well and sometimes not so well. One study of clerks, secretaries, technicians, and engineers in a large research and development laboratory found the staff spending 35 percent of all working time in face-to-face talk… A secretary tells a supervisor what supplies are in the office inventory and what must be bought. A lab assistant reports data to the supervising chemist or the chemist gives directions to his assistants. Thousands of small public speeches take place in every business organization – and not only there. An athletic scout returns from scouting a future opponent and tells its game strategies to the head coach, or to two or three coaches, or to the coaches and the entire team. A committee member tells the committee the facts he was asked to collect. (9)

Because speech is such an integral and unavoidable aspect of a professional setting “There is little doubt of the value of communication skills in today’s global marketplace. Experts have long reflected on the importance of this skill as it pertains to
leadership and employability” (Shafer 279). In 1999, an article in the LA Times called “Colleges, Like, Focus on Speech,” Elizabeth Mehren related the experience of the use of speech focused curriculums in a number of prestigious East Coast schools. The reason for the focus was that “writing skills and a degree from a prestigious institution are no longer enough. In order to face the world beyond college, students must speak effectively, be able to organize cogent arguments and be ready to function in an increasingly team-oriented workplace” (as noted in Mehren 1). Or as Edith Poor from Smith College argues in the same article “Being able to write well is no longer the only communications skill that people need to get measured on” (as noted in Mehren 3). Another Smith graduate, Wendy Markus Webb, said “her own speaking skills were minimal” when she graduated in 1980. She is now a senior vice president at Disney in Burbank, but it wasn’t during her undergrad that she was taught the skills she needed to get to where she is today; “it was at the Harvard Business School where she learned to speak up and articulate her thoughts.” What about our students who won’t go on to Harvard Business School? They shouldn’t have to go to the pinnacle of educational institutions in order to get the skills necessary to succeed. Webb says that now “when interviewing college students for prospective corporate jobs, ‘…they clearly have a hard time articulating themselves. They don’t know how to sell themselves, and often they resort to monosyllabic answers” (3). Writing a well-crafted cover letter and/or resume can get you into an interview. I will never argue that writing is a useless skill. However, it is your speaking ability during the interview that is going to get you into a job. And the once you’ve got the job:

Success in many careers and occupations depends upon effective oral presentation skills. In fact, the link between effective public speaking and success in careers is
so strong that these skills are considered crucial to a student’s education. Business leaders would agree. A study conducted among employers ranked communication skills as the most important skill needed for applicants seeking employment. More recently, a New York Times article reported on the results of a survey of 3,000 employers who were asked to rank the factors they considered in hiring decisions. When asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 5 the factors they used in making hiring decisions, these employers ranked communication skills second. Only attitude ranked higher. So, it appears that requiring oral presentations across disciplines would…prepare them for success in their careers. (Nicosia 74)

At her institution Kathleen Yancey says that she and her colleagues have been working very hard to assist undergraduates as they apply for high ranking scholarships, fellowships etc. such as the Truman and Rhodes competitions. Through these endeavors they know that “the judges for these awards look for and expect rhetorical skills – including skill in delivery at interviews” (26). Well, not every one of our students will be applying for these prestigious awards. In fact, most of them won’t be; however, all university students would benefit from greater speech instruction when it comes time to interview for graduate school or in the business and government workforce, “when they are called upon to make speeches or presentations or reports, and when they want to be listened to at town hall meetings or political conventions or other public gatherings” (26).

The diverse benefits of honing one’s speaking ability are given in an outline in the first chapter of Idea to Delivery under the heading of “What Will I Get out of Speech Training.” Each benefit outlined in the book will be explored in greater detail throughout this work but I will list the main topics here before focusing in on those most relevant to
this section: Sense of Satisfaction, Social Tool, Disciplined Thinking, Understanding of Self, and Understanding of Others. Each facet is accompanied by a paragraph, which includes other benefits, all of which cannot be discussed here. For now, I will focus in on the Social Tool benefit.

The section reiterates the point already made that practicing speech will aid in a number of college activities such as “giving an oral report in a history class or engaging in animated conversation in the student center” (3). But then it informs the students that “the advantages of speech training will be even more noticeable in your community, occupational, and social life after you have left college.” Garner then makes an interesting point about how improving the speaking abilities of our students can improve our society and the communities in which they take part. It is an especially important idea for university instructors to keep in mind because “colleges educate many of those who help mold our social patterns, and speech training is an important factor in the background of these leaders” (3). In other words, by giving students these skills, we aren’t going to just make better career men and women, but also better citizens. Lee Bowie, a philosophy professor who heads Mount Holyoke’s Speaking Center, “worries that ‘as a society, we are not very good at addressing crucial issues. We have a tendency when there are hard issues either to fight over them or to skirt around them’” (as noted in Mehren 2). He realizes that what he can do for the 2,000 students at his institution is hardly a solution to society’s problem; however, he says it’s a start and he wants his students to acquire enough skills that if they “have something important and interesting to say, they’re going to be able to say it well” (2).
William Dominik and Jon Hall in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* explained that the aspiring orator was to make sure that he talked, walked, and generally carried himself like a man,” and he also “had to make sure there was nothing in his gestures or movement that smacked of the humble laborer” (229). Marxist and feminist issues aside, the kernel of truth here is that they wanted to improve themselves and become something better than common. One of the main reasons that we seek education is to improve ourselves. The most sought after universities are the ones where the motive of the aforementioned curriculum designers is to create intelligent and well-rounded members of society: the elite of society. We need more people in our society who “can say the right thing at the right time” – the person who can “change a situation, unblock a situation, by the timeliness and aptness of their contribution or intervention” (McCormack 12). These are the kind of people who are “attuned to the tensions, ambiguities, and possibilities of social situations and know how to speak to these situations in ways that clarify them for those concerned. They have a way with words. They can speak up. They can organize their thoughts and speak cogently.” This is how Rob McCormack describes “the ethical attributes of the person ideally produced by a rhetorical education.”

I would like to draw special attention to the part where a rhetorician is described by the statement “They can speak up.” Kathleen Yancey affirms this idea when she says “The delivery of this kind of education, then would support not only our immediate educational mission but also our society and our political system, helping to create virtuous people disposed toward pluralism and democracy” (26). This may sound like a bit of a stretch but her reasoning behind the idea that speech instruction can create better citizens is that those who are living within a “democratic system would benefit when
citizens possess skills that allow them to participate effectively in governance and that encourage them to do so virtuously. …if we want a healthy society and …successful students, we ought to work to increase our delivery of Delivery.”
CHAPTER TWO: HOW SPEAKING CAN INFORM COMPOSITION

Introduction

Chapter One discussed in depth about how public speaking is still important and relevant in society and why speaking is a dismally weak area in our culture. This is an idea that could easily elicit more discussion and analysis. However, the objective that will hopefully make this argument more relevant to the field of composition and rhetoric is the hypothesis that including more public speaking activities in the standard composition course can not only benefit students’ public speaking abilities, but also improve composition skills.

Sherri Shafer shares a student’s personal experience in "Building Public Speaking Skills Across the Curriculum" that highlights well the effect of minimal educational exposure to students’ public speaking skills:

My public speaking skills are average and I think this is due to the school system and their lack of required courses for public speaking. As all others in my high school, I took the required speech class, but my education for public speaking began and ended with that class. I feel that speech class should not be introduced in high school. It should be incorporated into the learning requirements in either late elementary school or during middle school. It is better to be exposed to public speaking at a younger age rather than have the anxiety build up as you go through school. Most classes have one big assignment that requires a presentation of some
sort. You are graded on your material as well as how you present it, but if you have not been properly educated on speaking, your grade suffers. (279-280)

Shafer explains what this student’s experience – and no doubt many others’ in the educational system – means: “The academic community has provided a disservice in the field of communications studies” (280). She believes that the answer to mending this discrepancy is a cross-curriculum approach beginning in middle and high schools, in order to “better prepare our students in a more effective manner for the future” (280). I agree that this cross-curriculum approach should be implemented earlier than college and high school; however, I believe there is potential for it to begin as early as elementary school.

Kathleen Welch believes that “we can exploit the power of the spoken word more precisely to achieve more effective writing….We can take advantage of the interaction and the mutual dependence of speaking and writing” (140). By including speech in composition instruction, we could improve student writing. Welch comes to speech’s defense against composition’s domination in education when she says, “a vital element for the creation of philosophy and science was not the dominance of written abstraction or oral culture but the relationship between the two…. The evidence does not support a conception of “victory” by one medium over the other” (97). There was never a declared winner between writing and speaking, and yet writing receives all the benefits of required, cross-curricular instruction. Nancy Wood supports this in “The Classical Canons in Basic Speech and English Classes” by pointing out that “in classical times writing and speaking were not taught as separate modes of discourse as they are today. What aided the speaker would aid the writer as well” (189). If rhetoric is the foundation
from which composition courses are developed, than it seems only logical that speech instruction should be included. Welch points out that “Plato’s work developed significantly because of the interaction of orality and literacy.” She then refers to Walter Ong’s theory that “the mutuality in their coexistence exert[s] powerful language and consciousness changes” (97). In other words, using speech and writing together can have an effect on students’ awareness of their thought processes. Mary Saunders in "Oral Presentations in the Composition Classroom” cites “improved attitudes (indicated by student evaluations) and better grades” as signs that her combination of speaking and writing in the classroom is effective and she hopes that “we will begin to see a number of rhetoric programs that are truly rhetoric programs: marriages between public speaking and composition courses” (360).

There is a great deal of scholarship surrounding the idea that integrating speech elements into the classroom can improve the students’ understanding of the subject being taught. This has been found to be true of any subject not just composition or humanities, which leads to the theory that speech should be used as a learning tool. Mina G. Halliday in Communication Is Getting it Together explains:

Communication study is such that to be made practical, it must be used as an integrated study – one involved with and helping with every other subject or course of study. As Dorothy Higginbotham stated, “Whenever speech has become a separate area of study, it has tended to emphasize differences rather than similarities in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.” (16)

When speech is taught by itself, it benefits only the learning of speech. When it is taught with other subjects, it not only improves the learning of speech skills, it also
enhances the learning of the subject it is paired with. However, the focus of this piece will remain on speech’s effect on composition. John T. Morello in "Comparing Speaking Across the Curriculum and Writing Across The Curriculum Programs," claims that “anyone who has been involved in Writing Across the Curriculum knows that it works only if reading, talking, and listening work with it” (100). This is interesting coming from the composition side rather than the speech or communication camp because Morello is essentially saying that teaching writing works best when paired with talking and listening.

Mahla Strohmaier, in "Implementing Speaking Across the Curriculum: A Case Study," points out why speech should be used in conjunction with composition rather than as a separate subject:

The earlier work by Vangelisti and Daly (1989) indicated a connection between oral and written communication processes through the discovery of a significant correlation between oral communication competence and students' proficiency in reading, understanding documents, and comprehending prose. (33)

The writing benefits that can come from using public speech in a composition course are vast. In fact, it could be argued that using speech during the writing process can affect almost every aspect of student writing. Mary Saunders asserts that “This oral ease and confidence in being able to talk one's point across can be put to work helping students write better papers” (357). My research has led me to a myriad of composition scholars and instructors who are lining up to “count the ways” that they believe speech can benefit composition. Saunders follows her statement above with her belief that having students present their work
can result in essays that are better grammatically and stylistically and better in the sense of having theses on practicable topics. The strongest point, however, in favor of oral work in the composition classroom is that it enables students to feel that they are taken seriously as people with minds, and this confidence can increase motivation to write well and even to tackle research papers with some sense of pleasure and accomplishment. (357)

From this one passage, she has cited benefits in grammar, style, invention, authority, confidence, and enjoyment. And I do believe that two of those listed are in the favored three of the rhetorical canons (style and invention). Perhaps oral delivery is needed after all.

Wilson C. Snipes, author of “Oral Composing as an Approach to Writing,” uses a recorder in his oral approach to the composing process and has created a “talk-retalk-write-rewrite method.” He says that this “offer[s] the student a chance to hear and to see what he expresses,” meaning that it can help students discover and fine tune their voice by “study[ing] his use of the language, to hear repeatedly his characteristic voice, idiom, [and] patterns” (200). It is also “student-centered” and “simultaneously persona and audience oriented.” Because it is student-centered it can improve student engagement. Persona can help develop students’ voices in relation to their audience, or audience awareness and analysis. It can improve their critical thinking by “offer[ing] the student a critical relationship to his conscious and unconscious command of the language.” Because it is “rhetoric-centered,” students don’t concern themselves with the distractions of grammar and mechanics. Lastly, it can improve interpersonal relations by “emphasiz[ing] the daily importance of meaningful dialogue and conversation.”
In addition to Snipes’s observations, he compiled the students’ own list of advantages to using this method of talking during composition:

(1) the habit of composing; (2) a better understanding of structures; (3) more conscious awareness of language usage; (4) awareness of options as to how to develop a subject; (5) by listening "you become aware of what you are saying"; (6) speaking and writing were related for the first time; (7) the oral approach "livens up your writing" through its ear appeal; (8) the oral approach enables me to say "more what I feel"; (9) you listen to others more closely; (10) you recognize that a speaker must use a language the audience can understand; (11) you find yourself involved in critical rethinking for the "tape does not say what I want to say," so "I add new things"; (12) peers are critical; and finally (13) it is fun. (205)

Keeping in mind that Snipes is a composition instructor, not a communications instructor, he states that this method of talking during writing “is the only composing process I know about that offers each student a chance to study himself, to hear himself, to see himself, as a user of language” (205).

From my research, I have grouped the most frequently cited skills affected positively by the use of speech during the composition process. These will be discussed as follows: voice, student engagement, audience awareness, talking through ideas, critical thinking, grammar and mechanics, confidence, and interpersonal relations.

**Voice**

Voice seems to be the most obvious skill to be gained or enhanced from the use of speech since students would be using their actual voice. Voice in this instance would best
be defined as the student’s identity as a self and how that manifests in their communication. A common problem in first year writing, and one that I have noticed within the four classes of first year writing that I have taught, is that students are trying so hard to write “the right way” that they strive to imitate the academic writing that they are assigned in readings and that they encounter during their research and the result always reminds me of a child playing dress up with their parents’ shoes. It’s not that academic voices are the wrong way to write; it’s that it is not the student speaking. And when it’s not the student’s voice, it tends to also not be their ideas. I’m not suggesting plagiarism; I’m referring to original thought.

Patricia Duncker, in “The Impossibility of Making Writing: Mrs Arbuthnot, Mrs Lewes and Mrs Woolf,” says “In his study of inspiration and creativity, *The Theory of Inspiration*, Timothy Clark suggests that what we call ‘inspiration’ is in fact a form of ‘performance’” (Duncker 312). If students are performing for a seen and immediate audience, they will be more likely to use original language and thought because they don’t want to look out and see bored faces. With writing they have the privacy to be boring and to use tired ideas without having to witness the reaction beyond their letter grade. And even that is usually experienced in private. Writing is a very private venture – quite the opposite of speaking. Kathleen Welch, in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse*, points out that “literacy required removal from the group…. Writing generally required a certain amount of isolation, or at least a turning inward that is very much the inverse of the turning outward that performance requires” (152).
Duncker also says in relation to voice, “the writing I is of course a separate, dramatized voice, a quite different entity from the I who negotiates dailiness” (319). The personal voice in one’s head doesn’t translate perfectly to any form of communication. It is an entity that needs coaxing and taming in order to develop. It is rare for it to appear naturally. Frequent experience with speaking through their ideas can help students to begin to recognize and grow comfortable with their communicating voice. As Kathleen Yancey says, in *Delivering College Composition: The Fifth Canon*, “different methods will often suit different speakers” (20). This gives them the opportunity to try on different ways of presenting orally in order to find the way that suits their personality best and enables them to literally find *their* voice.

Because of the inexperience of most first year writing students, who they are as people and what their educated, well-thought out opinions are can be vague, weak, or lacking in confidence. Having something that you believe in is a vital component of the development of voice. Gerry Brookes quotes a visiting Chinese instructor in “Town Meetings: A Strategy for Including Speaking in a Writing Classroom”: “One of the needs of colleges students, especially first-year ones is to know what they think” (88). This is because for many students:

> the difficulties in formulating their beliefs are complicated by habits of public silence or acquiescence acquired from the local cultures in which they have grown up. Such students need especially to learn to know their own minds and to say what they think, to take responsibility for their attitudes and positions. (88)

As a result “students are not eager for confrontation in the classroom” (88). The fear of what is going to arise from the unpredictable audience is real for communicators of any
level of expertise. Now imagine that that fear is very alive in a student who holds a controversial position but doesn’t know how to articulate it well and is aware that they don’t fully understand all the complexities of the issue. The least we can do is try to make them more comfortable and acquainted with their communication style so that when they present their possibly unpopular point of view they can feel that they expressed it well.

Discussion is one of the best ways to substantiate where you stand in relation to other opinions. As Snipes says, “you attempt in the talking stage to discover who you are, what you think, where you stand on certain issues, subjects, experiences, events” (203). However, it can be a scary place to enter into. Brookes believes that he has found a way to encourage discussion without debilitating confrontation. His class will engage in a “Town Meeting.” This is an activity where each student throughout the semester is given the opportunity to speak uninterrupted for five minutes about a topic that concerns them. After responding to a few questions from the instructor, the discussion is opened up to the rest of the class. Brookes is careful to distinguish between this activity and a debate that is inherently confrontational: “They need to learn a critical habit of mind without having their own confidence destroyed in the process” (89). His experience with walking this fine line seems to have been positive. During the most dangerous discussion, he relates that “a real showdown threatened, but we were able to get out the views on each side without direct confrontation. Having seen us avoid it with a potentially divisive topic like this, others are readier to stand up and say what they think on different subjects” (90).

This activity had an added profit of not only developing their ideas and their confidence in their opinions, but it also:
supports writing in the course. Not letting the debate develop in class drives the
discussion underground and lets it emerge in journals and papers. Topics that get
aired for three minutes, with a few minutes added to consider alternative points of
view, become themes in student writing for the whole semester. (91)

We see here how discussing opinions briefly can lead to better knowledge of one’s
perspectives and drive to express those perspectives. This ties into the advantages of
invention, confidence, and engagement, all ideas that will be discussed later; however,
the interconnectedness of these skills makes tidy division difficult.

Welch explains how speaking about ideas can lead to better writing of those ideas:

In addition to increasing writerly authority…the presentation of self in writing
depends partly on the issues that the writer has repeatedly spoken to herself or
himself or has heard spoken. The connection between presenting a self in
speaking and presenting a self in writing is much closer than many researchers
have recognized. Connecting speaking and writing can illuminate the
manipulation of ethos, arguably one of the most important issues in speaking and
in writing but certainly a center of both spoken and written presentation. (139)

By practicing their speaking voice, they are simultaneously developing their writing
voice. Confidence in their voice can help them grasp a sense of authority and ownership
within their writing and decrease the need to imitate outside voices and ideas. Brookes
attests that his town meetings help students offer “ideas for new and related topics, both
for the speaker and for the listeners” (91). As mentioned above, it is difficult to discuss
one area of writing without talking about how it relates to other areas because of their
interconnected nature. Welch explains how this nature can work to the composition instructor and student writer’s advantage:

When the large – sometimes overwhelming – problem of authority is deemphasized, concentration on other writing issues leads to the development of writing strengths such as experimenting with presentations and increasing readability. This shift in the writer’s preoccupation from establishing authority to other, equally compelling writing issues enables students to work on aspects of writing that often they have never been reached in their previous writing instruction. The authority derives from the oral power….(138)

Engagement

Rob McCormack in Back To The 3 R’s: Reading, Writing, Rhetoric observed that “the more I can situate language into a performative setting, the more students engage and learn with passion and enjoyment” (9). For this reason, he also believes that “learning should lead to a risky and real final performance” (4). Brookes demonstrates that his students experiences with the town meetings caused them to be not only more engaged in the course, but with their writing as well: “Speakers occasionally phrase their topics in opposition to previous town meetings, though often with such subtlety that the point is missed. They are much more likely to state their strongest opposition on paper” (91). This engagement on the page eventually transfers to class participation: “as the semester progresses they seem readier to disagree verbally.” One of teachers’ favorite breakthroughs with their students is when the quieter students talk during class discussions. Brookes says:
these sessions also seem to help reticent students speak up. They certainly find themselves commenting on and expressing disagreement with these talks on paper, often with surprising energy, which has been disguised by their passive response to the talk itself. They may also speak out in other contexts. (91)

John T. Morello, in "Comparing Speaking Across the Curriculum and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs," supports these assertions: “WAC [Writing Across the Curriculum] and SAC [Speaking Across the Curriculum] each underscore how each approach works to make students more involved in their education” (103). This is because, as Brookes says, “the strategy lets students own more of the course” (92). M. Cronin and P. Glenn in “Oral Communication Across the Curriculum in Higher Education: The State of the Art” explain that “students feel that the active learning required by oral communication activities is preferable to the more passive learning in lecture-oriented courses” because “oral communication activities place greater emphasis on sharing their ideas in their classes” (361).

An added benefit to greater sense of ownership over one’s course, voice, and perspectives is that, as Kate Kessler observes in "Composing for Delivery," “Plagiarism disappears because composing for delivery is personal and demands author ownership” (90). When an assignment doesn’t just feel like something that belongs to the instructor, students may want to put more of themselves into their projects.

Another asset is that “the students themselves are a good audience, attentive, sympathetic, and eager to hear each other; they become better listeners” (Brookes 92). What instructor hasn’t looked out over their students and seen half with glazed expressions, a handful “hiding” their phones as they text, and the rest busily typing
“notes” on their laptop? When it’s their fellow students doing the talking and they know that they themselves will be doing the talking soon enough, their interest in what is going on is naturally roused. And when a student is engaged in class, it is more likely that they will be more engaged in the writing that stems from that class. It is less of an assignment to be endured and more an extension of the interesting discussion that happened in class that they got to play an active role in.

Audience Awareness

Since writing is a private activity, which means student writers usually don’t get to witness the effects of their own writing, audience awareness lessons and activities can be depressingly hypothetical. Questions like “Who is the audience that this essay is directed toward?” produce answers like “my teacher” or “my classmates” or “the world.” But when their words will be presented in class, they have a real audience to think about. They are considering the intelligence of the discussions that have taken place so far in class, their friends in the back row cheering them on, the classmate on the other side of the room that they’ve been eyeing and want to impress, not to mention the teacher with the legal pad who hands out the grades and whose grading style they have gained a familiarity with and want to stay on the good side of. That’s a lot of different audiences to consider. Real audiences. And there’s no hiding behind a page from them.

Brookes remarks that “the special pleasure of the exercise [public speech in class] is in seeing the wonder, surprise and shock – both at the strange and at the familiar – that they provoke in each other” (92). While it is fun to watch students discover true awareness of their audience for the first time, there is a serious benefit to be gained as well. Kate Kessler points out that “It is not enough to tell someone off. I want students to
know that they have the power to effect change” (90). This begins with knowing your audience. To refer back to Dwight L. Garner’s outline titled “What Will I Get out of Speech Training,” the last benefit is Understanding of Others. The section tells the new speech student that “Your appeal should be based on your understanding of what motivates people” (3).

Kessler uses a technique she calls composing for delivery in which her students compose letters to community members and organizations addressing issues that have been concerning them. These included such letters as a girl writing to the kind proprietors of a restaurant where she worked back home who had given a $100 bill to each employee when they graduated from high school, but she hadn’t received one, and another from a student to the transportation department about the difficulties art students had using the buses because no bus routes would take them to the art offices, requiring them to lug their oversized portfolios from their homes to the inconveniently located office. In both these examples, the students received replies as well as their concerns alleviated. The restaurateurs apologized for their oversight, assuring her that it was not meant as a slight towards her job performance in any way, and enclosed a $100 bill. The art student’s issue was addressed by the implementing of a new bus route that dropped students off directly in front of the art office.

I realize that this strategy does not involve public speech. Its author, however, addresses some very relatable problems with teaching audience awareness and insightful ways that this technique bypasses those problems: “The concept of audience is not new, but few students have considered that they have the power to effect change through their writing because few have ever written for an audience other than the teacher” (91). She
explains that she developed this technique based on her own experiences as a student:
“Writing for a teacher for a grade was not enough to make me want to write well.
Because I wanted my writing to mean more, I looked for audiences beyond my teachers”
(90). The strategy uses “delivery as a motivation for writing well” by composing for real
audiences in such a way that the motivation involved in the writing process to properly
address specific audiences and create a desired effect is very similar to the motivation
involved with speaking directly to a specific audience: “Composing for delivery can elicit
response and have real results. But to get the results they want, their writing must be
carefully crafted and rhetorically sensitive.” The author points out that students are very
timid about voicing their opinions to audiences outside their classroom and that writing is
a good way to introduce them to the practice because it provides them with the privacy
and delay to work through their rhetorical choices: “Composing for delivery can motivate
students to link the writing process with the writing product” (89). After having a positive
experience with writing to their audience, students begin to become more confident and
therefore more likely to address their concerns with community members vocally.

James Moffett, in his book *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum*, presents the same argument about audience as Kessler that:

It is essential that [students] address someone besides the English teacher and get
some kind of feedback other than red marks. … Compositions should be read in
class, out of class, reacted to and discussed. One must know the effects of one’s
rhetoric on someone else who does not give grades and does not stand as an
authority figure. I suggest also the performance and publication of student works
as frequently as possible. (147)
When I worked as a teaching assistant for an English 101 instructor during my undergraduate work, the instructor used a technique that I’ve always deemed too risky for my classroom, but during this research I have begun to see the merits outweighing the risk, and also seeing that the risk itself is an important experience. He would put a student’s draft up on the overhead and begin reading it aloud. The students were given a paddle with a green circle on one side and red on the other. They would begin with the green side facing him as he read. They were instructed to flip it to red as soon as they lost interest in the writing. In the modern classroom, there is much attention given to the creation of a humiliation free zone for learning. I feared that this practice would violate that zone. However, the papers would be presented anonymously, and while it may make a student squirm to hear their words that were written in quiet privacy falling on the ears of all their classmates, it allows them to see honest reactions to their writing. I was never present in the class period when this took place and the teacher never informed me of it. I learned about it during my one-on-one sessions with the students. They weren’t complaining or giving any kind of feedback on the practice itself. They were using the experience as a tool as we revised their papers together. I was introduced to the activity because a number of students said to me, “okay, this is where all the paddles flipped to red so I need help making this more interesting.” They were able to see an immediate audience response and use that to improve their writing. As Brookes says about receiving immediate reactions, it “give[s] them glimpses into minds other than their own” (91).

Kent E. Menzel and Lori J. Carrell of "The Relationship between Preparation and Performance in Public Speaking" advise speech students to practice speaking in front of an audience because then they “can more fully develop the perspective-taking and
audience analysis skills necessary for delivering the speech in the classroom” (23). One of the reasons that Speaking across the Curriculum programs advocate using speech in all areas of education is because “conventions of writing doubtlessly change when community members talk; new initiates must learn to write and speak in the forms and styles of others in the community they wish to join” (Morello 106). Each academic community will need to be addressed differently and all the modes can’t be taught in the single composition classroom. Plus, it is not enough for students to learn to speak to only their academic community; they need to be able “to communicate across groups, thereby building intercommunity relationships” (106).

Using speech to teach audience awareness to composition students may be the most effective way for students to learn the skill. As John F. Wilson and Carroll C. Arnold say in *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*:

> We never talk to one another without having to adjust, without having to build some sort of relationship between speaker and listener. This necessity for adaptation may be the single most important fact about speech as a way of communicating. To speak is to make an adjustment to our own and someone else’s presence together in time, under specific circumstances. (14)

Their argument ties in well with Kessler’s ideas of students effecting change with their words and rhetorically analyzing how to create that change:

> The important implication of the concept of rhetorical situation is that all practical speakers must learn to analyze situations because until they can do so, they can have little assurance that what they have in mind to say and do can make differences of the sorts they hope for. (16)
Kathleen Yancey in *Delivering College Composition: The Fifth Canon* explains how rhetorically analyzing one’s audience for oral communication can aid in the composition process by quoting Quintillian:

> Questions of both voice and gesture are determined by what is appropriate: After all, “the same characteristics of voice, gesture and gait are not equally becoming in the presence of the emperor, the senate, the people, and magistrates, or in private and public trials, or in making a request to the praetor for the appointment of a judge to hear our case, and in the actual pleading.” This advice echoes that given for the decisions concerning invention, arrangement, and especially style, the kind of advice every first-year composition textbook includes regarding audience analysis. (20)

Rob McCormack says this about rhetoric: “The art of rhetoric is an art of practical reason, the art of reading situations creatively, setting out positions clearly, appraising alternatives with prudence and practical judgment” (12). The stakes are higher when addressing an audience in person, which makes thinking about that audience a more present and urgent need than it often is for students when composing. Using speech and real audiences in the composition classroom would be like practicing running in the sand; you’ll be even better at it under normal circumstances if you can do it when it’s hard.

**Talking Through Ideas**

The use of real audience can be used as a tool before, during, and after the writing process. In this instance, that interaction will be more focused on conversational forms of speech than performative. In some cases, the only audience member is the self.
James Moffett advocates speech’s use during these points in the writing process: “Not all stages are pre-writing; talking over one’s ideas in mid-composition or after a draft is often extremely useful” (17). But he also believes it is a vital part of the prewriting process calling it “nearly obligatory” to go over ideas orally before putting them in writing “because that is almost certain to make written results more successful” (51) and that “talking is, after all, the main form of pre-writing (especially if one includes talking to oneself, inner speech)” (19).

The usefulness of “face-to-face” conversation while composing is also seen by Joanna Krych-Appelbaum and Meredyth Musial in “Students’ Perception of Value of Interactive Oral Communication as Part of Writing Course Papers.” They say:

speakers are affected by their conversational partners – not only in what they plan to say, but how and when they plan to say it. Writing, by contrast, typically has a future reader but the writer cannot interact with the reader. Based on previous research on face-to-face communication, we suggest that students will find it useful to talk interactively with another person about what they are in the process of writing. (131)

This is the same activity that Moffett suggests in Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum because “even novices can help each other foresee some problems, get good additional ideas, and think through what one has in mind” (19). He says it “may send participants rushing off to continue the discussion on paper as a more effective way of crystallizing and expressing their views.” This may sound idealistic, but I have witnessed it happen on a number of occasions while conferencing with students one-on-one as an instructor and as a tutor. As discussed earlier, often students try to
imitate academic voices that are not their own in their papers and this often results in wordy, vague, or confusing sentences. When I come across these situations in which the students appears to be struggling to convert their inner speech into the “proper” outer speech, I push the paper away and ask the student to tell me what it is they are trying to explain. Time after time they are able to explain much clearer and specifically and often in voices that are perfectly acceptable for their paper with the added bonus of being authentic. As soon as they finish, I reply excitedly “That! Write that!” They then quickly and enthusiastically return to the page.

Moffett explains the nature of inner and outer speech:

Both talking and writing may be usefully regarded as a revision of inner speech, talking being more spontaneous and writing more pondered. …the whole shift from inner speech to outer speech that occurs continually as people verbalize their experience for others. It is designed to show students how to tap off and verbalize what is going on at any moment in their sensations, memories, thoughts, and feelings. (29)

Krych-Appelbaum and Musial then explain why, as Menzel and Carrell put it, “verbalization clarifies thought” (Menzel and Carrell 23): “in face-to-face conversation, people typically introduce ideas step-by-step, to make sure that they are mutually understood. … Discussion may increase or re-invigorate the students’ own interest in the topic and the assignment, especially if the listener finds the topic particularly interesting” (Krych-Appelbaum and Musial 136).

Krych-Appelbaum and Musial then explains how discussion can improve both speaking and writing skills: “By viewing writing as a collaborative endeavor in which
they interact with their audience, students may learn to more efficiently and effectively communicate their ideas in written form as well as verbally” (136). This practice is also well-received by students since in Krych-Appelbaum and Musial’s experience they:

rated talking before and after writing combined higher than the other three techniques combined. … By initially focusing less on the evaluative aspect and focusing more on the writer’s ideas and how to best break them down to be understandable to a real listener, students can benefit by then applying such knowledge from face-to-face conversation to their paper writing. (136)

In the study by Krych-Appelbaum and Musial, the group that only gave written feedback rated the usefulness of their feedback lower than the students in the conversation group. Half of the students in the conversation group reported that they “planned to talk before writing in the future” (133). Krych-Appelbaum and Musial believe this method is more useful because:

people need to do much more than simply utter words for others to decode. Conversation is interactive, requiring people to coordinate with one another in order for communication to proceed properly. People not only establish the content of their conversation (the who, what, when, where) but they also provide evidence of their understanding by nodding, asking questions, gesturing, among other techniques. This social coordination is important, because it impacts the ways speakers and listeners plan what they say and do next. (131)

In a separate study conducted by Peter Smagorinsky in "Personal Growth in Social Context: A High School Senior's Search for Meaning in and Through Writing," Smagorinsky gave a high schooler who was struggling with English a tape recorder in
order to record himself talking through his thoughts. He calls it “Thinking-Aloud as Tool.” In one of the final recordings, the student expresses his gratitude for having this opportunity because he thought it was “kind of neat to get my thoughts out” and “to have someone to talk to like this” and that he meant to keep recording himself even after the study (92). Smagorinsky discovered that the tape recorder enabled the student “to think through his purposes for writing in ways he hadn’t previously found available” (93). The troubled student failed or did poorly in all his classes except English that year and he attested that “this stuff helped me in the fact that when I got in there and it was time to write a paper, it was very easy for me… I had a very easy time thinking it through in my head” (93). The student was able to identify verbalization as the difference in his thought process now: “actually getting my thoughts out, not necessarily on paper, but getting my thoughts out to where I was hearing instead of just having it pass through my head, that was a different experience for me.”

I believe that this can be applied to student writers. People don’t usually think in complete sentences. We think in disjointed, abstract ideas – which is why it is often difficult to explain our thoughts – to transfer them from inner speech to outer. As a novice instructor in my first few semesters, I would be planning for a class and instead of practicing what I was going to say to my students I would brush over certain topics thinking “I have a fairly strong grasp on what genre is” etc. Then I would find myself in front of twenty-five students the next day unable to explain what genre is. I understood the concept but it was stuck in inner speech where there are few, if any, complete sentences and concrete ideas. So I began to be more conscientious about writing out word-for-word what I wanted to say the next day. This was better because now at least I
had put myself through the process of articulating my inner understanding of the concepts. However, I would once again find myself in the front of the classroom realizing too late that I couldn’t stand there and read my notes to them. Most of the time, I have to be dancing around just to hold the freshmen’s attention. If I broke eye contact, it would all be over. So I would glance at my notes and catch a few key words and phrases, but see mostly a blur because as I may have mentioned already, I’m not a confident public speaker. From this experience, I have learned that while it does help to write out my thoughts in preparation for the teaching of a new concept, the best results come when I then practice explaining my ideas without looking at my notes. I have frequently been grateful during these practice sessions because what comes out the first few times is often utter nonsense that I am relieved does not have an audience beyond myself. The moral of this story is that until you can verbally explain a concept to an audience, you have not fully grasped it. Which is why I feel it is important to get students explaining what they have learned aloud if we have any hope of it being retained.

Because of this theory, John Gow would have oral tests during one-on-one conference time with his students. “At conference time, an informal discussion is conducted, based on selected questions. What ensues from this exchange clearly reveals the student’s strengths and weaknesses” (11-12). Students were given a list of ten questions based off what was being discussed in class during the preceding weeks. While they would only be asked two or three of the questions from the list, they needed to be prepared to speak on any of the listed topics. This may seem rather unconventional for a composition course; however, I believe it would solidify the concepts taught in class and increase the likelihood that those ideas will manifest themselves in the students’
compositions. In addition, I have had numerous students mention in evaluations how helpful it was for them to have the opportunity during conferences to talk about what they were thinking about writing while they were still in the pre-writing and drafting phases because it helped them make connections to other ideas and to flesh out what they had been thinking about in a more substantial way than if they had simply started writing.

Patricia R. Palmerton in "Speaking Across the Curriculum: Threat, Opportunity Or Both?" provides an insight into why the practice of talking before and during the composing process is so beneficial: “Speaking across the Curriculum courses are structured to provide more than one chance, being developed around the idea that thinking and talking are integrally related” (4-5). Wilson Snipes’ description of talking makes it more clear how it is related to thinking: “talking includes what you normally call ‘talking to yourself,’ conversing, discussing, during which you ‘talk off the top of your head,’ associate ideas and attitudes freely, make tentative choices among possible points of views, ideas, attitudes, value” (203). Another reason that talking while composing helps is because “Like the delivery of a speech, the writing of the first draft should be fluent and rapid enough to capture the logic of the original outline. Attention to style and "correctness" can be saved for later” (Wood 191). The fluency and rapidness cited here is much like how conversational speech could be described. If a student writer can talk about it first, their paper may likely retain that fluency.

Kathleen Welch explains that whenever you change from one medium of communication to another, orality and literacy “will inform one another” because “they are changes in consciousness, that is, in the ways one conceptualizes” (154). Smagorinsky expresses the same idea that when one’s understanding of a topic “becomes
public and social” it “thus achieves meaning to the speaker. In this conceptualization of
meaning, the focus is on the activity of speaking and its potential for enabling changes in
consciousness” (65). It changes the way a person thinks about their ideas, and viewing
anything from multiple perspectives, or in this case modes, can lend greater
understanding and clarity.

Critical Thinking

Referring back again to Dwight Garner’s outline of what a person can expect to
get out of speech training, number three is Disciplined Thinking. Garner claims in Idea to
Delivery that practicing the transfer of internal speech to external speech will foster “the
discipline necessary to organize and present ideas” (3). Organization is one of the
primary concerns of composition instructors for their composition students. In fact,
organization tends to be used as a synonym for one of the more favored rhetorical canons
“arrangement.” How interesting that by better utilizing the canon of delivery as it was
originally intended, we could also improve student writers’ arrangement or organization
in their written compositions.

Another benefit to speech training is that it teaches students “an orderly approach
to the techniques of analyzing problems and then forming adequate and intelligent
solutions” (3). In other words, this practice with organizing one’s thoughts before
speaking them can improve one’s critical thinking. So not only can the ideas in students’
composition be better organized or “arranged,” but they may also simply be better ideas.

The critical thinking that could be gained through speech training is not limited to
composition. In fact, “this mode of communication successfully could enhance learning
as it, too, activates critical thinking” (Nicosia 74). It could enhance the learning of any
subject. Nicosia goes on to say that “communication is a mode of learning” therefore “requiring students to make oral presentations in content areas outside of the speech class would enhance the learning of that content” (74). This is what was found in an Oral Communication across the Curriculum programs at a midsized comprehensive state university: “Faculty feel that oral communication activities in their classes are a fundamental mode of learning because they promote cognitive structuring and higher levels of conceptualization for students” (Cronin and Glenn 361). Plus, critical thinking is not only stimulated while preparing and arranging one’s ideas for a speech, it is also in action while delivering the presentation. Nicosia cites Zarefsky’s point “that critical thinking is necessary to form the precise statements that embody our thoughts” (74). After all, as James Moffett said, “rendering experience into words is the real business of school” (as cited in Smagorinsky 66). Being able to clearly and intelligently explain oneself or complex concepts to others is a primary reason for seeking out a university education and a sign that information has been adequately learned because “Every time you practice speaking in public you will practice and gain experience in surveying information weighing options, making choices, and explaining or defending them” (Wilson and Arnold 6). Until you can talk about a concept or process to those who aren’t familiar with it, it has not been sufficiently learned – as I have learned through my teaching experiences. So students need not only read and be tested on a subject area, they need to be talking about their subject as well.

**Language vs. Grammar and Mechanics**

Many composition instructors experience the same frustrations during peer review and student revision and have made the same speeches before releasing their students into
the peer review and early revision process: don’t worry about grammar and mechanics right now. Do not proofread each other’s rough drafts! So many times as a writing center assistant or when conferencing with students one-on-one, I would ask “what are you most concerned about with your paper right now?” The most common response was grammar and mechanics, or commas, or spelling. An analogy that I have used to the amusement of my students when they want to talk about proofreading errors or when they ask how concerned I am with grammar and mechanics is that it is like trying to paint the house while it is burning down. Why agonize over the punctuation in a sentence when we realize later that the whole paragraph needs to go? Nancy Wood points out why this is a problem in composition: “the student does not need to know much about invention or arrangement to write paragraphs” (as cited in Wood 190). Not to mention, many of these first year writing students are coming from high school English courses where these technical elements were overly nitpicked because “it becomes overwhelmingly tempting in such classes for both student and teacher to become, in Edward Corbett's words, neurotically concerned with ‘correct usage’” (190). However, “the oral approach begins with the rhetorical framework, not his grammar, syntax, and such” (Snipes 202). Nancy Wood contrasts the experience of working with speech students and then the experience of working with composition students in the writing lab because “speech students, regardless of the textbook and method of instruction they follow, are usually more successful than writing students in learning to invent ideas and organize them to create a total message” (190). She illustrates this contrast by saying:

speech students who are seeking help in the writing lab are seeking help with ideas and organization because their assignment is to write a speech outline rather
than a paper. And, as we work with these students, they confess to us regularly that their speech course is helping them learn to organize and write term papers for their other classes as well. (188).

Wood then goes on to explain that “we have this situation: speech students seem to be learning to organize ideas, writing students struggle with syntax and punctuation, but lack clear organization in their work, and professors complain about the lack of organization in students papers” (188). Maybe if there were more speech writing and delivering exercises in composition courses, composition instructors could more clearly demonstrate to students how to ignore the mechanical aspects of a composition and finally focus solely on ideas and arrangement. Not only would the need to check for the minor details be eliminated, but students would be far more aware of the importance of their ideas and arrangement because they will be preparing to speak in front of their classmates rather than privately turning in an essay to their teacher. Also, when explaining fluency to my students, I tell them that their essay should read as if they are just talking about it to us rather than tightly compartmentalizing each idea in its paragraph with no apparent connection from paragraph to the next. With a speech, they would actually be talking about their topic to their audience and through practice would begin to naturally arrange their ideas so that it didn’t sound awkward and disjointed in speech.

A possible effect of a speech emphasis is that students will better pick up on grammar and mechanical rules on their own since most punctuation marks are for pauses in speech that are difficult to interpret when writing but will become much more apparent and necessary when preparing a composition to be spoken. James Moffett explains that
this practice of oral emphasis can “develop the ear” and therefore “develop punctuation” (54). This is because punctuation “should be explained to the student as a set of signals enabling the reader to reproduce as exactly as possible the original voice” (54). I can see a student now practicing their speech with page in hand and saying “I need a longer pause here,” then taking out a pencil and deciding how long of a pause they should have for the best rhetorical effect: a comma? A semicolon? A dash? A period? Making their decision, drawing the mark and continuing.

Therefore, this practice can have the paradoxical effect of easing the students’ focus away from the minor grammatical and mechanical matters while also increasing their understanding and usage of such details.

Confidence

A skeptic to the idea of increasing focus on delivery would probably feel that confidence is an issue for other areas of a student’s life. We’re supposed to teach them to write; their emotional health is not relevant. Honestly, on some level I agree. However, increasing confidence in a person can increase their performance in virtually every area of their life, including composition. They are more likely to take risks, to experiment, to trust their own ideas rather than falling back on others’, and to become less preoccupied with what they think the teacher wants (as addressed in the voice section), and to try harder because they believe they can do a good job. Now taking a scared freshman and putting them in front of a class and their teacher and assigning them to speak may not seem like the best way to increase their confidence. Frankly, while they’re up there it probably doesn’t. It comes after they sit down and realize that they’ve done it. Next time it won’t be as hard.
Returning to Dwight Garner’s outline of the benefits of speech training, the first one listed is Sense of Satisfaction (3). He attests that you may experience a sense of satisfaction from “having effectively presented your ideas and thinking to your audience” and having articulated your “thoughts into an intelligible and moving speech pattern” (3). Another source of personal pride comes from having “the opportunity to be the focal point of audience attention. Here the speaker has the opportunity to influence others by putting across his or her thinking, ideas, and feelings. In this sense, speaking is attention centered in a healthy and constructive way” (3). Usually when we hear about people’s issues with attention it is something they need less of. However, there is a happy medium for most everything and many first year students are more uncomfortable with attention than they are in constant need of it. This is an idea that Gerry Brookes agrees with. When speaking of his town meetings, he says that he tries to keep students from becoming merely the leader of a group discussion, “turning a monologue into a conversation” because he wants “to give the student the experience of standing up and saying something, declaring himself or herself, and receiving some attention for doing so” (92). It could just be a matter of becoming more accustomed and comfortable with having attention. If they have attention on them often enough, it becomes less of a concern and their focus can be directed to the content of their message. As Lee Bowie was quoted saying earlier “if students have something important and interesting to say” we want them “to be able to say it well” (as qtd. in Mehren 2). Confidence is also an important part of successfully delivering a speech. When the speaker is confident, the quality of their delivery increases. “Quintillian adheres to the widespread assumption that mediocre speeches, if well delivered will be far more effective than the best of speeches poorly
performed” (Dominik and Hall 318). A student can have a beautifully written, researched, and argued speech, but if they don’t deliver it with confidence, the lack thereof may be all anyone will see or judge. If they have confidence in themselves, their audience will be more likely to have confidence in them and what they have to say.

This is a point that is difficult to prove or measure; however Mary Saunders in "Oral Presentations in the Composition Classroom" explains how improved attitudes in student evaluations and better grades led her to believe that confidence was a factor in her students’ performance:

It is difficult to chart increases in something as impenetrably abstract as student "confidence." But my impression that the quality of written work… has been enhanced through oral presentations is supported by numbers and grades. In 1977-78, without giving oral presentations, 26 out of a total of 53 students in my classes failed their research projects, and only 10 produced above-average work. From the spring of 1979, when I began requiring oral presentations, through the spring of 1980, a less depressing 12 out of 60 students have received F's on their term papers while 22 have achieved B's or higher. (360)

What Saunders took away from her experience is that:

This oral ease and confidence in being able to talk one's point across can be put to work helping students write better papers. Having students precede submission of papers with oral presentations of their efforts can result in essays that are better grammatically and stylistically and better in the sense of having theses on practicable topics. The strongest point, however, in favor of oral work in the composition classroom is that it enables students to feel that they are taken
seriously as people with minds, and this confidence can increase motivation to write well and even to tackle research papers with some sense of pleasure and accomplishment. (360)

**Interpersonal Relations**

The final benefit to be gained from greater instructional focus on vocal delivery is the effect it can have on a students’ interpersonal relations. While this may not relate directly back to composition, it is another way that we can do our part to help produce a well-rounded university graduate. I feel this is especially important because of how relationships are rapidly evolving due to the amount of interaction that occurs through the internet and cellphones versus person to person contact. Just the other day I read one of my students’ papers where the issue of how Facebook affects romantic relationships was the focus. In her concluding paragraph, she wrote:

> Sometimes I want to live in my mom and dad’s generation where Facebook wasn’t invented, just to see what it would be like. Then I could personally answer the question, “How would I be without Facebook?” Would they be a lot stronger and healthier than they are today?

This is a young adult who has never experienced romance or friendship beyond elementary school without Facebook. I didn’t have it until my freshman year of college and I’m only seven years older than she is, yet such a world feels so remote to her that she thinks she would need to live during her parents’ generation to experience it.

Ironically, society’s interpersonal relations were already a concern in 1973 when Mina Halliday wrote:
People in our mechanical age are struggling to remain “human” people. As Giffin and Patton stated, “Our automated, complex society has created a growing state of impersonality and the yearning for closer personal ties is one of the major themes of our times. Of course the basis of our “personal ties” or human transactions is in the communication we establish with those around us. Its relevancy and significance cannot be overemphasized; however, schools have always attempted to teach students to read and write acceptably. A few have even attempted to teach students to be “orators” in the elocutionary spirit, but until recently, few have attempted teaching competency in transacting human communications, so much a part of our everyday lives. (4)

If we were concerned in 1973 about society becoming too mechanized for “personal ties or human transactions,” I’m afraid to think of where we are now. It is more important than ever to maintain our ability to converse on a person-to-person basis. Especially when, as established in Chapter One of this thesis, it is unlikely that the need to speak to others will ever completely go away and will continue to play a vital role in a person’s success during and after college.

The last two items listed in Dwight Garner’s outline in *Idea to Delivery* of what you will get out of speech training are *Understanding of Self* and *Understanding of Others*. Garner explains that by practicing public speech “you will see how your personality affects those with whom you talk” – you don’t usually get as immediate and honest a response with a written composition – “you will notice your reaction to their mode of behavior” (3). So through this practice you become better acquainted with your comfort zone and how far it reaches so you can begin pushing it farther. Also, despite any
play acting or speculation, we seldom know how we will react in a situation until we are in that situation. With all that focused attention on us, we become hyper aware of how we want to be treated. It is this kind of self-discovery that practice with public speech can bring. Also, in terms of understanding others, “you will find yourself becoming more sensitive to the reactions of others, and you will develop a greater knowledge of human behavior” (3). Not only can you gain a greater understanding of your own behavior and nature, but you can also begin to better understand how other people behave differently or similarly and may be more in tune with their needs in human transactions – not to mention, how to better appeal to different people rhetorically.

I’ll be one of the first to admit that the need to prepare students to address an audience of hundreds as an orator is not practical or necessary. For many educators, when they hear speech instruction, this is what they think of, though. This is likely because as R.R. Allen and S. Clay Willmington write, “‘By tradition, speech instruction sought to teach people to give speeches, act, direct, announce, and read aloud.’ These are all talents which are not often used in adult life by the common man,” (as qtd. in Halliday 10). What I do think is the purpose of speech instruction is “understanding of self-relationships with others, and a development of a critical thinking process. This shift demands a much more informal setting and group of daily activities than the Rhetorical Approach” (Halliday 6). Students just need to learn to communicate to other human beings. At the time that Halliday wrote *Communication Is Getting it Together* in 1973 “a semester course in oral or interpersonal communications” was required “in a growing number of Illinois high schools” and in these classes, rather than “the Rhetorical Approach,” “a more human approach [was] explored” (10). Maybe there has been a shift in the purpose of speech
instruction from mass audience to “human transaction”; however, there hasn’t been a
shift in the need for it.

Doug, the subject from Peter Smagorinsky’s study who carried a tape recorder
and documented his thoughts was interviewed sometime after his participation and was
asked if he had kept recording his thoughts as he had claimed he would. Doug answered:

I never did continue doing that, but what I have done since, what I am able to talk
openly with some friends, and the way I am able to write down my feelings, I can
sit here and directly relate my experience speaking to a tape recorder. You know,
when we get into having more openness with friends. (93)

The study wasn’t meant to measure how well Doug would interact with his friends and
others after his experience of translating inner speech to outer speech. They just wanted
to see if it would improve his critical thinking and composition. While it did help Doug
pass English that year, it had the unexpected side effect of improving his interpersonal
relationships. This is because speech is innately a group event. Walter Ong, when
speaking of the secondary orality created by the electronic age, finds that with or without
technology, speech is something shared with others: “The new orality has striking
resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense,
its concentration on the present moment…. Secondary orality generates a strong group
sense” (as qtd. in Reynolds 148). This is because, as discussed much earlier, text is
“contumacious” in that “literacy can record oral argument but it cannot engage in it”
(Lanham 20-21). Whereas simply by speaking in the presence of another person one is
engaging them in interaction. In writing “thought becomes private, or even an antisocial
enterprise” (21). One perspective could be that the main difference between speech and
writing is that one reaches out when communicating ideas while the other reaches inward. Interestingly, it was “determined that students with high levels of communication apprehension spend more time writing instead of spending time on other elements of the speech, such as practicing delivery, in order to avoid communicating” (Pearson, Child, and Kahl 353). It seems in the best interest of the student to have a balance of each.

**Increasing Exposure**

Throughout my research I have found a number of solutions to the neglect of delivery and students’ weakness with public speech. Current solutions being practiced are one semester required speech courses, there are Speaking across the Curriculum programs, Oral Communication across the Curriculum, Communication across the Curriculum, Speaking across the Disciplines programs and many others. From what I can surmise, the best way to teach someone to speak well and have it stick is to have it “implemented early in the educational career,” to have it follow them (“teachers should provide the basic oration principles within their courses”), and to incorporate it into as many areas as possible, “thus adopting the cross-curriculum approach” (Shafer 280-281). As many of the previously cited sources have said, speaking about a topic increases the understanding of that topic; it benefits both the student’s handle on the subject and their ability to communicate orally.

Most of all, I believe in repeated exposure to the actual practice; “fluent discourse demands it” (Wilson and Arnold 43). I believe this mostly from experience, and partly because it was recommended across the board throughout my research. This need for repeated exposure is why one required speech course or a presentation or two per semester doesn’t cut it. In "The Relationship between Preparation and Performance in
Public Speaking," Menzel and Carrell “recommend rehearsal before an audience as a way of improving speech delivery” (24), and in "Preparation Meeting Opportunity: How Do College Students Prepare for Public Speeches?,” Pearson et al. found that “students who were engaged in extracurricular communication experiences were also more competent on a number of measures” (Pearson 352). John F. Wilson and Carroll C. Arnold wrote a public speaking textbook in which they recommend that students “seek repeated, real experience” (41). They urge those students who aspire to be more competent in their communication skills to “take every opportunity you can to practice speaking in public situations.” Pearson et al. also “suggest that practice and preparation will lead to greater confidence and less speech apprehension” (353). The number one roadblock for most students with public speaking is anxiety. It even has a name (Public Speech Anxiety) and an acronym (PSA). It stands to reason that the best way to dispel a fear is to face it. Repeatedly. Is it difficult for you to swim 750 meters? Then do it over and over again until it’s not as hard. Why does practice reduce anxiety? According to Kent Menzel and Lori Carrell, “anxiety is due to the perception that one’s skills are deficient, and development of communication skills may alter that perception and eliminate the consequent anxiety” (19).

Not only does frequent exposure lessen the anxiety but it also gives the speaker lots of opportunities to identify specific problems that he or she has and then find solutions. In Dwight Garner’s explanation of how speech training will bring better Understanding of Self, he says “[a]s you progress through your speech training, you will become better acquainted with your reaction to stress situations” (3). This coincides with Wilson and Arnold who advise speech students that practicing speaking in public
situations “will contribute to habituating yourself to specific aspects of rhetorical situations. Certain things about speaking in public will become so familiar to you that you will feel more at ease each time you experiment” (41). After a few drawn blanks, rambling jags, and successful experiences, students can come to know what sets them off and what helps them stay on track. They can get to the point where they know if they pause and breathe for a moment that their mind will clear. But this is something that can only happen once the student has been through it before.

Another problem is the retention of this skill. No matter how skilled you become at swimming 750 meters, if you stop swimming for a few years, you’re not going to be able to just jump in and do it again as well as you did when you were practicing regularly. Something that is observed in speech students is that “Even if they ‘get it’ somewhere, students tend to lose their abilities to write and speak well unless given a chance to continue using and upgrading those abilities” (Palmerton 3). This is why I am not an advocate of the required speech course. I think there are more effective ways to teach the skill and it can easily be implemented into any subject area without making the focus in that subject area suffer. “With the Speaking Across the Curriculum approach, classes other than speech classes afford continuing opportunities for speaking, in addition, they help students develop their oral communication skills” (3). All of these points are supported by John T. Morello of "Comparing Speaking Across the Curriculum and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs”:

SAC advocates point to research suggesting that oral communication improvements may deteriorate unless students are called upon again and again to put what they've learned into practice. When speaking opportunities permeate the
curriculum, however, student improvements in oral communication are enhanced and made long-lasting. Learning extends far beyond that available in a one-semester speech course as students come to apply communication principles and skills in a range of disciplines and before a variety of audiences. (102)

For some students headed down certain career paths, speech is an academic subject requiring intensive, specialized instruction. The basic speech ability that I am discussing, that I believe every student should develop, is a learning tool and a method of communication to be used in discussing anything. It doesn’t need its own class; it needs to be a part of every class.
CHAPTER THREE: STUDY OF ONE ENGLISH 101 COURSE

The purpose of this chapter is to present the description and results of an empirical study I conducted in conjunction with my literature study in order to address and investigate some of the trends I observed in the field. In the fall of 2012, I taught a single section of English 101. The study that I conducted would be classified as a quasi-experiment because my class had to stay intact rather than be randomized.

Because of the nature of the experiment, I included a few pretest questions in the entrance survey at the beginning of the survey. The pretest was to determine any inequalities in my variables; in this case, to determine how much previous public survey instruction they had already received and what their gender was. However, the genders were relatively even and while a few had received public speaking instruction in the past, the majority had similar experiences with the practice: the occasional presentation in class. For the study’s treatment, I planned a curriculum for the semester that included as many speech activities as possible without taking away from the composition instruction. The hypothesis I was testing was that repeated exposure to the treatment would increase student’s confidence and comfort level with public speech. The instrument used to test this hypothesis was a multiple choice and short answer survey given both at the beginning and end of the semester. I hoped to also gather any unexpected effects that the treatment caused in the participants’ thinking and writing abilities and/or attitude. The course was made up of 23 students; however, for my participants, only 11 students
completed both the beginning and end of the semester surveys. The sampling group was made up of 7 females and 4 males between the ages of 18 and 25.

The first idea that I gleaned from my reading was from Gerry H. Brookes’ article "Town Meetings: A Strategy for Including Speaking in a Writing Classroom." In his article, he relates an experiment that he conducted with this own class. For three minutes a student would speak about a subject of their choice, the instructor would then ask a few questions that would deepen the student’s thinking and understanding of the subject, and then he would open the discussion up to the rest of the class. He calls it a town meeting because he wanted to avoid the combative atmosphere that would be inherent in a debate format. I put up a sign up sheet early on in the semester and instructed the students to sign up. Every few weeks a class period would be devoted to three students’ town meeting. Each student had up to five minutes – though I often let it go longer – to speak freely on any subject they wished with the help of a visual aid. These ranged from powerpoints and videos to physical objects like soccer balls, ballet shoes, and a couple members of the school wrestling team.

Another reason that this strategy worked well in this study is that it allowed for the rest of the class to speak instead of just the one lead student. It helped overcome the difficulty of having so many subjects and so limited time to devote to each one’s exposure to public speaking. Because I foresaw reluctance in students to participate, I had a three-question participation requirement. This was simply a requirement that each student ask a speaker a question at least three times throughout the semester. Though many students asked more than was required, it at least got every student participating instead of just the more vocal students.
In the past, with this course, I have held conferences one-on-one with students after they have had a rough draft peer reviewed. However, I thought it would be beneficial to hold the conferences before they had a written draft and instead of discussing their paper. I listened silently to the students describe their thought processes thus far, what ideas they had, and what they intended to do with their paper. I would then ask questions and give suggestions, but for the most part just let them talk through their ideas and encourage them to take notes of any new ideas they have during the conference. This was paired with a strategy where students paired up with partners and discussed what they were thinking about for their projects while in the prewriting or drafting stage.

Because of the strain on my time and mental faculties, I only conducted one-on-one conferences once during the semester. However, I did an alternative where the students read their papers aloud to each other. I framed these conference sessions to be very similar to a writing center session. Students often view their papers more clearly and proofread better when they read it aloud. Students would get with a partner, each would have a copy of the paper, and the author would read their paper aloud to the partner. Afterward the partner would give their feedback. During the last unit, after the class had experience a wide variety of peer review strategies, I gave them an option: they could meet with me in a group conference where students had read each other’s papers beforehand and then when we met together students would receive verbal feedback and be able to ask questions of their group members about their papers. Or they could come to class that day and read each other’s papers and give written feedback anonymously. This is a process I developed to give students as much privacy as possible. No names are on the papers and no names are on the feedback. They also include 2-3 questions for their
peer reviewer with the essay that pertain to what they especially want their reviewer to focus their feedback on. I had the students vote online so that they weren’t swayed by the popular vote.

![Peer Review Preference](image)

**Figure 1:** Peer Review Preference

The results indicated that twice as many students voted to receive verbal feedback from a group of peers than chose to receive anonymous written feedback, thus indicating that the verbal feedback was more helpful in the writing process than written. See Figure 1.

Lastly, at the end of every unit, students stood in front of the class and gave a presentation of their paper or project. The purpose of which was to, for one, give them exposure to public speech, and secondly, to give them practice with transforming their written ideas to the genre of speech.
There were inherent limitations to this study because of my situation as a teacher with only one class of first year writing students to use as subjects in the course of one semester when ideally my research would be conducted over a longer span of time so that the students’ exposure to practicing public speech could be more extensive and therefore have a greater chance of affecting their thinking and writing. There was also the difficulty of measuring the findings on the subject in a scientific way.

For a while I debated whether or not this should be a blind study. Should the students be told from the beginning what is being studied and should the study be carried without explanation, and if so, how? The advantage to carrying it out blind is that there will be no observer effect with the subjects and they will not be influenced in how they respond to surveys and reflections. However, I decided that if they weren’t informed of the purposes and methods at the beginning of the semester, they wouldn’t be paying as much attention to the effects that these different methods would have on their writing and thinking. In fact, there was the danger that at the end of the semester when asked to reflect on how the public speaking used in the class had affected them, it may not have occurred to them that there had been so many elements of oral communication in the curriculum, thus preventing their reflections from containing the depth of analysis that I was hoping for. Since I informed them ahead of time, they were able to be thinking about it throughout the semester. What I eventually decided was to inform them of what was being working on in very general terms. After obtaining informed consent and surveys from them, I avoided mentioning the study. As far as I could tell, they didn’t show any concern about being observed and it is possible that they had forgotten about the study.
In order to measure the effects of the oral communication practices that were implemented throughout the semester, I gave the students a survey at the beginning of the semester where they self-reported their anxieties and views of their strengths and weakness in public speaking and writing. I gave the same survey at the end of the semester as well to gauge any changes in either their confidence and/or skill in speaking and/or writing. The following is the results from the eleven students who completed both the beginning and end of the semester surveys. The sampling group was made up of 7 females and 4 males between the ages of 18 and 25.

**Results: Student Perspectives from Public Speaking Study**

There was potential to find information on a variety of areas. Firstly, there was determining if there was a change in the students’ abilities and/or confidence levels in general. Increasing confidence levels alone could lead to improvements in student writing. What these results hopefully prove is that there is a benefit to including and emphasizing public speaking in general education and that it should be more thoroughly and extensively included in education.

The data I was able to draw these results from consisted of the multiple-choice and short answer surveys as planned; however, I also had an unexpected pool of data to pull from.

At the end of every semester, students include a cover letter with their final portfolio where they reflect on their revision and also on their experience throughout the semester. I found that the responses I received in these letters were more candid and heartfelt than those I received in the formal survey. This was partly because the responses they gave to the public speaking aspects of the course were unsolicited. Despite the
amount of attention paid to the speech elements of my course in this project, it was still primarily a writing course with the majority of the activities and assignments focused on composition. Here is a copy of the prompt that they received for their cover letter:

- When did I learn the most in this course?
- Which activities did I find helpful? Why?
- What do I hope to use from this course in future situations?
- How has this course challenged the way I understand writing, language, or communication?
- What did I learn about myself by working in this course?
- What did I feel most proud of that I did in this course?

From this I garnered the following positive feedback: “I am glad we had town meetings as well. It taught us how to speak in public.” “Personally, one of the things that I was most proud about was my town meeting.” “The activity I enjoyed most was the town meetings.” “The activity that we were required to do that I found the most helpful was presenting our projects in front of the class.” “The activities that I found helpful in this course was how we had to share to the whole class about our recent papers or projects that we had just finished and turned in.” Finally, the very validating comment: “It was a great idea to incorporate the public speaking into this English 101 class.” I was also particularly pleased by how one student was able to discern the difference between the kind of speech taught in my course and the kind taught in a regular speech class:

Some of the most helpful activities from the course for me were the town meetings. I’ve never been much a public speaker, and have never really had any interest in learning. Most classes are just speech classes. You write a script, you give the speech. I liked being able to make a speech, but have it be so much more than just me talking from a script. I was able to present research on a topic, give
my opinions on it, and then answer questions and provide my own insight on the topic. It gives a whole new feeling to public speaking that I like a lot more than just giving speeches.

This student saw the difference between preparing and delivering a speech and practicing explaining oneself to an audience – which is what my unspoken goal was. One main difference being that as one student put it “I think it also taught us how to answer questions right off the bat. We were timed and could not go umm or let me think about it. We just had to go with the flow and be prepared.” I wasn’t training them to just stand and deliver; I wanted them to learn to express themselves fluently through spontaneous oral communication since that is how most oral communication occurs.

**Evidence of Neglect**

I was also able to gauge student response from the semester’s activities from one of the multiple-choice survey questions that asked them if they were interested in receiving further public speaking instruction. While interest remained strong at the end of the semester, there was a small decline in the strength of that interest with one student who had expressed interest at the beginning of the semester slipping into a more neutral stance. However, the one student who had responded that she was not interested at the beginning also took a neutral stance at the end so that at the end of the semester no participating students were firmly against any further public speaking instruction, as shown in Figure 2.
Figure 2: Interest in Public Speaking Instruction

I also found data to substantiate that public speaking education and exposure are neglected in most curriculums and also that they all, at one point or another, find themselves speaking for an audience of “at least three people and speaking in a more formal setting than a casual conversation.”

A little less than half of the participants had received public speaking instruction. To be fair, this is more than I had expected; however, I feel confident that the results (as seen in Figure 3) would look rather different if the students had been asked if they had ever received formal composition instruction.
Figure 3: Have You Received Any Formal Public Speaking Instruction

Despite the fact that so few have received public speaking instruction, all 11 participants claimed to speak publicly at least once a year, with only 3 responding with one a year or less. Figure 4 also shows that nearly half of the participants speak publicly daily or frequently.
Increased Confidence

One of the strongest trends I found among the data was an increase in students’ confidence with speaking before a group. As was demonstrated when one student replied to the exit survey’s question “How do you feel before, during, and after speaking publicly?” with “Before I could speak but did not overly care for it, but as the course persisted, I became more confident.”

The best example of a student’s response showing a change of heart at the end of the semester was one subject’s response to the first question, “How do you feel about public speaking?” In the first survey, he point blank replied, “It is a necessary evil.” At the end of the semester when asked the same question he responded with, “I know I can do it, and do it well. I just do best when I really know what I’m talking about, so I don’t mind it.” Public speaking went from something evil to something that wasn’t quite as
dark and menacing. The student’s reply also shows signs of an increase in confidence because he can now say it is something that he not only can do, but do well.

One important attitude change my students reported was a general loss of fear of public speaking across the semester. At the beginning of the class, some reported fear of speaking and none reported a strong absence of fear. By the end of the class, none reported fear and more expressed an absence of fear. At the very least, this shows that no one was more afraid of public speaking by the end of the semester; at the most, this shows that no one surveyed was afraid of public speaking by the end of the semester – or at least not as afraid as they were at the beginning. (Figure 5 illustrates this clear shift.)

![Image of a bar chart showing changes in fear of public speaking]

**Figure 5: I Am Afraid of Public Speaking**

Nearly every student who mentioned the speech activities in their reflection letter began by professing how scared and insecure they were about speaking in front of
people. “I started this class not very confident with my essays and speaking in front of larger groups.” “I’ve never been good at speaking in front of people, even in front of people I know.” “During the speech at first my voice was really shaken and I was nervous.” “It didn’t help that I hated talking in front of the class and giving presentations, I have been scared of talking in front of crowds for as long as I can remember.” “I challenged my communications skills every time I had to speak in front of the class and especially when I spoke for 5 minutes straight at my town meeting. At first I got really nervous before speaking in front of the class.” One student observed and took comfort in the fact that this was something most everyone was nervous about: “I remember when we started the speeches I was very nervous! Each person went up slowly, but it was kind of a relief that everyone else was just as freaked out as me. I even got the whole sweaty palms and shaky voice as I was talking. I was nervous about what to say, because it was all about myself anyways! It was the fact that I was standing in front of a bunch of people I did not know and it was the first week of college!”

Despite initial aversion to public speaking, most students expressed that they were more comfortable using oral communication than written as is illustrated by comparing Figures 6 and 7.
Figure 6: I Am Comfortable Speaking About My Ideas

Figure 7: I Am Comfortable Writing About My Ideas
While there was a general increase in confidence with both writing and speaking by the end of the semester, more students agreed that they were comfortable speaking about their ideas then agreed that they were comfortable writing about their ideas. This evidence is even stronger in Figure 8.

![Bar Chart: I Explain Myself Better When: Speaking or Writing](image)

**Figure 8:** I Explain Myself Better When: Speaking or Writing

Both at the beginning and at the end of the semester, students largely preferred speaking to writing. First off, there is a small increase in speaking confidence. However, the strongest trend in this data is that students are more comfortable speaking than writing. While this may come across as evidence that we need to continue to stay focused on composition instruction, I see it as evidence that because students can more easily explain their thinking through speech than writing, speech should be used more often as a facilitator to the writing process.
While not every student mentioned the speech activities in their reflections, most of the ones who did expressed initial fear and aversion. Not a single one who expressed this aversion gave a negative reaction to the activities.

In fact, most of the quotations given above were portions of their complete sentences. Most of those sentences ended with some statement about how that fear had now been alleviated: “but I eventually loosened up and just really let everything out and told the class how it is.” “but now I feel comfortable and don’t mind it at all.” “I got a little more comfortable with public speaking, sharing my thoughts and ideas.” “This course has also challenged me when it comes to public speaking, but I feel as if I have made a great improvement in my ability to speak in front of crowds, without getting overly nervous or shaken up.” I especially liked when they directly proved my hypothesis about increased speech practice improving students’ confidence in their ability to address an audience and in themselves in general: “I guess what I’m trying to get around to saying is that speaking in front of the class helped me gain more confidence. Not even lying when I say, I was super glad that this was one of the first things I get to experience at college.” “I am thankful for the experience as it has made me more confident when speaking in public.” “I also learned that I’m not as bad at public speaking as I thought I was. Even though I will never in my life make a career out of it, I feel as if I’ve gotten over the fear I had of presenting to a group and also have more confidence in myself when presenting.”

Lastly, I read one girl’s account of why the activities benefited her in a way that I had not foreseen:
As I was growing up I had a very bad stutter. So bad, that I was in speech classes for years in elementary school. Because of my speech impediment, I have always been insecure to read out loud or present to a group of people. Reading my paper in peer review has helped me get over my insecurities.

Lastly, one student illustrated how these activities increased student engagement and class participation: “but, let's be honest, after a few class periods my true colors started to show. After a few class sessions it was kind of hard to stop myself from speaking randomly.” While she was the only one to observe her own talkative behavior in class, she was certainly not the only case. My fellow graduate teaching assistants would complain about how only the same 2 or 3 students would speak during class discussions, and while that had been the case in some of my classes in previous semesters, it drew my attention to the fact that at least half of the students would contribute voluntarily to every class discussion.

Not only did these activities lead to greater class participation, they also took a greater interest in each other and became a community to a greater extent than any class I have taught so far: “The town meetings I liked because I got to know everyone a little better and what they love to do and something about their lives.” “I really liked hearing about what other people do and what interests they have. Some of them are really unique and I would have never thought some of my classmates would present them.” “I loved learning about each person in our class, through them teaching us something that they feel passionate or know a lot about.” “It was also helpful to watch other people's town meetings, and be able to learn from their speaking abilities or inabilities! It was also very interesting to learn about other people's interests and be able to ask questions about
them.” “Since this was such a small class we all got very close. This has a lot to do with the fact that we needed to communicate with each other a lot during class. We communicated with each other by asking questions after someone’s Town Meeting, or through peer review. It was evident that this English 101 class was very chatty.” “I also found it helpful because it helped the people within the class grow closer and become better friends because it helped us get to know each other. This was helpful when it came to peer-review or group discussions because we felt more comfortable with each other.”

In this “chatty” and “comfortable” environment,” many of the students were able to explore their own writing voice and identity. “Town meetings were something that I always looked forward to because in my opinion it expressed the person.” “It has taught me a lot about myself as well.” “I actually learned quite a bit about myself from this course. For one I learned that I am actually not too bad at speaking in public to my peers. “One thing I found interesting about the peer reviews that I have never done before, is reading it aloud to your partner. This benefitted greatly, because I was able to vocally portray the message that I was trying to get out, with the tone that I was intending.” “Something that I really loved was the town meetings. I thought it was really great that we were able to show another side of ourselves that a class of college students would not normally see.” “I was nervous it was not going to be like everyone else's town meeting. But then I started thinking, ‘Why would I want to be like everyone else?’ So, I just went with it.” “I liked doing my town meeting and sharing my likes in life and what I do for fun. I have never really shared things like that to strangers or class mates and it was cool to show them and to see how interested they were in my hobbies.”
Personal Connection Increases Engagement

A common theme in students’ reactions was how personal they felt the activities were, which made them more engaged with their own work and each other’s. When asked at the end of the semester how the experience with their topic would have been different if they had only written about it rather than also speaking on it one student replied “there would be less of an emotional impact and connection.” When asked the question “How do you feel about public speaking?” at the end of the semester a student responded with: “I enjoy public speaking very much. It can add a more personal perspective to whatever the topic is and as a result make it more relatable to an audience.” Another student who recognized the closer human connection through this form of communication remarked “I love it because I feel like I can connect with everyone in the room who is listening to my ideas.”

One of the benefits that comes from having this connection with their audience that a number of students remarked on is the immediate response they were able to receive. Another respondent “got more information through comments or questions from others” referring to the benefits that she reaps from getting to receive her audience’s reaction and feedback to what she is talking about – a benefit that isn’t as effective with writing. Another student enjoyed the immediacy of it because she was able to see how her audience reacted to her message as it was being delivered. This is similar to another student’s description of his experience when addressing an audience: “Personally I am a visual teacher so writing most likely would be harder than speaking because I can illustrate with my hands and then the audience can hear my tone and see the expression
on my face.” One participant commented that “It is always fun to express personal opinions on topics people are passionate about and to see their reaction.”

Comments about the passion and emotional connection that they experienced with speaking about their topic appeared a number of times in their feedback along with an expression of feeling like the practice created greater engagement with the assignment than if it had only been written about: “It made me feel more passionate about the topic, giving my all in order to get my point/view across.” Because of the public nature of the assignment they cared more about its presentation and quality and because of the greater physical interaction with it, they also found themselves caring more about the project. The fact that they worked harder at it is evidenced by one student’s comment that writing “seems less personal, so it’s easier.” This supports the idea I argued about writing being a private space while speech is a social interaction and when given that privacy, the communication act can be less challenging because there is less at stake. The reason for this could be because, as one student pointed out, with writing “it’d be just between me and the professor” and “I wouldn’t really care if it’s done or not.” By having that wider, more public audience they would pay more attention to the quality of their message and ensure that they knew what they were talking about.

**Exposure Increases Confidence**

Another trend that I found that also supported my hypotheses was that the frequent exposure to public speaking was a huge factor in increasing confidence. The survey also asked why they felt the way they did about public speaking. At the end of the semester, one student who had said that he didn’t “mind it too much. I actually sort of enjoy it when it is a topic that I am interested in” replied, “I need to get more comfortable
and work more on it. This semester helped a bit.” His experience with speech throughout
the semester made him more aware of where his abilities were and inspired him to
continue the progress he had made.

At the beginning of the semester, more students strongly agreed that they were
comfortable speaking about their ideas than at the end; however, there was an increase in
students who agreed and a decrease in neutrality, as can be seen in Figure 9. My theory
about the lower number for strongly agreeing is that the semester of exposure to speech
gave them a more realistic perspective on their strengths and comfort level with speech.
They were still comfortable with the practice, but they were more aware of their
struggles.

![I Am Comfortable Speaking about My Ideas](image)

**Figure 9:** I Am Comfortable Speaking About My Ideas
Not to mention six of the fourteen respondents explained that their confidence had increased “just because of the practice,” which supports my hypothesis of increased exposure increasing confidence in public speaking.

Their feedback helps support my hypothesis that frequent exposure to public speaking as opposed to one required class can bring improvement to their new skills: “I am really quite bad at speaking and presenting in front of any group of people, and I felt that since we repeated this so often that by the time the class was over, I felt comfortable in front of the class and talking about my recent works.” “Making us present after each project made me slightly more comfortable when speaking to an audience.” “But since we did it so much in this class I began to get over that fear. Then towards the end it wasn’t a big deal at all I just got up there and said what I needed to say, so in a way this class helped conquer my fear of public speaking.” “I know that if I continue to practice this it will become so easy to me,” “I believe the only way to get over that fear is by constantly being thrown into that situation. We had to present several times and each time I was shaky and nervous but I improved each time,” and finally “I really do not mind it if I practice. If someone puts me on the spot that is when I freak out.” It is the spontaneous speech that students struggle with and that they need practice with rather than preparing and delivering a pre-written speech.

Lastly, several students also made allusions to how the speech skills they learned in our class would help them in the future or that they could see the future application in the skill: “The presentations and public speaking exercises forced me to learn and be comfortable talking about a topic I’ve researched or written about, which will be a huge advantage for me in the future.” “I have a feeling I am going to be making a few
presentations in this part of my life.” “Also making us present after each project made me
slightly more comfortable when speaking to an audience, which will be handy all my
life.” “I hope to use my newfound ability to speak in front of groups in my future courses,
and jobs. This trait can be used in all of life, and I hope I can only expand on it from
here.” “And I know that if I continue to practice this it will become so easy to me by the
time I am an athletic director.” “I will take what I learned from this course and apply it to
job interviews or resumes because through this class I learned how to better communicate
my ideas.” “This would work in a job interview because you are presenting yourself
especially and if you can’t tell and show that person who you are in that short amount of
time you are not going to get the job. I have had a lot of job interviews and I have always
struggled with this. But because we did have to stand up in front of the class and present
our ideas, and explain why we chose to do what we did, and what we learned from it; I
think I will be better at doing that in a more professional setting.” Finally, one student
supported my earlier assertions about how being able to communicate effectively through
speech can make a person a better member of society and the stuff leaders are made of:
“A well-spoken person will always get people's attention,” and “People are much more
receptive to well thought out, well-spoken points that are supported by fact and reason.”

Complicates Thinking and Deepens Understanding

One of my students felt that her confidence had increased because she had a
“more articulated opinion.” This response reminds me of Gerry Brookes quoting a
visiting Chinese instructor in “Town Meetings: A Strategy for Including Speaking in a
Writing Classroom”: “One of the needs of college students, especially first-year ones is
to know what they think” (88).
Survey data conveyed an increase in students’ belief that speaking about a topic increases understanding of it as can be seen in Figure 10. Hopefully, this increase occurred because the increased exposure they experienced to such activities throughout the semester helped them to better learn what they were writing about.

![It Helps Me Understand What I Am Writing If I Talk about It](image)

**Figure 10:** It Helps Me Understand What I Am Writing If I Talk about It

When asked if their writing experience would have been different had they only written about their topic instead of speaking as well, the most common response was along the lines of there would “be a lot less depth,” “I would be less familiar with everything I wrote about,” and “I wouldn’t get that extra perspective.”

At the beginning of the semester, I also asked how they felt about a topic after speaking about it. The responses I received were along the lines of “informed,” “like I knew the topic better,” “I would still feel like I knew the topic, but not as smart,” and “it would have been less informative.” Meaning that speaking about a topic at least made
them feel more confident and knowledgeable about what they had been thinking, researching, and writing about.

The other half of the responses indicated that talking about their topic deepened their thinking. For instance, “I don’t just talk; I am in deep thought about every detail we talk about so as I talk I might come up with new concepts never mentioned or thought about before,” and “It helped me better understand what I was talking about and also helped me see it in new ways.” One student gave an interesting insight into why this happens for students: “Thinking and speaking go hand in hand with me so the more I talk about it the more I think about different scenarios and perspectives so I would say it increases my thought processes.” Another reason given was that by delivering a product orally the presenter felt more like a teacher than a student writer: “It helped me understand it better because in a way I was having to teach it when I presented it to a class.” In a similar vein, another student replied that “when I would talk/teach, I learned the content better.”

Several comments addressed how this changed the way they thought about their ideas. For instance, the student with the stutter explained that “Having to present in front of the entire class every unit has helped me practice thinking through my thoughts carefully before I say them, which eliminates my stutter, for the most part.” One student recognized the situation alluded to in Public Speaking as a Liberal Art by John F. Wilson and Carroll C. Arnold. They explain that we learn to speak “unself-conscious[ly]. So naturally enough, we take our speech habits for granted until something happens that makes us see our talk is not producing the effects we want it to. Then comes the sense that ‘communication has broken down,’ and that sense is not rare” (10). My student
explained the lesson that she learned about oral communication during this course: “you can’t just say something and expect people to understand what you are saying. You need to articulate your ideas.” Another student expressed how the end of unit presentations challenged her critical thinking: “I had also never had to explain to people why I wrote about what I wrote about, and that was a hard adjustment in the beginning.”

When posed the question at the beginning of the semester, “Do you think speaking increased, decreased, or had no effect on your thinking on the subject?,” a couple students found that it substantiated their understanding: “I felt like I knew the topic better,” “Increased, because it is reinforced,” and “It increased. The speech was more of a self-reflection period for me.”

An unexpected remark was “I feel as if I wouldn’t have gained as much from it, and probably forgotten about it easier.” This observation supports the assertion that speech aids the learning process – and could possibly increase retention of information. Also, that public speaking anxiety that is so common among students could end up helping them by leaving a greater emotional connection with the material and thereby increasing its retention.

An additional trend that appeared in the student responses was how talking about the topic before or during the writing process helped them organize their thoughts both mentally and on paper: “Public speaking is a fantastic form of teaching because individuals learn to articulate their opinions in an organized way.” She is saying a few interesting things here: first, it helps individuals with organizing their ideas and figuring out how to articulate their opinions. Also, “It helped clarify my thoughts and give me some direction on the subject,” “By talking about my topic, I was better able to condense
and organize my opinions,” “It helped me reorganize the thought process,” “It might have made my papers less organized [if I only wrote about the topic],” and “When writing, I usually just wrote facts but speaking helped me explain it and break it down.”

Aids the Writing Process

While sorting through my students’ survey for useable material, I found that most of the quotations I would highlight were from the end of the semester surveys. The beginning of the semester surveys tended to be shorter and less descriptive, lending very little insight into the feelings behind the answers. Any number of factors could be a contributor to this occurrence; however, it is clear that in the months between, they gained greater ability to express themselves with detail and analysis.

A couple of students demonstrated how the use of both speech and writing in a course affected their skill in each. “In learning to write with a clear, concise voice in my papers, I've learned to speak in a more clear and concise way as well.” “When I make points in conversation, I've found myself structuring my sentences while speaking like I have learned to in my writing.”

A few students also referred to talking about the material making the writing process easier: “It would have been harder and more horrible [sic],” and “if I don’t talk about the ideas aloud then it would be harder for me to write.” Or in this student’s case, it can accelerate the thinking and writing process: “Most likely I would have gotten the same result [if he had only written about the topic], just would have taken more time. By talking about it, I was able to more fluently express my ideas on paper, as they had already been better formulated via speaking. Helped to get fluency and wording down up front instead of trying to correct it.”
It also made the writing process easier by helping them see new perspectives and connections than what they had developed with just thinking and writing. (Did talking before or during the writing process effect your thinking?) “Yes, very much so. It helps me get ideas about what to do with the paper”, “Yes, because I think more ideas start to form when talking about it”, and “It gave me new ideas because when I talk I don’t stop a lot and words just flow out of my mouth and my true feelings show.”
CONCLUSION

When I first got the idea for this thesis, I felt struck and there may have been a gong sounding somewhere. I’m still not sure why it spoke to me so resoundingly. It may have been because I was still struggling through my first year of teaching and feeling like I had missed some vital instruction somewhere along the line that was supposed to make addressing a classroom of students a more doable task. It might have been because I felt so strongly opposed to what I felt Collin Brooke was arguing and that I had witnessed others profess before as well: that one medium had decreased the need for another. It may have been because I was still haunted by the dismal presentations my first 101 class had put me and their classmates through the semester before. It may have just been that I wished someone had fought this fight before I had gone through my education. I wish someone had made me practice more before I was thrust behind a podium (which I still struggle to come out from behind while teaching). Mostly, it was because I had finally found a topic I wanted to fight for.

It was exhilarating when I began to research and found there were scores of scholars who felt the same way I did. I found more support than I could use to substantiate that oral communication was a suffering field in our world. And it wasn’t just scholars and instructors; it was also employers and other members of society who weren’t naturally paying attention to the populace’s ability in this area.
It seems especially absurd that speaking instruction should be so neglected in the composition and rhetoric field when the basis of most composition instruction comes from ancient rhetorical pedagogies that were used in speech instruction. The reasons behind this neglect became apparent when I began discussing it with fellow graduate students in my field. The general consensus was a shrug, an awkward pause, and then the question, “haven’t you ever heard of a speech course?”

It is neglected because of that shrug. The majority of people don’t think it’s important anymore unless you’re going to be a politician or a motivational speaker. Addressing scores of people is not the only time that a speaker has an audience. An audience could be a classroom full of students, a future employer, a group of friends, the customers at one’s place of business, etc. The definition that I landed on for public speech is speaking to anyone beyond oneself. Any time a person needs to translate their inner dialogue into outer dialogue. This definition and the skills needed to carry it out apply to a far wider margin of people than those running for office.

Despite all the technological advances and media through which we can present ourselves, there is nothing more honest and vulnerable and potentially impressive than the presentation of the actual self with voice and mannerisms. It is communication’s heart and soul, not its appendix.

As for that question often posed to me about the required speech course, I’ve never taken or been required to take that course. The four universities I’ve attended have all had stringent rules for the taking of basic composition courses; so much so that I actually had to take the same class twice when I transferred because my new school required two basic composition courses in contrast to the university I was coming from.
that only required one. However, throughout my journey as a transfer student with the wide variety of course requirements that different schools had and the frequent battles that I had to fight through the years over course requirement disputes, not once was the issue of a public speech course brought up. Some may say it would depend on my major. Well, I wasn’t a math major. I was an English major – the field where rhetoric has chosen to lay its head. I’ve had to take four foreign language courses, but by the end of my undergraduate work the most public speaking I’d had to do was limited to that once a semester five-minute presentation. This is an English undergraduate career that spanned three universities in three different states.

In addition to the fact that the required speaking course isn’t nearly as required as composition, I believe that the best way to truly help someone improve their public speaking ability is to have frequent practice and exposure with the skill. This is supported by many scholars and SAC and SACesque programs in the field, as well as by the participants in my study after they experienced a semester of frequent public speaking.

I also don’t think it is necessary for speech to have its own course in order to be effective. Speech should be a learning tool for any and all subjects. Studies have shown that speaking about a subject increasing understanding and retention of whatever it is the students are speaking about. And more specifically to composition, it can help students expand their ideas, find their voice, improve their grammar, gain greater understanding of audience, better organize their thoughts, and improve their confidence.

The fight that I undertook in this thesis is for the greater use of speech as a learning tool in all subject areas for the sake of both improved oral communication skills and for the sake of improved learning in any subject that chooses to use the tool. But this
call is especially strong to the composition studies because delivery is their ancestor and “there can be no complete rhetoric without a consideration of all five of its canons. All of them… are necessary for a full understanding of a communication act, whether is it written [or] spoken” (Reynolds vii).
REFERENCES


Entrance Multiple Choice and Short-Answer Survey
**Question 1**

Indicate your gender:

- Male
- Female

**Question 2**

I am afraid of public speaking.

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 3**

I am comfortable with speaking about my ideas.

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 4**

I am comfortable with writing my ideas.

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree
### Question 5
I explain myself better when

- 1. Speaking
- 2. Writing

### Question 6
It helps me understand what I am writing if I talk about it.

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

### Question 7
How often do you speak publicly? (Stand in front of at least three people and speak in a more formal setting than a casual conversation.)

- Almost daily
- Frequently
- A few times a year
- Once in a while (once a year or less)
- Maybe once or twice in my life
- Never

### Question 8
Have you received any formal public speaking instruction?

- Yes
- No

### Question 9
If so, briefly describe the instruction and why you signed up for it.
Public Speaking Reflection

• How do you feel about public speaking?
• Why do you feel that way?
• How much public speaking have you done in your life.
• How did you feel before, during and after speaking?
• How did you feel about the topic after speaking about it?
• How would it have been different if you had only written about it?
• Do you think speaking increased, decreased, or had no effect on your thinking on the subject? Explain your answer.
• What makes you more confident about speaking publicly?
APPENDIX b

Exit Multiple Choice and Short-Answer Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2</th>
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<td>I am afraid of public speaking.</td>
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<th>Question 3</th>
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<td>I am comfortable with speaking about my ideas.</td>
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<th>Question 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with writing my ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question 5

I explain myself better when

- 1. Speaking
- 2. Writing

### Question 6

It helps me understand what I am writing if I talk about it.

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

### Question 10

I wish I was a better public speaker:

- Yes
- No

### Question 11

I would be interested in receiving further instruction in public speaking:

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree
Public Speaking Reflection

• How do you feel about public speaking?
• Why do you feel that way?
• How do you feel before, during and after speaking publicly?
• Do you feel that talking about your essay topic before or during writing had any effect on your thinking on the subject? Explain your answer.
• Would it have been different if you had only written about it?
• Has your confidence in public speaking increased, decreased or not changed since the beginning of this semester? Explain your answer.
• Has your confidence in writing increased, decreased or not changed since the beginning of this semester? Explain your answer.