
CHAPTER 7

Increasing Teacher Influence Through Immediacy

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The primary goal, or desired outcome, of educational systems in the United States culture is student learning. What people include in their definition of student "learning" varies but some of the aspects that are common include mastery of certain psychomotor behaviors, acquisition of many levels of cognitive understanding and synthesis, and development of various feelings, attitudes, and values. The function of the teacher in such systems is to create environments within which the probability of the desired achievements is enhanced.

Teacher power, then, is not an end-state; rather, it is a factor that, we believe, influences the achievement of the primary goal of the educational system. Many different views of the teacher's role in the learning process have been advanced and some of the more notable ones have been discussed in previous chapters. All have a common root assumption: The teacher will have sufficient power to influence the students to engage in the behaviors necessary to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

In cooperation with several of our colleagues and graduate students, we have worked with the question of power in organizations, classrooms, and marriages for over a decade. We have probed the impact of the various bases of power (see chapters 1 and 4) and the communicative messages that might be called into play to draw upon those bases of power (see chapter 5). We have examined outcomes such as job satisfaction, affective learning, cognitive learning, and marital satisfaction. We believe certain generalizations can be drawn from the results of this work. Some of these include:

1. Virtually all bases of power can be used effectively to get people to do what we want, so long as
 - a. we are willing to watch them do it, and
 - b. we do not care what they think of us afterward.
2. Both of the above conditions are seldom present outside of prisons.
3. The only power one person has over another is the power granted by the other person.
4. Affinity (liking, loving, admiring, respecting—see chapter 8) in large part determines the amount of power one person grants another.
5. People usually will comply with, rather than resist, reasonable instructions or requests if they
 - a. like, respect, admire their supervisor
 - b. like, respect, admire their teacher
 - c. love their spouse

The central place of affinity in human communication was first articulated by McCroskey and Wheelless (1976, pp. 21–22, 230–260) when they advanced the development of affinity as the first function of communication and discussed its central role in conflict management and avoidance. Bell and Daly (1984) went far beyond the initial attempt of McCroskey and Wheelless to identify ways in which people might use communication to develop affinity with others. Their typology of affinity-seeking techniques included 25 ways people might try to get others to like them. Later work based on their efforts suggest a central role for affinity in the classroom (see chapter 8).

Of particular importance to the present discussion is the fact that Bell and Daly (1984) included use of nonverbal immediacy cues as one of their 25 affinity-seeking techniques. This inclusion suggests we should bring together three lines of research—the power in the classroom studies, the affinity studies, and the series of studies relating to immediacy in the classroom. Before we do so, let us trace the research relating to immediacy in the classroom so that we may determine where that research places us as this point.

EARLY RESEARCH ON IMMEDIACY IN INSTRUCTION

The early work on immediacy in instruction was an outgrowth of efforts by faculty and students at West Virginia University to bring together the research literature in the field of communication with that in the field of

education which was specifically directed toward identifying teacher behaviors associated with effective classroom instruction. As a function of unreasonable demands of her dissertation advisor (and senior author of this chapter), Janis F. Andersen attempted to explain, in terms familiar to researchers in communication, what was then (early to mid-1970s) available in the education literature concerning communication behaviors believed to be associated with effective teaching.

This was not a simple task, and Andersen spent several months reading without overcoming a growing feeling of frustration. She felt there was a common thread in much of the literature, but identification of that thread was most difficult. Finally, as a function of her then-current work in nonverbal communication, she proposed the construct of "nonverbal immediacy" as representing what she believed the research in education was finding to be important. This construct was an outgrowth of work by Mehrabian (1971) in the interpersonal arena.

Andersen (1978) chose to define immediacy as behaviors that "enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another," a definition first employed by Mehrabian (1969). She then drew on literature from the fields of communication and education to elaborate on that definition and demonstrate that research already existed to indicate positive impact of several nonverbal immediacy behaviors of teachers on classroom outcomes (Andersen, 1978, 1979; Andersen & Andersen, 1982).

Andersen's dissertation was the seminal research effort in this area not only because she presented the basic theoretical explanation for the impact of immediacy in instruction but also because she developed an observational methodology for measuring immediacy levels of teachers, the Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy (BII) scale. She found this measure to be reliable and to have predictive validity and, of considerable importance to later work, she found that carefully trained observers' scores on the instrument correlated highly with scores provided by untrained students enrolled in the targeted courses.

The importance of the BII scale cannot be overemphasized. It was composed of low-inference items relating to teacher behaviors. Hence, the face validity of the measure is extremely high. She also employed two sets of bipolar scales (one composed of five items, the other four items, which McCroskey had used as measures of attitudes and beliefs previously) as an alternate measure of immediacy, a Generalized Immediacy (GI) scale. Although scores on this measure were highly reliable and highly correlated with scores on the BII, it was a very high-inference scale. The GI scale was used in many later studies because of its ease of administration. Only after extended use was it generally recognized that the high-inference nature of this instrument made it subject to potential redundancy of measurement when other affective measures were included in the data collection, as they virtually always were.

Most of the results of Andersen's (1978, 1979) study were clear and highly supportive of her hypotheses. Approximately 20% of the variance in student affect toward the subject matter and 46% of the variance in affect toward the teacher were predictable from teachers' scores on immediacy. About 18% of the variance in students' behavioral commitment toward taking another course in the subject matter (interpersonal communication) and engaging in the communication practices recommended in the current course in which they were enrolled, were predictable from the teachers' scores in immediacy. Clearly, immediacy was most closely associated with student affect toward the teacher. That was not unanticipated. After all, it is the teacher who is engaging in the behaviors that are viewed as positive. Thus, if any impact on affect is to be observed, it certainly must be expected that it would be affect toward the teacher. This must not, however, be allowed to overshadow the very strong association of immediacy with the other affect variables. Clearly, what the teacher does in terms of immediacy has a general impact on student affect, one that goes well beyond simply increasing liking for the teacher.

One hypothesis in Andersen's study was not supported. There was no significant relationship observed between teachers' immediacy scores and the test scores used to operationalize cognitive learning. Much has been made of this finding by later writers, particularly those critical of research in this area. This is unfortunate because the nature of the course and the test foreordained the failure to find a significant relationship.

The students and teachers in this study all were drawn from a single course (a course in interpersonal communication). The course employed a common textbook, a common workbook that guided instruction in each class period, a common syllabus, learning objectives that were provided the students, and tests based on those objectives. With those objectives and the textbook it was quite possible for a student to have mastered the content tested *without ever attending the class*. Hence, the impact of teacher behaviors (immediacy and all other) was virtually prohibited. It is ironic that in the attempt to find a way that a common cognitive test could be employed to test the related hypothesis, it was decided to use students and teachers in a class where every effort had been made to make the tests "teacher proof." Several other studies related to instructional communication were conducted in this same course before it was recognized that the nature of the course design was producing the observed results. The understanding of cognitive objectives was still primitive in the field of communication at that time. As that understanding increased, this type of class ceased to be used for research purposes.

Two other early studies contributed to the recognition of the potential importance of immediacy in instruction. In the first of these, Kearney (Kearney Knutson, 1979; Kearney & McCroskey, 1980) directed attention to

the impact on learning of aspects of teachers' communication style (for more on this general topic, see chapter 9). Among a number of other concerns, she investigated the association of a style variable she called "responsiveness" with affective learning of students. In her discussion of the responsiveness construct, she made clear that it was primarily composed of behaviors related to nonverbal immediacy. Her results indicated a very high association of teacher responsiveness (immediacy) with student affect for both the teacher and the subject matter.

In her dissertation, Sorensen (1980) made the first attempt to extend the study of immediacy to include an aspect of verbal behavior. She manipulated the appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure statements and measured their impact on student perceptions of the teacher's immediacy. Because this study employed a laboratory simulation methodology, the students did not actually see or hear the teacher. They were only exposed to the experimental statements. Even under these circumstances, the variability in self-disclosure statements accounted for 28% of the variance in ratings of teacher immediacy. Clearly, as Mehrabian (1971) had indicated previously, immediacy has verbal as well as nonverbal components, and both can have an impact on learning in the classroom.

RECENT RESEARCH ON IMMEDIACY IN INSTRUCTION

The Importance of Immediacy to Affective Learning. Early research sought to determine the importance of immediacy in the classroom. Initial findings suggested the probability that immediacy might be a central aspect of effective teaching. During the period between 1980 and 1987 a number of studies relating to immediacy were reported. However, for our purposes here only one of these are considered before directing attention to the more recent studies. That is the study reported by Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond in 1986. Although this study was most concerned with the role of power in the classroom as a function of verbal behavior-alteration techniques (BATs; this is discussed in more detail in chapter 5), the portion of concern here was the theoretical model proposed in that study suggesting that the impact of verbal control strategies may be mediated by students' perceptions of teacher immediacy.

The results of the Plax et al. study provided extremely strong support for the theoretical model. Although immediacy and use of BATs each had unique impact on students' affective learning, the overwhelming majority of the impact of BATs was found to be mediated by immediacy. In short, as communication theorists had argued for many years before this study, the

nonverbal behavior of teachers served as mediators for teachers' verbal behaviors. Thus, it is not simply a matter of a teacher using reward, punishment, or some other verbal influence strategy. What the teacher uses as a verbal strategy has a differential impact based on her or his nonverbal immediacy. On balance, in this study of several hundred secondary school students, and replicated with several hundred college students, it was found that immediacy could best be described as overpowering verbal control strategies in terms of impact on affective learning. This conclusion has been strongly reinforced by the recent work of Burroughs (1990) and other work related to student resistance of influence (see chapter 6).

The Cognitive Learning Problem. The earliest problem that communication researchers faced when trying to study the impact of teachers' communication behaviors on students' learning was gaining access to observe the full range of teachers. Poor teachers, those with dubious self-concepts, and those who have a low value for social science research on teaching are usually very unwilling to cooperate with research that may involve anyone observing or reporting on their teaching behaviors. We finally solved that problem (in Power VI, Plax et al., 1986) by collecting data from students about "the last class you had before this one." Thus, when data are collected in classes that meet university requirements, data from a wide and representative range of unidentified teachers are available even though the individual teachers might not be willing to cooperate if asked to do so.

Although this method overcomes the limitations in generalizability concerning affective learning associated with studying sections in a single course, it makes the measurement of cognitive learning even more difficult. Our examination of the literature in education indicated we were not the first to confront this problem, but those preceding us had not found a satisfactory solution either. The study of variables that impact cognitive learning has long been impeded by the difficulty in establishing valid measures of this type of learning. Although standardized measures of cognitive learning within many specific content areas have been developed, comparisons across content areas, particularly across content areas in disparate fields (such as art and chemistry), suffer from lack of comparability of the cognitive learning measures. Use of standard scores would only partially compensate for those differences.

In addition, two other serious problems confront the use of standardized tests — even if we concede their validity as measures of what the student has learned, which many people will not concede. First, there is no assurance in most circumstances that the teacher has attempted to teach what is included on the standardized exam. In fact, great care usually is taken to assure that the teacher does not even know what is on the exam in order to prevent her

or him from "teaching the test." Thus, the design and execution of these tests intends to make them "teacher proof." Second, administering such tests to students over a wide range of subjects and courses would be extremely expensive, would require cooperation of their teachers (which many would not give), and would be very time consuming for the students participating in the research project (hence leading to high subject loss). These two problems make use of standardized exams an unrealistic solution to this difficult problem.

The next approach we considered was use of data already available in the classes in which students are enrolled. The first data considered, and rejected, was the final grade in the course. These data could be obtained from central records with little or no difficulty. Unfortunately, students' grades often have little relation to what students learn in a given class. Students may know the material when they enroll, they may know so little they cannot catch up with the other students, grades may be based on such irrelevant (to amount learned, that is) matters as class participation, work turned in late, attendance, or "attitude." The second data considered (which also relate to student grades) are the exams prepared and administered by the teachers of the individual classes. These were rejected because of the obvious difficulty of obtaining the scores from the teachers, the absence of norms from which to generate standard scores for each student, the general incompetence of individual teachers in generating reliable and valid tests, and, finally, the fact that many teacher-made tests are not based on publicly stated objectives and are only marginally related to what is taught in the class.

These problems, which are related to measurement of cognitive learning, usually are not present in carefully controlled experiments. Unfortunately, such experiments usually have low ecological validity for generalizing to normal classrooms. As a result, we decided that obtaining a fully valid measure of cognitive learning across a variety of subject matters, teachers, and student levels was not a realistic goal. No such measures currently exist, and it appears that none are likely to appear in the foreseeable future.

The solution we chose is not a fully satisfactory one. We arrived at it by reasoning that what a person learns is a subjective matter no matter how it is measured. Standardized test scores are valid in the minds of those preparing the exams, but have no necessary correspondence to what is taught by a given teacher in a given class, much less what is learned from that teacher. Scores on teacher-made tests are valid in the mind of the teacher making out the test. However, these may have little or no correspondence with what the student thought he or she was supposed to (and did) learn, and may have very low reliability or validity internally.

The other person in this learning equation is the student. Few students leave a course without some idea of how much they learned in that course.

Hence, our choice was to use student reports of their learning as our measure of cognitive learning when studying the effect of various communication variables in the classroom. We do not argue this is the true, valid measure of cognitive learning. We do argue that this method provides useful information concerning learning, that if compared with other data on cognitive learning from laboratory experiments, will give us insights into teacher behaviors that can contribute to increased cognitive learning of students. Our first use of the measurement approach was in Power VII (Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987) and we have continued its use in several immediacy studies since that time.

The Cognitive Learning Results. The studies reported by Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) broke new ground in two ways. First, these were the first immediacy studies to employ the student self-report approach to measuring cognitive learning. The students were asked to respond to two questions: "On a scale of 0-9, how much did you learn in this class, with 0 meaning you learned nothing and 9 meaning you learned more than in any other class you've had?" and "How much do you think you could have learned in the class had you had the ideal instructor?" By subtracting the score on the first scale from the score on the second, a variable labeled *learning loss* was created. This was intended to remove some of the possible bias with regard to estimated learning that could stem from being forced to take a class in a disliked subject. Hence, two scores were taken to represent students' perceptions of their learning. The first was the raw "learning" score and the second was the "learning loss score." It was presumed that immediacy should be correlated positively with the former and negatively with the latter.

The second unique aspect of this research was the introduction of a new observational measure of immediacy. It was based on the original BII, but the items were worded in an absolute fashion ("This teacher gestures when talking to the class") rather than in the comparative fashion of the original instrument ("This instructor gestures more while teaching than most other instructors"). In addition, instead of the original 1-7, "strongly agree-strongly disagree" response format, the students were asked to respond by circling Yes or No to indicate whether their teacher used a given behavior at all. Then those responding Yes were asked to indicate in a 1-4, "rarely-very often" response format how frequently the teacher used the behavior. This change was made in response to findings reported by Rodgers and McCroskey (1984) that suggested the comparative approach might introduce invalidity when students enter classes with substantially different experiences, such as students in the hard sciences compared to students in theater. Subsequent research (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990) indicates this new approach yields more valid data than the previous approach.

Results of the first Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey (1987) study indicated that when students were asked either to describe the worst or best teacher they could recall, immediacy behaviors alone permitted 95% accuracy in classifying teachers into the two categories. In the second study, students were asked to recall a class they had in the immediately previous semester, report the immediacy behaviors of the teacher in that class, and indicate how much they thought they learned. The subjects were classified into low (0-3), moderate (4-6), or high (7-9) learners. Discriminate analysis indicated that the students could be classified in the correct category, based on the reported teacher immediacy level, with an accuracy level of 68%, over twice what would be expected by chance alone.

An additional examination of these data indicated that students categorized as low learners had teachers who on average had moderately low immediacy. Those with high and moderate learning had teachers who on average had moderately high immediacy. This suggests the possibility that the relationship between immediacy and cognitive learning may not be linear. That is, a moderate amount of immediacy may be crucial to attain a moderate amount of cognitive learning, but increased immediacy beyond that level may have little more positive impact. It may even be that there is a point at which the teacher can have "too much" immediacy. The data in this study could not completely confirm such an impact, but this appears to be a possibility worthy of exploration in future research.

Gorham (1988) built upon the Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey (1987) study by developing and testing a measure of verbal behaviors believed to be related to immediacy. In a study employing the methodology of having students complete questionnaires based on "the class you have just before this one," she replicated the decade-long findings of a strong relationship of nonverbal immediacy with affective learning (for the first time using the Richmond et al. measure of nonverbal immediacy) and also the cognitive learning findings in the previous study. Her measure of verbal immediacy was found to produce results very similar to those involving nonverbal immediacy.

At this point it became clear that employing the student self-report method of measuring cognitive learning generated data that pointed to a strong impact of both nonverbal and verbal immediacy. Given the known limitations of such a measure, however, participants in the research program were hesitant to advance strong generalizations related to cognitive learning without comparable results employing another methodology. The next study removed that hesitation.

In order to overcome the limitations related to studying cognitive learning in the field, Kelley and Gorham (1988) designed a laboratory experiment in which all content to be learned was novel and could not be known by the student participants in advance. Students were taught

individually. They were read, and asked to recall, four groups of six items in each of four conditions. Each group of items consisted of alternating three- to five-letter nouns and two-digit numbers. The word/number sequences provided six unrelated "chunks" for memory storage and recall.

The four teaching conditions were (a) high physical immediacy with eye contact, (b) high physical immediacy with no eye contact, (c) low physical immediacy with eye contact, and (d) low physical immediacy with no eye contact. High physical immediacy was operationalized as having the teacher sit on the edge of the chair, lean forward, place nothing between teacher and student, and utilize head nods while administering the test. Low physical immediacy was operationalized as having the teacher recline in the chair, sit with crossed legs, use a notebook to create a barrier between teacher and student, and utilize no head nods. "With eye contact" was operationalized as focusing the teacher's eyes on the eye area of the student while administering all six items. "No eye contact" was operationalized as the teacher focusing eye direction on the notebook while administering all items. After each list of six items was read, the teacher supplied the student with a slip of paper to reproduce the list. The accuracy of reproduction served as the measure of cognitive learning.

Analysis of variance indicated that each of the two types of immediacy behaviors increased learning. Physical immediacy accounted for 11.4% of the total learning variance and eye contact accounted for 6.9%. An interaction of the two immediacy conditions accounted for an additional 1.2% of the variance. This came as a function of the very negative impact of the combination of low physical immediacy and no eye contact condition.

Post hoc analyses indicated additional impact related to eye behavior. In the primary analysis noted earlier, responses were counted as correct even if they were recalled out of order. Simply put, the measure was one of recall of items, not recall of sequence. When sequence errors were examined it was found that there were 37 instances of incorrect sequencing in the two conditions with no eye contact, but only 11 instances in the two conditions with eye contact. In addition, students correctly recalled the second digit, while incorrectly recalling the first digit of the two-digit numbers in 68 instances in the two conditions that did not involve eye contact but in only 32 instances in the conditions with eye contact. Both of these differences were statistically significant far beyond chance+ ($p < .0001$).

The results of the Kelley and Gorham (1988) study filled in the important gap in the previous studies of the relationship between immediacy and cognitive learning. Although that study alone would not "prove" such a relationship in a "real" classroom, neither would the earlier studies drawing on student self-reports. In combination, however, they make a strong case for the relationship. The weaknesses in one type of study are overcome by

the strengths of the other type. At this point, then, the presumption moves in favor of a meaningful and positive relationship between nonverbal immediacy and cognitive as well as affective learning. It is now the responsibility of one who doubts such a relationship to disprove it rather than simply to demand more evidence.

EXPLAINING IMMEDIACY'S IMPACT

At this point only the morbidly skeptic among us is likely to question whether increased teacher immediacy has a positive impact on student learning. Explaining how that impact occurs, however, is quite another matter. At this point, two viable explanations have been advanced: the arousal-attention explanation and the motivation explanation.

The arousal-attention explanation has been advanced by Kelley and Gorham (1988). They restricted their theory to cognitive learning, but this does not preclude impact on affective learning. They argued that immediacy is related to arousal, which is related to attention, which is related to memory, which is related to cognitive learning. They support this theory by drawing from research reported prior to their own study, then use the results of their study for additional support.

Essentially, their argument is that a mentally inert student cannot learn. Thus, it is initially essential to arouse the student from an inert state (unless that has already occurred). Lively, immediate behaviors are seen as most likely to generate arousal. That which stimulates arousal is seen then as that which will receive attention. Things cannot be remembered (initially learned) unless they received initial attention. Thus, behaviors that draw attention to the teacher provide the minimal conditions necessary for learning. If things are vividly presented, they are more likely to be remembered by students who attend to their presentation. Hence, immediate teachers arouse students, draw attention to themselves, have that attention directed to the content being taught, and produce more student learning.

The motivation explanation has been advanced by both Christophel (1990a, 1990b) and Richmond (1990). Essentially, this view sees students learning when they want to learn. If they want to learn they will expend extra effort and learn more. Motivated students want to learn and will work at it. It is recognized that some students are generally more motivated to learn than are others, a trait of motivation orientation. Nevertheless, the motivation level of less motivated students can be increased under some circumstances. Thus, some teacher behaviors may have the result of increasing student motivation. Specifically, teachers engaging in immediate

behaviors are seen as likely to increase state motivation by stimulating the students and directing their efforts in the proper directions.

As noted previously, the Kelley and Gorham (1988) research was predicated on the arousal-attention theory, and the results of the study were those predicted from the theory. Unfortunately, however, they measured neither attention nor arousal. Hence, we cannot say their theory was supported. But at least it was not discounted, because the results were consistent with the theory.

In the Richmond (1990) study, student motivation was measured along with measures of several other constructs (immediacy, affinity seeking, BATs, relative power use, learning). Results indicated that motivation was substantially associated with both learning and nonverbal immediacy. This is consistent with the motivation theory but, of course, does not confirm the theory because all of the data were collected simultaneously, thus precluding firm causal explanations.

Two studies are reported in the Christophel (1990a, 1990b) paper. The primary difference in the two studies was in the methods of data collection. Study 1 used the same general method used in the Richmond (1990) study and several others noted previously, the method that asked students to reference the class they were taking immediately before the one in which the data were collected. Because this design was subject to the criticism that all of the data were collected from the same subjects at the same time and might inflate correlations observed, her second study used a different data-collection method. There were 60 intact classes included in the study. The students in each class were randomly assigned to one of two sets of scales. One set included scales related to verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and motivation. The other set included scales to measure motivation and learning. Mean scores were completed for each class for each of the two sets of scales. All analyses involved the class as the unit of analysis rather than the individual student. Thus, scores on immediacy from one set of students could be correlated with scores on learning from the other set of students. Similar analyses could be computed for questions concerning motivation.

Because the results of both studies were highly similar, we address those employing the new data-collection procedures. Immediacy scores of the first set of students were highly correlated with motivation scores of the other set of students. Similarly, motivation scores of the first set of students were highly correlated with learning scores of the other set of students. Not only did these results support the motivation theory, they also indicated that previous research was most likely not contaminated to any significant degree by simultaneous completion of measures among interrelated concepts.

Multiple correlations of nonverbal immediacy and motivation with the

various measures of learning were decomposed to identify unique and colinear predictive power. With the exception of the learning loss scores (where nonverbal immediacy and motivation had very similar amounts of unique ability to predict variance) and affect toward the teacher (where nonverbal immediacy predicted far more variance), motivation was a far superior unique predictor of learning than was immediacy. In conjunction with the finding that much of the predictable variance was a function of the two variables' colinear relationships with learning, this was strongly supportive of the motivation theory's ability to explain the relationship between immediacy and learning.

At this point, then, the theory with the best support for explaining the role of immediacy in enhancing student learning is the motivation theory. The arousal-attention theory, however, certainly should not be discounted. What data are available are supportive of the theory, but they are far from conclusive at this point. Also, it is very possible that both theories will ultimately be found to be useful explanations. They are not in conflict with each other, so acceptance of one does not necessitate rejection of the other.

SPECIAL CONCERNS

Immediacy and Affinity. As we noted before, one way of viewing immediacy is as one of many methods of seeking affinity. From this perspective, teachers engage in immediate behaviors with students and, as a function of the resulting higher affinity between the teacher and students, the students learn more. This is somewhat like a referent power explanation. If students like and respect the teacher, they will engage in less misbehavior and direct more efforts toward learning what the teacher suggests is important.

This perspective suggests, then, that there is little direct impact of immediacy on learning. Rather, the impact is seen as indirect. Immediacy leads to increased affinity that results in increased learning. Nothing in the studies reported to date in any way would cause us to reject this perspective. In fact, the results of the Richmond (1990) study are quite supportive. In that work most of the predictive power of immediacy and affinity seeking was colinear, precisely what we should expect if the impact of immediacy results from increased affinity. Chapter 8 considers this type of general role for affinity in additional ways.

Culture and Immediacy. Most empirically based communication theory is heavily biased in the direction of what is normative for the White, middle-class, American culture. Almost all of the research in instructional

communication has been conducted within this cultural context, even though students from junior high school through college levels have been studied.

There is good reason to suspect that the immediate behaviors of teachers might have different impact in one culture than they have in another. Much of immediacy is a function of nonverbal behavior, and it is very well established that nonverbal behaviors have different norms and impacts in different cultures. Thus, ignoring culture in the generation of theory concerning immediacy in the classroom greatly increases the probability that the resulting theory will have little cross-cultural validity. This, of course, does not put immediacy theory in any different position than other theories related to communication in instruction, or theory about communication in other contexts for that matter.

Researchers interested in immediacy in instruction have not totally ignored the potential impact of culture. Both Sanders and Wiseman (1990) and Powell and Harville (1990) have sought to determine whether students from different subcultures in California universities differ in their responses to teacher immediacy behaviors.

Powell and Harville found only small differences among White, Latino, and Asian-American subgroups with regard to the relationships between nonverbal immediacy behaviors and four affect variables. A similar result was observed for the relationship between verbal immediacy behaviors and those same affect variables for White and Latino subgroups. In contrast, the relationships for verbal immediacy and the affect variables was much smaller for the Asian-American subgroup.

Sanders and Wiseman (1990) conducted a somewhat similar study that included four subgroups: White, Asian, Hispanic, and Black. They collected data related to cognitive, affective, and behavioral (intent) learning. The associations between immediacy (a combination of verbal and nonverbal items) and both cognitive and behavioral learning did not differ across the four ethnic subgroups. With regard to affective learning, the association between immediacy was larger for the Hispanic group than for the Asian or Black groups. The White group did not differ from any of the other three groups.

These relatively small differences among ethnic subgroups may be taken to suggest that the overall relationships between immediacy and learning may not be very large. However, when Sanders and Wiseman compared the ethnic groups on individual items they found some striking differences. Blacks, in particular, appeared in several instances to respond very differently to some items than members of other groups. However, the number of Blacks in the study was so small that the correlations obtained were not very stable and can be expected to be quite different if based on a larger sample.

Although we do not wish to make too much of the results from only two studies, we believe the differences observed here are very conservative estimates of what might be found in comparisons between more clearly different cultures. It can be argued, for example, that all groups of Americans are likely to be more like each other than they are to be like Japanese, Saudis, or Somalians. The present studies, from this perspective, only examine differences within a given culture and do not present a truly intercultural perspective.

We are currently involved (with colleagues from other countries) in several studies of teacher immediacy and learning in cultures outside the United States. The limited data we have analyzed to this point suggest the relationships in at least some cultures may very similar to those in the United States. One of the problems we have confronted, and have yet to overcome, is that in many cultures anything that might be seen as student evaluation of a teacher is considered completely unacceptable, and the kind of social science research represented in the work on immediacy is seen to fall into that category.

Can Teachers Learn To Be More Immediate? One concern that always must be addressed by instructional communication researchers is whether their findings can be translated into real improvements in the classroom. Finding that immediate teachers produce more learning in students is an interesting outcome of 15 years of intensive research. But it is a relatively meaningless finding if immediacy is purely personality based and cannot be changed.

Fortunately, a number of studies have found that teacher nonverbal behaviors are subject to change through appropriate instructional intervention. The one most directly related to our present concerns was reported by Richmond, McCroskey, Plax, and Kearney (1986). Teachers in Grades 7-12 who were trained in nonverbal communication generally, and nonverbal immediacy behaviors specifically, were paired with teachers in their same school (pairs of teachers in several different schools were involved) who taught the same subject but had no nonverbal communication training. Measures of nonverbal immediacy (BII) and affective learning were administered to the students of both groups of teachers. The students of the trained teachers were seen as significantly more immediate than those of the untrained teachers and the students of the trained teachers reported higher affect for both the teacher and the subject matter than did the students of the untrained teachers. Based on this, and other research reviewed by Richmond et al. (1986), it would appear that the results of the research on immediacy in the classroom can be translated to real improvements in teacher behaviors and real increases in student learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions may be drawn from the results of the research summarized here. Let us examine these briefly and then turn our attention to directions open for future research.

1. Increased teacher immediacy results in increased student affect (affinity) for the teacher. This is the most consistent finding from all of the research conducted in this area. Immediate teachers are liked far more than nonimmediate teachers.

2. Increased teacher immediacy results in increased student affect for the subject matter. This is the essence of affective learning. Students who become "turned on" to a subject will continue to learn long after the teacher who "turned them on" is out of the picture. It is the essence of lifelong learning, one of the main goals of education. "Turned off" students reject future classes in a subject, devalue school attendance, and may ultimately "drop out" from formal schooling. Immediate teachers may prevent such negative educational outcomes.

3. Increased teacher immediacy results in increased cognitive learning among students. Because of inappropriate research designs and incorrect interpretation of results from early studies, this conclusion was challenged for many years. Similarly, when this conclusion was drawn from a single research methodology it was viewed as a possible methodological artifact. At this point such questions may be put to rest. The conclusion now is supported by multiple methodologies. Both experimental and survey research point to the appropriateness of this conclusion. Although we still have more to learn about the immediacy-cognitive learning relationship, as we note later, the essence of that relationship is now clear.

4. Increased teacher immediacy results in increased student motivation. The recent research, employing multiple methodologies, provides conclusive support for this conclusion. In fact, it would appear that the primary way that immediacy produces learning effects may be as a function of increasing students' motivation.

5. Increased teacher immediacy results in reduced student resistance to teachers' influence attempts. Although this conclusion has already been drawn in chapter 6, it is important to reiterate it here. Immediate teachers appear to have more referent power, hence students tend to comply with the wishes of those teachers without such compliance becoming an issue in the interaction between teacher and student. Therefore, immediate teachers are more powerful teachers, even though they are less likely to have to take steps to exercise power.

6. Teachers can be taught to engage in more immediate communication behaviors. Although not every teacher takes to behaving in an immediate fashion naturally, they all can be trained to do so through direct education regarding nonverbal communication and the importance of immediacy in instruction. Because immediacy can be increased by a wide variety of behaviors, with training most teachers can learn to be more immediate and be comfortable doing so.

Although we can confidently draw a number of conclusions relating to immediacy in instruction, we should not take this fact as indicative of the lack of need for additional research. Research is needed to explore many questions, including the following:

1. May we generalize the just cited conclusions to teachers and students from cultures other than the one that has received primary attention to this point? With the dramatic increase in students from minority cultures confronting schools at all levels in most areas of the United States, answers to this question are critical. Most current teachers have little training in how to deal with students from the variety of cultures they must face already, or are destined to face in the near future. We must adapt our teacher training to the variety of cultures in our society if we are to prepare teachers to communicate effectively with all of the students in our schools. We cannot do this until we have addressed this question.

2. Does being immediate have any impact on the teacher? Research has not addressed this issue. However, we believe that immediate teachers create a much more positive atmosphere for their students, which in turn creates a much more positive atmosphere for the teacher. We have received many, many anecdotal reports that point in this direction. Some teachers even go so far as to say that being more immediate helped them recover from or prevent burnout.

3. To what extent are different immediacy behaviors differentially effective at the various levels of education? We know that kindergarten teachers often hug their students and college professors usually do not. Are there other behavioral differences among the various teaching levels? We know very little about these differences. Knowing more would help provide a base for training teachers at the different levels.

4. To what extent are different levels of immediacy, or different immediacy behaviors, differentially effective for different class sizes and different subject matters? Some incidental reports have been made about differences in immediacy as function of class sizes, but this issue has not

been the focus of primary attention in any study to date. One study (Kearney, Plax, & Wendt-Wasco, 1985) has reported that immediacy appears to have more impact in some subject-matter areas than it does in others, but this finding has not been replicated. More research is needed so we can refine our generalizations to adjust to different kinds of classes.

5. What is the nature of the relationship between immediacy and cognitive learning? Although we know that a positive relationship exists, it is not yet known whether this is a linear or nonlinear relationship. Does cognitive learning continue to increase at very high levels of immediacy? Or does increased immediacy cease to produce more learning at a certain point? Can we reach a point of too much immediacy with resulting reductions in cognitive learning? All of these questions need to be addressed.

6. What theory (theories) can we use to explain effects we already have isolated and predict effects we have not yet studied? There is a substantial base of research on immediacy in the literature. Most of this has been produced in a context of discovery. It is now time to attempt to generate theory from the results available and move on to test the validity of that theory. This process has begun, as we noted earlier in this chapter, but it needs to continue at an increasing rate.

From the research available at the time of this writing, it appears that teacher immediacy may be one of the most critical variables in determining teaching effectiveness. It certainly is an area that deserves continued attention from scholars and practitioners interested in improving communication in the classroom.

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