

The mechanics of creating a sanctuary for learning are easy to state, difficult to apply. Knowledge and wisdom must be valued, both in the general and particular sense. We should make no apologies for being enthusiastic about what we know and what we do not know. If we cannot maintain that kind of enthusiasm or if we find ourselves constantly expressing excuses about our "lack of time" or our students "growing incompetence," perhaps we ought to take a sabbatical from teaching or teach something new, to rekindle our fire.

The sanctuary of learning is a place where everyone's opinion is important — not right, but important. This does not require only that students listen to the instructor; that is easy given the authoritative nature of the professor-student relationship. It demands that we create an atmosphere where students listen to one another, where, in the learning process, they regard each others' opinions as important. In the sanctuary of learning there are no stupid questions. The "haven of trust" is one where teacher and student alike ought not fear the "I don't know." This is not an excuse for flippancy; rather it is an admission that we all are seekers. In a purely mechanical sense, if a teacher is capable of creating a community of trust where students are not fearful of asking questions, the teacher will know more readily what is being communicated and what is not. Finally, the sanctuary of learning must allow the unpredictable, in at least two ways. We are all of us bound, for the most part, by our course subject matter; but we should interpret those boundaries carefully. The urge to "cover the material" at the expense of useful and meaningful inquiry down an unfamiliar path is a deadening experience, for student and teacher alike. Second, and more important, we should allow the unpredictable in terms of the capacities of our students. The phenomenon of allowing expectations to govern judgement of performance is well known. It too has a deadening effect. The sanctuary as the unpredictable is open always to the renewing capacity of the human being. It acknowledges the capacity for change and difference, perhaps even growth.

If we are successful in finding the techniques and methods that express our passionate concern for knowledge and wisdom, i.e., virtue, no matter what our model or metaphor of teaching is like, then we will have experienced the joy of teaching. Joy, however, connotes rewards; and Socrates was condemned to death by his fellow citizens. That other teacher worth emulating, the dangerous innocent from Galilee, was crucified. It is worth noting that teaching is a "dangerous profession." This knowledge should not make us timid. It should reinforce our awareness of the importance of teaching. Certainly the university environment is not altogether conducive to making teaching a joyous endeavor. That ought not make us bitter; it merely reinforces our knowledge of the tendency of institutions to cut off possibilities for creativity. Where, then, is the joy? Socrates spoke to that issue as well. If teaching is really a calling, a passion and a joy, it becomes its own reward. One cannot buy a home with that nor send one's children to college with it; but one's soul can rest on it!

# What Do YOU Communicate?

Waldo W. Braden

In this paper I wish to discuss some of the complexities that take place when a teacher talks to students. Finding the answers to the mystery of any communication is as challenging today as it was when the ancient Greeks first attempted to perfect the art in fifth century B.C. What occurs in the teacher-student confrontation, like any other kind of communication, is complex, complicated, and difficult to describe. No one, not even experts in the College of Education, has discovered how to punch the variables into a great computer, to program the results, and to feed them back to solve the problems of teachers who are lazy, incompetent, unprofessional, reluctant, or misplaced. Usually these types have much more than communication problems and require counsel from departmental chairmen or deans.

My primary concern in this paper is the improving of your communication. Ask yourself the simple question: What do I communicate when I face students? The question is not, how do you communicate, but WHAT! Before I conclude I will return to this query.

## Five Obstacles

A good place to start our search for answers is to look at five common types of obstacles that impede effectiveness in the classroom. They are prevalent in many forms, in many departments as well as in the political forum.

**1.** The first obstacle I call the elitism fallacy. The intellectual and particularly the college professor is prone to conclude that research, careful analysis, and deep thought produce a successful communicator. Once the elitist is on his feet, he assumes that profundity will automatically issue forth in torrents. Living in an ivory tower, he is likely to feel that he has a corner on answers to complex social, political, and professional problems. He is the type who frequently complains, why won't they just seek my advice about solving the problems? Of course the elitist may not take time to make his observations meaningful even to colleagues in his own field.

**2.** The second obstacle I label the lecture fallacy. To you who have spent hundreds of hours in classrooms either as a student or a teacher, there should be little need to explain this obstacle. You have probably seen a professor snarf at work, droning away over his stale notes. He views teaching as a one way street that moves from his manuscript to the student's notebook or recorder. Often he mumbles on, paying little attention to

Braden is the Boyd Professor Emeritus of Speech, Louisiana State University, 535 Ursulin Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808. This paper was delivered at the 27th annual NACTA Conference on his campus June 7-10, 1981.

his listeners. And of course, intent upon his lecture, he seldom looks up from the lectern, departs from his manuscript, or invites questions because he wants nothing to cut into his recital or to disturb his concentration. During these "reading hours," his students most likely find time to sleep, to read newspapers, or just daydream.

**3.** The third obstacle I have named the miraculous uplifting fallacy. Simply stated this posture requires the student to adjust to the teacher, not the teacher to the student. Ralph Waldo Emerson propounded this theory when he said, "As soon as you become yourself dilated with a thought, you carry men with you as by a miraculous uplifting." Perhaps on the lyceum platform Emerson could practice this approach, although it is reported that he did put persons to sleep when he carefully read his abstract thoughts. Miraculous uplifting starts with the conclusion that the teacher has thoughts superior to those of his listeners who therefore are obligated to bring themselves up into his rarefied realm. Of course, a professor may aim his efforts at a select circle who understand his musings and technical jargon. He considers that adapting his remarks to a mere student or anyone else of lesser station is a blow to his academic status. In fact, the big ego divines that those who hear him are fortunate just to be in his presence.

**4.** The fourth obstacle I suggest is the oratorical fallacy. Frankly, I encounter this one in a fast talker, who is a kind of amateur orator, but many others belong to the club. Do you know of someone who "likes to hear himself talk," who is in love with the sound of his own voice? The incessant talker may run on and on, dominating the conversation and smothering his companions in a flood of verbiage. He never permits the listeners to react or to catch up in their notetaking. At the more formal level, he may become an angry oracle or preacher who spouts on, whether anyone is listening or not. He may even vent his enthusiasm in a display of vocabulary, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

**5.** The fifth obstacle I term the gullability fallacy. This one substitutes entertainment for teaching. It strives for immediate overt response over learning and attitude development. Cynical about the ability of students to comprehend and discern, the pressure boy devises strategies to attract attention and please. He is likely to talk around difficult issues. He loads his presentations with glittering generalities, stories, and advice about all manner of problems outside his subject matter. He practices double talk and soap opera sentiment. In a popularity contest for FTE's, this type will attract students who may listen and laugh, but who will leave the class no richer than when they entered.

You will note that in each of my categories I have used the word **fallacy**. By this word I mean a notion that is deceptive, misleading, or false. You ask, "notion" about what? In each of the five obstacles the problem starts with the teacher who deceives himself because he

does not see himself as others view him. He probably regards himself as a superior person with rare insight, and at the same time he holds a low opinion of his students. Or he may have an unrealistic view of teacher-student relationship. Perhaps he dreams of being what Plato called a philosopher king. This is the very stuff that snobbery is made of, and in its extreme it produces classroom autocrats.

These obstacles become warnings to students to beware. Once alerted by manner or sign, they turn off the teacher and become unenthusiastic about his subject matter.

Let me now ask you a personal question: do you hold to any of the fallacies? Let me repeat my earlier question: what do you communicate? My emphasis is still upon **what**. Do you realize that what you speak louder than what you say? I am referring to those nuances — sometimes almost subliminal — that a teacher gives off, that make a student sense whether the communicator is or is not worthy of consideration, trust, or respect. Actually what the teacher offers may be well researched, worthwhile, and even profound; but the listener detects certain warning signs that make him hold back. One speech authority observes that, "It is virtually impossible to escape the tales minimal cues tell us" because we are "constantly excluding these small fleeting stimuli."

### Communication Is

What does communication involve? It is multi-dimensional in that it encompasses many aspects and often is influenced by insignificant details, so minor that they go almost unnoticed. Your communication includes the sum total of the many elements that come together when you talk with others, when confrontation takes place. Let me enumerate. It involves the context — the classroom or wherever you teach. It involves all the senses — not just words and voice, but modes of dress, characteristic expressions, an expressive face, shifts of posture, a nervous laugh, a careless mistake in grammar, a twinge of timidity, some subtle identifications, unsaid moods, black board technique, and on and on.

Remember communication involves the total impression that you make on the listener. Now an important reminder: it is the impression that you stir up in the heads of the students, for that is where meaning resides, not in a title, in a word, a book, or a gimmick, but with the listener who observes, interprets, and reacts.

The answer to the question, what do you communicate, is found in the Greek concept of **ethos** or what has been translated as ethical appeal. In the **Rhetoric**, Aristotle discusses this concept at length, calling it the most important aspect of persuasion. It encompasses how the listener **perceives** the speaker. Herein is an important point: it is not what the speaker is, or thinks he is, but how he is perceived "in the heads of the listeners."

The wise old Greek suggested that **ethos** includes the listener's view of the (1) speaker's intelligence (common sense), (2) his good character, and (3) his good will.

How are these three elements reflected in the classroom?

1. **Intelligence** of course reflects your command of your subject and your expertness in your field, but it also is suggested by your familiarity with the great world beyond the classroom. Students respond to the teacher who relates his materials to other fields and who also seems at ease in discussing other topics.

2. **Good character** is associated with the virtues: goodness and morality. In the classroom the students place a high premium upon objectivity, fairness, forthrightness, promptness, and compassion.

3. **Good will** is suggested in your attitudes toward your students: attempts to understand the student's point of view, concerns about the student's welfare, how you answer questions, enthusiasm about your subject, and being available for conferences.

A few years ago the LSU Petroleum Engineering Department had an outstanding student who showed great promise — at least the faculty thought so. Among the graduates that year, he found the top job. Six months later he was fired. One of his professors rushed over to the speech department seeking a remedy. Did the young engineer have a communication problem? It seemed the oil men had found the young engineer arrogant. I would say that he lacked **ethos**. When you lose common touch, lose sight of the worth of others, lose compassion for others, then you are likely to fail as a communicator. Your students will find you out and turn you off. My message is found in these words: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

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# Improving Instruction LSU Style!!!

Martha Collins Cheek

Improving instruction on a university campus is a topic continuously discussed throughout the country. Unfortunately, at many universities, little action is taken following many faculty and administrative conversations. At Louisiana State University, the same situation existed — there were numerous discussions regarding the need for some in-service program to help the faculty improve their teaching skills but nothing happened. However, when the faculty senate adopted this interest in teaching as a special concern and requested assistance from the administration to develop a plan for providing such in-service, changes began to occur.

More meetings, more discussions, and finally in 1978, a plan was developed for offering faculty members information on techniques for improving their classroom instruction. The recommendations of this interdepartment committee were specific, based on much faculty input, and careful deliberation. The following suggestions were included in the recommendations presented to the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

- A course entitled "Faculty Enrichment" should be offered through the office of the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs.
- The course should not be attached directly to any college or department.
- The course should be offered for three semester hours of graduate credit and open to faculty members as well as doctoral students.
- Participants may elect to enroll in the course for graduate credit, an audit, or just sit in on the classes without registering.
- Resource persons from throughout the university should be invited to serve as leaders for

the class with a coordinator designated by the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

- Persons participating in at least two-thirds of the sessions would receive a letter of commendation from the Vice-Chancellor. Copies of such letters should be sent to the participants' deans and chairmen.
- The contents of the course should emphasize teaching with a proposed course outline included with these recommendations.

Following these recommendations and using the proposed course outline, the Vice-Chancellor and appropriate university committees approved the offering of a course for faculty enrichment of teaching skills to be known as University (UNIV) 7000!

## What Next?

In the Fall of 1978, the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs appointed the coordinator for UNIV 7000 and directed that the course be offered for the first time in the Spring Semester 1979.

With the committee's course outline as a guide, resource persons were identified from throughout the university. The course was advertised via a variety of means; and at spring registration, twenty-six faculty members elected to become involved with the class — one for credit, three to audit, and twenty-two just to sit in! The course participants were enthusiastic about the classes, provided continuous input regarding changes needed in the course, suggested speakers, and served to advise the coordinator on all aspects of this new course. At the conclusion of this first semester experiment, twenty of the twenty-six participants received letters of commendation, the course outline was revised, and a campus survey made to determine if, in fact, spring was the best semester for this once a year course.

With the survey findings indicating a desire for the course each semester combined with the advice of the first

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Cheek is associate professor of Education and course coordinator at the Louisiana State University. This paper was delivered during the 27th annual NACTA Conference held on the Louisiana State University campus at Baton Rouge, LA, June 7-10, 1981.