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A Photographic Study of the Use of Intensity by Superior Speakers

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A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE USE OF INTENSITY BY SUPERIOR SPEAKERS

MAX D. STEER AND JOSEPH TIFFIN

This report covers the first study in a series now being made for the purpose of determining the basic characteristics of superior speech.

Six superior speakers were selected, and a sampling of their speech was recorded on phonograph records. A photographic technique using a vacuum tube voltmeter was employed to determine the use of intensity by the performers. A grammatical analysis was made of the speech content for each speaker. The results obtained warranted the following conclusions:

1. *Intensity of various parts of speech.* On the basis of the amount of intensity employed, the various parts of speech are ranked in this order: (a) adverbs, (b) nouns and adjectives, (c) verbs and pronouns, (d) prepositions, conjunctions, and articles.
2. *Intensity variability.* (a) Superior speakers employ, on the average, a range in syllabic power of approximately 20 decibels; (b) variability of intensity as indicated by a measure of standard deviation is 4.4 decibels for the speech of the subjects in this experiment. If we may consider these performers as superior speakers, then these findings are in accordance with Murray and Tiffin and others who have pointed out that the superior voice is highly flexible in intensity.

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