

Aphasia Insights!

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“I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact that *we can know more than we can tell.*”

The Tacit Dimension, pp. 4.

Michael Polanyi
(3/11/1891-2/22/1976)

He has made contributions to the theory of knowledge and philosophy of science and the identification of the structure of tacit knowing.

Tacit knowing (attributed by Michael Polanyi) stated that knowledge that cannot be adequately articulated by verbal means, and that all knowledge is rooted in tacit knowledge.

Stroke Educator, Inc. is committed to educating the wider public about stroke and the 50 state “*Aim High for Aphasia!*” Aphasia Awareness Campaign.

Stroke Educator, Inc.
541 Domenico Circle
St. Augustine, FL 32086
207-798-1449

tbroussa@comcast.net
www.strokeeducator.com

The Organic Process of Aphasia Recovery in Slow Motion: Seeing What Can't Be Seen.

By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.

I was in the Navy and stationed in USS *Sam Rayburn* (SSBN-635). I was the Supply Officer for what we called, “Sammy R.” Our submarine was homeported in New London, CT, but we sailed from our forward

base to submarine tenders that were located at either Holy Loch, Scotland, or Rota, Spain. We had sailed from both of them.

Another sub, the USS *Will Rogers* (SSBN-659)

docked with us for a few days. A friend of mine was also the Supply Officer for the *Will Rogers*. He invited me to visit for a meal and watch some old films about Will Rogers, the humorist. I had always liked Will Rogers and still have the book, *The Value of Humor: The Story of Will Rogers*.

Rogers had been working with a rope for many years as a cowboy circus performer, in vaudeville and

in the movies. He was incredibly skilled at roping a horse, a man, a man on a horse, and sometimes a duck. He was so quick that many people in the audience couldn't see what he had done. The cow was roped before anybody could see what had happened.

Will Rogers' audience couldn't appreciate his skill. Some even asked for a refund. It looked like a trick and they wanted their money back.



Will Rogers and his rope (Google).

Will Rogers started to invest in slow-motion films for that very reason. He wanted his audience to be able to see what was actually happening. Roping the beak of a duck while galloping full speed on a horse is almost impossible to see. But Rogers could do it, and more. The image of

seeing what couldn't be seen, stuck with me.

As the decades went by, I continued to use the metaphor of Will Rogers' thoughts about “seeing what can't be seen,” teaching people about the process of career development and constant change. I also bought some of Rogers' films plus several flip books for my workshops when I visited the Will Rogers Memorial Museum in Claremont, Oklahoma.

The flip books were called “thumb cinemas” and were originally called “kineographs.” Flipping the pages looked like tiny movies.

I used flip books in my career workshops. I would separate the pages and tape them randomly on the wall. The job was to put them back in order. I asked the class to review the individual images and look for similarities and differences between them. By the end of the exercise, the flip book “movies” were usually back in order.

The students had to think through the problems on their own. They had to *experience* the problem. I didn’t know it at the time, but that was the way it felt to me after my stroke. I had to *experience* what was happening to me without really *knowing* what was happening inside me.

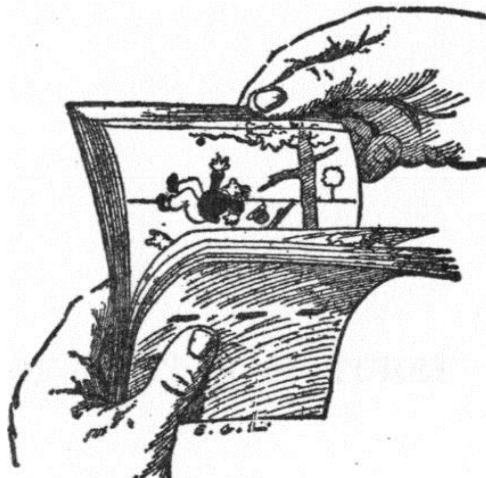
The students took notes and created a list of factors that sounded like they had been provided by a class of speech-language pathologists. My class listed memory, sequence, chunking, noticeable changes, images, timing, gaps, awareness, and networks.

The same thing happened to me with my stroke. I kept track of my life by using my diary, recording my voice, and took hundreds of pictures of the world around me. Like my students, I had a sense of awareness about certain activities that could be useful, but without any conscious direction.

Soon enough, the students began to see that there was a beginning,

middle and end to the flip book. The students looked for small differences and began to see the sequence of each of the images *within* the story of the flip book.

As they studied each image, they noticed the gradual changes *between* images that felt right. When the changes were too drastic, they could tell that the sequence was wrong. They could just *feel* it.



Kineograph, 1886 Flip book
(Wikipedia Commons).

After my stroke, I too began to *tell* that something was wrong. I couldn’t *describe* my deficits until the deficits started to resolve themselves on their own. I could *feel* it happening but still couldn’t explain it or even express my awareness of it to anyone else.

The “thumb cinema” and flip books were the start of motion pictures. Ironically, as soon as real movies started, Will Rogers saw slow-motion movies as the way for people to see what they had never seen before. His lariat took on a life of its own that others could finally see too.

I grew up with the flip book metaphor through Will Rogers’ slow-motion films and always wanted to understand how changes exist below the threshold of awareness in what is often called “tacit knowledge.”

It wasn’t until my stroke and aphasia when I began to experience and observe the changes and activities in my brain that I had never seen before.

I was beginning to understand the organic process of aphasia recovery and the part that self-therapy and self-motivation played.

Signed: *The Johnny Appleseed of Aphasia Awareness.*