



Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing

Peter Elbow

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Since the publication of his groundbreaking books *Writing Without Teachers* and *Writing with Power*, Peter Elbow has revolutionized how people think about writing. Now, in *Vernacular Eloquence*, he makes a vital new contribution to both practice and theory. The core idea is simple: we can enlist virtues from the language activity most people find easiest-speaking-for the language activity most people find hardest-writing. Speech, with its spontaneity, naturalness of expression, and fluidity of thought, has many overlooked linguistic and rhetorical merits. Through several easy to employ techniques, writers can marshal this "wisdom of the tongue" to produce stronger, clearer, more natural writing.

This simple idea, it turns out, has deep repercussions. Our culture of literacy, Elbow argues, functions as though it were a plot against the spoken voice, the human body, vernacular language, and those without privilege-making it harder than necessary to write with comfort or power. Giving speech a central role in writing overturns many empty preconceptions. It causes readers to think critically about the relationship between speech, writing, and our notion of literacy. Developing the political implications behind Elbow's previous books, *Vernacular Eloquence* makes a compelling case that strengthening writing and democratizing it go hand in hand.

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