

TEACHING IS COMMUNICATING! A HANDBOOK  
FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

by

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## ABSTRACT

A list of communication topics for an educational handbook was compiled and analyzed from instructional communication concerns of student teachers, along with the past 20 years of research within the field. Results indicate that the following instructional communication topics are needed and relevant for a handbook designed for student teachers: Instructional Clarity; Communicating Teacher Authority; Classroom Management; Adapting to Different Cognitive Levels; Understanding Student Slang; Intercultural Communication; Socio-Communicative Styles; Teacher Immediacy (Verbal & Nonverbal); Discussion as an Instructional Strategy; and Teacher Nervousness or Communication Apprehension. Public school teachers also participated in a questionnaire, and some of their responses can be found in the handbook as well. The handbook as a resource tool could be helpful for the professional development of preservice teachers.

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# CHAPTER I

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Communication literature suggests that student teachers could benefit from more knowledge and skills within the realm of instructional communication (Cooper, 1986; Hunt, Simonds, & Cooper, 2002; McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2002). “Being an effective communicator is not required for certification by any state in the U.S. nor is instruction in effective communication included in most teacher education programs. When it is included in undergraduate programs it usually is limited to nothing more than an introductory public speaking class” (McCroskey et al., 2002, p. 384). However, public speaking classes may not address specific instructional communication topics that are pertinent within the classroom. Therefore, the communication skills acquired in the basic public speaking course could be limited for prospective teachers that will need to know how to effectively communicate with their students.

In recent literature, communication researchers advocate the implementation of instructional communication within higher education and grades K-12, which has surfaced as ‘The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’ (McCroskey et al., 2002). They are challenging communication professionals to contribute to the ‘Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’ and to disseminate instructional communication knowledge to those who will benefit from it (McCroskey et al., 2002). Therefore, in order to prepare student teachers more effectively within the realm of communication, more feasible

resources that contain such knowledge need to be explored and developed. Resource tools such as pamphlets, workbooks, handbooks, and other literary sources could prove useful for hands-on exploration of such communication topics that are pertinent within the classroom. Therefore, the objective and focus of this thesis project is to develop a communication handbook for student teachers that is based on communication research, student teacher surveys, as well as contributions from experienced teachers.

### Instructional Communication Research

The concept of teaching in a way to enhance understanding has been the goal of educators for many years. Instructional communication is defined as “the study of the human communication process as it occurs in instructional contexts—across subject matter, grade levels, and types of settings” (Staton, 1989, p. 365). On the other hand, the term communication education should not be confused with instructional communication, whereby communication education focuses on the teaching of speech communication (Staton, 1989).

Instructional communication has been a legitimate sub-field of Communication since the early 1970’s (McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2002; Sprague, 2002), and by 1976 it became part of the editorial mission of the journal Communication Education (Sprague, 2002). Therefore, for almost 30 years, scholars within this sub-field have been diligently researching the role of communication within the realm of pedagogy.

In 1984, Staton-Spicer and Wulff completed a categorization and synthesis of research in communication and instruction. They reviewed articles covering both

instructional communication and communication education in all the national journals published by the Speech Communication Association and the International Communication Association (Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984). The analysis identified six prominent areas of research: teacher characteristics; student characteristics; teaching strategies; speech criticism and student evaluation; speech content; and speech communication programs (Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984). In particular, the main subcategories within some of these research areas included (Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984):

*Teacher Characteristics*—various teacher characteristics and student learning; teacher characteristics and teacher effectiveness; and teacher attitudes and expectations;

*Student Characteristics*—studies relating to student communication apprehension (CA) and speech anxiety; and developmental approaches to examining student communication abilities;

*Teaching Strategies*—ways of teaching different courses; particular teaching strategies; strategies to reduce CA; methods of improving children’s language skills; strategies for admitting students to instructional programs; and strategies for assessing communication skills.

As a result, the research areas from the teacher and student characteristics categories emerged as “the most important contribution toward disciplinary-wide understanding of communication” (Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984, p. 384).

Eighteen years later, in 2002, Communication Education published a special issue that reflected and celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the journal, first known as the Speech Teacher. A few articles offered an evaluative synthesis of research within communication in instruction, otherwise known as instructional communication. Specifically, contributions from the discipline have focused on communication traits and teacher

communication behaviors that lead to effective teaching and increased learning (McCroskey et al., 2002). Research concerning communication traits have revolved around such topics as: communication apprehension, communication competence, shyness, and willingness to communicate/reticence (McCroskey et al., 2002). A representative sample of research regarding teacher behaviors include: “nonverbal immediacy, socio-communicative style and orientation, clarity, and the use of power and influence in the classroom” (McCroskey et al., 2002, p. 386).

Despite some of the specific research topics within the field of instructional communication, most of the literature within Communication Education has tilted toward higher education, with research focused on communication professors at the university level and undergraduate students (Sprague, 2002). However, by the mid-1980's, most of the articles submitted expanded outside the realm of communication education and encompassed all other subjects, such as math, history, business, or the corporate world (Sprague, 2002). At the same time, research still primarily focused on higher education and university instructors (Sprague, 2002). Sprague (2002) identified three dimensions of research over the years and displayed them in the following 3-D graph in Figure 2.1:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										

**Figure 2.1: Research Areas in Instructional Communication**  
 Source: Jo Sprague, Copyright 2002. Copied with Permission.  
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The vertical dimension (A-J) represents the teachers or instructors: (A) Parents, (B) Peers, (C) K-12 instructors of speech, (D) K-12 instructors of all other subjects, (E) University instructors of communication, (F) University instructors of all other subjects, (G) Trainers/organizational developers, (H) Managers/supervisors, (I) Members of the helping professions, and (J) Other. The horizontal dimension (1-11) represents the learners: (1) Infants, (2) Preschool children, (3) Elementary school students, (4) Secondary school learners, (5) Undergraduate students, (6) Graduate students, (7) Entry level workers, (8) Advanced workers/executives/professionals, (9) Adults in non-work roles, (10) Senior citizens, and (11) Other. Roman numeral one (I) corresponds to Communication Education and Roman numeral two (II) indicates the area of Instructional Communication. Category II includes every area where communication is “the vehicle of instruction” across disciplines (Sprague, 2002, p. 342). Sprague (2002)

indicated that by the mid-80's a majority of articles fell into the II, F, 5 cell and that five of the six articles in the October 2001 issue of Communication Education fell into the same grid. While this is only one example, other articles from other issues do lie in other cells. However, the hope is for future articles to encompass cells that protrude out from the center of the grid, thus exploring other areas of research (Sprague, 2002).

Although the review of literature within instructional communication tends to focus on teachers or professors, some research from the mid-1980's specifically looks at communication concerns of preservice teachers. Research suggests that teacher education is imperative for effective teaching, therefore looking at the internship period of preservice teachers is key to understanding their engagement in various communication processes (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986). Specifically, the socialization of preservice teachers was analyzed and various communication topics emerged (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986). Socialization is the process by which "people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge—in short the culture—current in the groups to which they are, or seek to become, a member" (Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957, p. 287). The data revealed five categories of discussion topics or 'teacher talk' that student teachers engaged in: (1) anxiety about discipline; (2) discipline and classroom management; (3) relationships; (4) lesson planning; and (5) role discrepancies (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986). The topics were further analyzed according to the three functional phases of the communication concern constructs—self, task, and impact (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986). The constructs are defined as "the *self* as a communicator, the *task* of communicating, and the *impact* of one's communication on

others” (Staton-Spicer & Marty-White, 1981, p. 355). The results indicated that the majority of ‘teacher talk’ topics were related to the self as a communicator (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986). Other studies relating to teacher communication concerns revealed that instructors change their behavior in direct relation to changes in their communication concerns (Staton-Spicer & Marty-White, 1981) and is positively related to the instructor’s attitude about teaching (Staton-Spicer, 1983). Therefore, the research regarding teacher communication concerns directly aligns with the synthesis of communication and instruction research, most notably concerning the category of teacher characteristics that demonstrates student teachers are concerned about their teaching behavior within the *self* communication construct.

Within educational literature, a meta-analysis of human relations training programs for teachers and student teachers were analyzed (Robinson & Hyman, 1984). Results indicated that social literacy training, reality therapy, teacher effectiveness training, transactional analysis, human relations training, behavior modification, and conflict mediation were prominent models; and that student teachers had the largest treatment effect (Robinson & Hyman, 1984). Additionally, for a program to be effective, the training should be 20-30 hours in length (Robinson & Hyman, 1984).

Despite some educational research focusing on student teachers, research within the field of instructional communication indicates that teacher characteristics and teacher behavior are key to helping preservice teachers communicate more effectively with their students (McCroskey et al., 2002; Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986; Staton-Spicer & Wulff, 1984). The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) in Texas also indicates that

communicating effectively is important for becoming a teacher for grades K-12. Outlined in the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TEXES) preparation manual, competency number seven indicates that “the teacher understands and applies principles and strategies for communicating effectively in varied teaching and learning contexts,” whereas the specific components include:

- Demonstrates clear, accurate communication in the teaching and learning process and uses language that is appropriate to students’ ages, interests, and backgrounds.
- Engages in skilled questioning and leads effective student discussions, including using questioning and discussion to engage all students in exploring content; extends students’ knowledge; and fosters active student inquiry, higher-order thinking, problem solving, and productive, supportive interactions, including appropriate wait time.
- Communicates directions, explanations, and procedures effectively and uses strategies for adjusting communication to enhance student understanding.
- Practices effective communication techniques and interpersonal skills (including both verbal and nonverbal skills and electronic communication) for meeting specified goals in various contexts.

Despite the importance of communication skills for teachers, a question to consider is why haven’t some of the instructional communication research been used to enhance teacher-training programs? A push for teacher education reform by both the Carnegie Commission Task Force and the Holmes Group surfaced in 1986 to improve teacher quality (Hunt, Simonds, & Cooper, 2002; Williams & Alawiye, 2001). By the 1990’s the Association for Teacher Educators, Teachers for the New Millennium, and Completing the Circle of Education Reform also critiqued teacher education and offered some possible causes for the problems concerning teacher-training programs (Hunt et al., 2002). Whether a teacher-training program is adequate or not, some argue that a four-year undergraduate education is not sufficient to adequately prepare teachers (Williams &

Alawiye, 2001). Other researchers suggest focusing in on specific courses to enhance the knowledge and skills of preservice teachers. For example, implementing a communication course for all teachers could improve teacher quality (Cooper, 1986; Hunt et al., 2002). By focusing on various communication goals for teachers set by organizations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, a new communication course was designed to enable preservice or inservice teachers to improve their communication skills and knowledge in 2002 (Hunt et al., 2002). An earlier proposal for this course surfaced in 1986 and consisted of the following course units: (1) Human Communication in the Education Environment; (2) Interpersonal Communication in the Classroom; (3) Listening; (4) Nonverbal Communication in the Classroom; (5) Information Dispensing in the Classroom; (6) Leading Classroom Discussions; (7) Small Group Communication in the Classroom; (8) Teacher Influence in the Classroom; (9) Communication Barriers; (10) and Communicating in Parent/Teacher Conferences (Cooper, 1986). The latest proposal from 2002 encompasses the majority of the same objectives but, instead, is divided into three units: (1) Communication Competence, (2) Instructional Strategies, and (3) Communication Impact (Hunt et al., 2002). The previous course units align with the socialization research regarding the teacher communication concerns of *self*, *task*, and *impact*.

One particular university has incorporated a communication and instruction program that utilizes a variety of courses in instructional communication (Staton, 1989). The undergraduate program at the University of Washington offers three instructional

communication courses for preservice teachers: *Communication in the Classroom*, *Communication in Children's Environments*, and *Communication in Adolescent Environments* (Staton, 1989). Although these courses are offered, it is unclear if they are required as part of the teacher education program or if they are electives.

Despite the cross-disciplinary hurdles to incorporate instructional communication within the realm of teacher education, it is imperative to recognize the importance of communication within the realm of pedagogy. Encouraging communication curriculum for student teachers is a “step toward recognizing the inherent connections between Communication and Education disciplines and toward helping students move ahead in their lifelong journeys toward improved communication with others” (Johnson & Roellke, 1999, p. 137).

Instructional areas that have utilized communication research for professional development include higher education and the training of graduate teaching assistants (GTA's). A report from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) focuses on effective communication skills for instructors at the college level, including teacher immediacy, effective communication behaviors, and gender differences (Sensenbaugh, 1995). A 1994 study from the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom identified key instructional areas that should receive high priority for training GTA's: effective communication, motivating students, encouraging student participation, preparation of lectures and presentations, facilitating discussions, tutorial methods, and assessment/grading (Lueddeke, 1997). Suggestions for training GTA's also focus on using educational learning theories to teach instructional communication topics such as

teacher power and immediacy (Roach, 2002). GTA's are not only taught about instructional research and theories, but are taught ways to put them into practice (Roach, 2002). Accordingly, the rationale of higher education seems to be grounding itself in learning and communication theories (Lueddeke, 1997). Learning theories such as constructivism, where students are given more responsibility, are emerging as tools that will impact the role of the GTA (Lueddeke, 1997). In this way, there is also an underlying focus to incorporate theories of pedagogy with that of communication research in GTA training. Ultimately, higher education and GTA training areas include an array of fundamental instructional communication topics that can also be utilized for prospective teachers of grades K-12.

A push for instructional communication within the realm of higher education and grades K-12 has recently surfaced as 'The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' (McCroskey et al., 2002). One idea behind the scholarship of teaching and learning can be compared to a 'three-legged stool' (McCroskey et al., 2002). Higher education and K-12 education are grounding their trust in content knowledge and pedagogy, a 'two-legged stool' (McCroskey et al., 2002). Communication scholars contend that instructional effectiveness relies on a 'three-legged stool,' whereas the third leg is effective communication (McCroskey et al., 2002). Therefore, the scholarship agenda is partly two-fold: higher education instructors are being encouraged to become more aware of pedagogical concerns as well as communication and K-12 teachers are encouraged to become more aware of communication research. Another idea behind the scholarship of teaching and learning is that there is an increased interest in curriculum, classroom

teaching, and the quality of student learning within specific disciplines, such as history, psychology, mathematics, or science (Huber & Morreale, 2002). “Each discipline has its own intellectual history, agreements and disputes about subject matter and methods...traditional pedagogies...and its own discourse of reflection and reform” (Huber & Morreale, 2002, p. 2). The scholarship agenda acknowledges the differences within each subject as a major strength. In turn, this creates interdisciplinary conversations that contribute to new ideas and insights that can be traded and utilized across disciplines (Huber & Morreale, 2002).

### Textbooks

Courses in instructional communication are in existence as noted at the University of Washington, however, the textbooks for such classes seem limited. A textbook search under “Classroom Communication” from the publishing company Allyn & Bacon revealed four texts: (1) Communication for the Classroom Teacher (now in its 7<sup>th</sup> edition in 2003) by Pamela Cooper, (2) Communication for Teachers (2002) edited by Joseph Chesebro and James McCroskey, (3) Motivating Your Students: Before You Can Teach Them, You Have to Reach Them (2001) by Hanoch McCarty and Frank Siccone, and (4) The Power of Story: Teaching Through Storytelling (in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1997) by Rives Collins and Pamela Cooper. A general library search revealed a few more textbooks: (1) Communication in Education (1990) edited by Richard Fiordo, (2) Communicating in the Classroom (1997) by Kathleen Kougil, (3) Speaking Skills for Prospective Teachers

(1983) by Donald Klopff and Ronald Cambra, and (4) Communication in the Classroom (1978) by H. Thomas Hurt, Michael Scott, and James McCroskey.

Pamela Cooper, the author of Communication for the Classroom Teacher, outlined a communication course for all teachers in Communication Education (Hunt et al., 2002). The following are some of the major topics that are covered in this communication course, which also aligns with the chapters in her textbook (Hunt et al., 2002):

*Communication Competence*—teacher and student socialization; self-concept; self-disclosure; immediacy; communicator style; credibility; listening; and verbal and nonverbal communication;

*Instructional Strategies*—lecture; discussion; computer-assisted instruction; small group instruction; peer instruction; and guidelines on choosing a teaching strategy;

*Communication Impact*—ethical considerations; power; conflict; handling student misbehavior; racism; and sexism.

Communication for Teachers, an edited book with contributions from numerous communication scholars, also contains a plethora of instructional communication topics such as (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2002):

- Teacher Nonverbal Immediacy
- Making Content Relevant to Students
- Teaching Clearly
- Socio-Communicative Styles/Orientation
- Humor
- Teacher Misbehaviors
- Student Motivation
- Distance Education
- Students from other Cultures
- Students of Various Ages
- Training Teaching Assistants

Looking through the majority of the previous textbooks from the library search, some of the prominent chapters focus on key communication topics such as: interpersonal communication between the teacher and the student; nonverbal communication; instructional strategies such as discussion, small groups, and lecturing; communication skills and values; gender; culture; and communication technology. By exploring the chapters and sections within these current communication textbooks, some key concerns and issues have been brought to focus.

### Problem

Communication literature suggests that student teachers could benefit from more knowledge and skills within the realm of instructional communication (Cooper, 1986; Hunt, et al., 2002; McCroskey et al., 2002). As it stands, most teacher training programs require a basic public speaking course to develop their communication skills (McCroskey, et al., 2002). However, public speaking classes do not address specific instructional communication topics that are pertinent within the classroom. Therefore, the communication skills acquired in the basic course could be limited for prospective teachers that will need to know how to effectively communicate with their students.

Incorporating instructional communication into training programs has mainly been addressed by higher education and by GTA training programs. With the exception of a few undergraduate programs, specifically at the University of Washington, offering instructional communication courses are rare. And it is even more rare to merge communication research with that of teacher training programs. On the other side of the

coin, educational research seems to focus on human relations training programs for teachers and student teachers (Robinson & Hyman, 1984). Granted human relations involve communication, but these programs seem to utilize different communicative constructs. Additionally, student teachers have not been the focus of much communication research. Despite a few studies regarding student teacher socialization (Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986), little research has focused on what their communication needs might be or what type of teacher behaviors they employ effectively or ineffectively. If more research explored student teachers within instructional communication, perhaps specific training programs or resources could be developed. Such communication tools would have to be easily accessible given the nature of student teaching and their full-time responsibilities within the schools.

### Rationale

There is an apparent need to provide student teachers with some type of resource that addresses communication issues in the classroom because the basic public speaking course that is often required does not address these specific communication concerns. Limited student teacher research as well as limited cross-disciplinary programs between Communication and Education departments provide challenging obstacles to address the communication needs of student teachers. It would prove beneficial to know what type of communication issues are important to student teachers as well as what the prevalent topics are within communication literature in order to customize a communication tool that will be helpful for them. With this in mind, the objective of this research study is to

create a resource tool in the form of a handbook that will address the communication needs of student teachers. The handbook will be formatted in a way that will incorporate research, its implications, and ways that student teachers can apply this research into their classrooms.

A handbook format will be chosen because a portable resource book may prove more effective. Student teachers are routinely very busy with lesson planning and teaching. Additionally, they are adjusting to new hours that can range from 8-5 pm, therefore a small book divided into easy-to-read chapters on various communication topics may prove the most beneficial type of format due to time constraints as well as work load commitments.

### Research Questions

Research within the field of Instructional Communication has revealed some studies that have focused on student teachers, published textbooks, and a few communication courses in existence. The fact that there are already books in existence that focus on educating preservice teachers within the realm of communication demonstrates the importance of such a project. However, in order to create a handbook that directly addresses both research within the field as well as what student teachers believe is important, the following research questions will be explored prior to the creation of the handbook:

- 1) What does research show to be the most prevalent issues within the field of Instructional Communication?

- 2) What communication needs and issues do student teachers report having?
- 3) What would student teachers find helpful in a handbook?

By focusing on the research aspect first, a list of common communication topics can be created and condensed into more prevalent topics of analysis. In turn, the handbook will exhibit more academic viability and credibility by utilizing this research as a foundation to build upon. This foundation will also be helpful in creating a survey for student teachers. By focusing on student teachers and their communication problems and concerns, the handbook can be adapted accordingly. New ideas and communication issues may emerge from the student teacher input that are not apparent in the literature, and thus, enhance the handbook as a resource. Student teachers who may not have any knowledge about instructional communication will be able to utilize such a handbook because both the research and the data that they report will be included in it.

After analyzing the previous research questions, the handbook topics will be decided. However, in order to include information outside of the literary realm, the final research question will focus on instructors. The handbook can be greatly enhanced if comments and suggestions from experienced teachers were included that revolve around the topics selected for the handbook. Experience within the classroom can provide interesting insights and suggestions that the literature may not encompass, therefore the following research question is advanced:

- 4) What kinds of instructional communication stories, suggestions, or advice do instructors report using and applying in their classrooms?

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

#### Meta-Analysis Research

The first part of this study involved research-based exploration of the prevalent issues within the field of Instructional Communication. This was analyzed with two different methods. The first method involved examining meta-analysis research and current textbooks to find recurrent instructional communication themes. The second method utilized qualitative coding of emergent topics in the journal Communication Education. Journal titles from 1990 to 2000 were coded using a system derived by the researcher. Every title was accounted for and if the title included two or more communication topics, each topic was coded and counted. For example, “Nonverbal Immediacy and Cognitive Learning: A Cross-Cultural Investigation” was coded for three different communication topics: Nonverbal Immediacy, Cognition, and Intercultural Communication. Only journal titles and ‘Brief Reports’ were coded, while the ‘Reviews,’ ‘Book Reviews’ and ‘Commentary’ were not coded. A condensed list of the more prevalent topics was then re-tabulated.

#### Participants and Procedures

##### Student Teachers

The second part of this study revolved around survey responses. Participants included current student teachers enrolled in a teacher education program at a

Southwestern University. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The sample size consisted of 82 student teachers—28 males, 53 females, and one unknown sex. Ages ranged from 21 to 50 years old. Their educational background consisted of 46 with education degrees, 19 in a post bachelor's teacher certification program, and 17 reported other educational backgrounds. Certification levels included 15 early childhood teachers (EC-4<sup>th</sup>), 16 mid-level teachers (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>), 41 secondary teachers (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>), eight all-level teachers, and two were unreported. Fifty-one student teachers had full semester assignments under one cooperating teacher and 31 had split assignments under two or more cooperating teachers. Student teachers were given the questionnaire at the end of the semester by their Capstone teachers for an evaluative perspective.

#### Instructors

Participants in this study were composed of voluntary instructors currently teaching at public schools in West Texas. Participants had the option of not publishing their names, but only a few chose this option. The sample size consisted of 34 instructors, 32 females and 2 males. The age of the participants ranged from 24 to 60 years old, with an average age of 46. The average number of years the participants taught was 19, with a range of one to 40 years. The teachers taught a wide array of subjects and grade levels. The subjects included: Government, Social Studies, History, Math, Science, Language Arts, Reading, English, Special Education, Art, Choir, Music, Speech, Desktop Publishing, Health, Physical Education, and Gifted and Talented classes. The grade levels ranged from K-12, with 17 elementary teachers, 16 secondary teachers, and one teacher at both levels. Of the sample size, 19 were chosen to be represented in the handbook.

## Instrumentation

### Student Teacher Survey

The student teacher survey consisted of demographic information such as sex, age, certification areas, and educational background. The survey was divided into two methodological sections—quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative section was composed of 15 items derived from research and literature: handling student misbehavior (classroom management); communication apprehension; nonverbal immediacy; verbal immediacy; using humor in instruction; communication styles of the teacher; understanding teacher power; interpersonal communication; listening strategies; cultural communication; teaching clearly and relevantly; and instructional strategies such as lecture, small groups, discussion, and computer-mediated technology. Each item was ranked on a Likert-type scale that ranged from ‘1=Very Unconcerned’ to ‘5=Very Concerned.’ The qualitative section included the following open-ended questions to determine specific needs of the student teacher: 1) What kinds of communication problems with students did you face during your student teaching assignment? 2) How did you handle these problems and what were the outcomes? 3) What kinds of communication problems did you face in your methods of teaching? 4) How did you handle these problems and what were the outcomes? and 5) What communication topics do you feel you need more information on to communicate more effectively with your students?

## Instructor Survey

The instructor survey consisted of demographic information and an open-ended inquiry of specific instructional communication topics employed in the classroom. After the results from the student teacher surveys were analyzed and the handbook chapters were compiled, the instructor survey was created. Instructors responded to one of the ten chapter topics regarding instructional techniques. The teachers were asked to write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how they applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom: Instructional Clarity, Communicating Teacher Power, Behavior Management, Adapting to Different Cognitive Levels, Understanding Student Slang, Socio-Communicative Styles, Intercultural Communication, Teacher Immediacy, Discussion as an Instructional Strategy, and Teacher Nervousness. The ten strategies were divided into five different forms in which the teacher had the choice to respond to one of two instructional strategies. The survey was divided this way to ensure that each communication strategy had an appropriate amount of responses and that one particular topic did not dominate. This type of data was used to show beginning teachers how specific communication topics are utilized and employed in the classroom from current public school teachers.

## Data Analysis

### Student Teacher Survey

The demographic data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The 15-item quantitative section was thrown out due to

inconsistent photocopying of the Likert-type scale on pages two and three on a majority of the surveys. This created low numbers of correct surveys, and therefore the data was not valid. The qualitative open-ended questions were coded for emergent themes and then classified into categories. For example, each answer was written down under the corresponding question. If there were duplicate answers, it was noted the exact number of times that specific answer emerged. After this process, questions one and three ('What kinds of communication problems with students did you face during your student teaching assignment?' and 'What kinds of communication problems did you face in your methods of teaching?') and questions two and four ('How did you handle these problems and what were the outcomes?') were combined and counted for overlapping answers. Then a final list was created. Question number five was treated in a similar manner.

#### Instructor Survey

The instructor's examples and narratives were read and analyzed. The narratives were chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity by the researcher. Due to the high and low number of responses on some topics, each chapter has varying amounts of teacher representation. Some surveys that were used were condensed due to length, but the content was never changed.

#### Research Design

The overarching research design that was utilized for the construction of this handbook encompassed action research methodology. Action research is a problem-solving approach that is utilized in order to make a difference in our everyday lives

(Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001; Stinger, 2004). Action researchers “engage in careful, diligent inquiry, not for purposes of discovering new facts or revising accepted laws or theories, but to acquire information having practical application to the solution of specific problems related to their work” (Stringer, 2004, p. 3). This methodology is prominent within educational research because it is directly correlated with the social and human experiences of educational life (Stringer, 2004). Additionally, action research is one of the most effective ways to address the professional development of teachers (Johnson, 2005; Stringer, 2004). It can provide teachers with tools for lesson planning, formulating teaching strategies, and student assessment (Stringer, 2004). By utilizing action research methodology, the problem of inadequate communication training for preservice teachers can be analyzed in order to find a practical solution for enhancing their professional development. Therefore, the purpose of the handbook is to utilize theory and research in order for preservice teachers to apply instructional communication practices in the classroom.

Action research methodology involves the following five steps (Stringer, 2004, p. 36):

- 1) The research design of initiating a study—reviewing literature; information; ethics; and validity.
- 2) Data gathering that captures experiences and perspectives of others—interviewing; observing; and reviewing artifacts and literature.
- 3) Data analysis that identifies key features of experience—analyzing experiences; categorizing and coding; and constructing category systems.

- 4) Communication such as writing reports, presentations, or performances.
- 5) Action-oriented solutions—solving problems; classroom practice; curriculum development; and evaluation.

By using this framework, the entire research project was structured in the following format:

- 1) Research and literature review of the Instructional Communication field.
- 2) Student teacher and instructor data gathering.
- 3) Coding and categorizing the experiences of student teachers. Analyzing the narratives and suggestions of the instructors.
- 4) Writing/creating a handbook for student teachers by utilizing the research, student teacher data, and instructor responses.
- 5) The handbook itself is the solution to help with the professional development of student teachers.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Research & Literature

The first component of research question number one, which inquired about the most prevalent issues within the field of Instructional Communication, was analyzed according to the literature and communication books. A list of prominent communication topics within the field was compiled using both chapter titles and meta-analysis research topics. Results indicated the following as recurring topics of teacher behavior:

- Nonverbal Immediacy
- Verbal Immediacy
- Communication Apprehension
- Interpersonal Communication
- Socio-Communicative Styles
- Teacher Clarity
- Teacher Relevance
- Listening Strategies
- Teacher Power
- Handling Conflict & Misbehavior
- Intercultural Communication
- Humor
- Teacher Misbehaviors
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Instructional Strategies:
  - Lecture
  - Small Groups
  - Discussion
  - Computer-Assisted
  - Peer

A second component of research question number one was analyzed by researching the prevalent topics within the journal Communication Education from 1990

to 2000. This decade was chosen for study because a thorough meta-analysis has not been completed for this time period. The extensive meta-analysis from Staton-Spicer and Wulff (1984) was used as a model for coding. The following major categories were used: Communication Traits, Teacher Behavior, Student Behavior, Instructional Techniques, Special Topics, and Other. Using these as major category headings, the journal titles were then categorized into sub-categories. The following items in Table 5.1 reflect the most prominent sub-categories in each main heading, and are listed from the most occurring to the least occurring communication topics.

Table 5.1: Meta-Analysis of Communication Education (1990-2000)

<b>COMMUNICATION TRAITS</b> Communication Apprehension, Communication Competence, Communication Reticence, and Receiver Apprehension.
<b>TEACHER BEHAVIOR</b> Teacher Immediacy, Power/Compliance, Nonverbal Communication, Credibility, Socialization, Socio-Communicative Styles, Humor, Clarity, Language Use, Caring, Attire, Affinity-Seeking, and Burnout.
<b>STUDENT BEHAVIOR</b> Motivation, Student Affect/Evaluation, Learning Styles, Student Recall, University Transition, Affinity-Seeking, and Truth Seeking.
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES</b> Various Instructional Techniques, Performance/Art of Public Speaking, Assessment, Special Stories of Communication in Education, Consulting/Training Models, and Persuasion.
<b>SPECIAL TOPICS</b> Intercultural Communication, Communication Technology/Internet, Gender Issues, Media, Organizational/Business Communication, Conflict/Argumentation, Women's Studies, Cognition, and Distance Learning.
<b>OTHER</b> Communication as a Field, Theory/Research Methods, Ethics, Teacher Training, Textbooks, Conferences, Teaching Assistants, Educational Reform, and Family Communication.

## Surveys

### Student Teacher Survey

In order to best answer research question number two concerning what communication needs and issues student teachers report having, the qualitative aspect of the student teacher questionnaire was used for analysis due to the more in-depth and specific answers that were given.

In relation to communication problems encountered in the classroom during the student teachers' assignments, a few themes emerged. After coding and re-coding, the following list was compiled in descending order of emergence in Table 5.2. Additionally, the percentages are represented according to the total amount of responses from all 82 student teacher surveys.

Table 5.2: Communication Problems Encountered by Student Teachers

1.	Gaining Attention/Students not Listening (23%)
2.	Instructional Clarity (22%)
3.	Communicating Teacher Authority to Students (15%)
4.	Students not Understanding Vocabulary of Teacher (13%)
5.	* Communicating Concepts for Understanding (9%)
	* Behavior Management/Discipline (9%)
	* Adapting to Cognitive Levels of Students (9%)
	* Understanding Slang/Vernacular of Students (9%)
6.	Having Examples to Relate to Students/Discussion/ Questioning (6%)
7.	Teacher Nervousness (5%)
8.	* Motivation Techniques (4%)
	* Bilingual Challenges (4%)
	* Getting Students to Feel Comfortable to Open Up (4%)

A majority of student teachers indicated that they had problems with students not listening or talking during the lesson or that it was challenging for them to get the students' attention. One secondary teacher said, "The distractions of individual conversations during lectures or presentations represented the biggest problem. Often times, I would lose my train of thought and eventually my temper as I attempted to pull

students back on task.” Another problem that emerged was that of communicating instructions clearly. One early childhood student teacher commented: “I had a few problems delivering instructions very clearly. Some of the struggling students were confused after I gave directions for independent study.” A mid-level teacher indicated the problem was “being clear enough with instruction for them to understand.”

Communicating authority emerged across all levels. An early childhood teacher indicated problems with “communicating my authority as the teacher with some students.” A mid-level teacher said, “Students would occasionally say ‘You’re not the teacher’ when they were doing things. In the beginning it was common for students to show disrespect.” A secondary student teacher remarked, “They have a hard time accepting you as a teacher.” Additionally, a couple of female secondary teachers had problems with student flirting. “I did not know how to respond to their flirting. Sometimes they pushed the line and made me uncomfortable, and I didn’t know how to handle it,” said one teacher.

A fourth theme that emerged consisted of vocabulary challenges of the teacher, whereas the students’ would not understand what the teacher was saying due to a vocabulary that was too advanced for that particular level. An early childhood educator mentioned that “sometimes I used words that the little kids didn’t understand.” A secondary teacher commented, “Often my vocabulary was too advanced, and I spoke too quickly for the history students.” Four themes tied under the fifth category, which included: Communicating Concepts for Understanding; Behavior Management/Discipline; Adapting to Cognitive Levels of Students; and Understanding

Slang/Vernacular of Students. As for cognition, an early childhood educator found it difficult to “get on the students’ thinking levels.” Another interesting communication problem that emerged was that student teachers had problems understanding students because of the slang or vernacular they used. This problem primarily emerged in the high schools. For example, a secondary teacher said, “There were differences in our backgrounds so we communicated in different ways and used different words. I didn’t always understand the slang terms used by the students.”

The sixth category included instructional communication problems. Student teachers across the board found that it was difficult to find student-related examples during the lesson, as well as problems with questioning and discussion strategies during lecture. The seventh category corresponds with teacher nervousness, whether the nervousness was derived from the surroundings or from trait-like behavior. Finally, the last category had three themes that emerged an equal number of times and included: Motivation Techniques, Bilingual Challenges, and Getting Students to Feel Comfortable to Open Up.

Along with the various communication problems that emerged, it is important to note that some individuals also indicated that they did not have any communication problems or issues during their student teaching assignments. One all-level educator stated that, “I had no problem with communication. I could speak to them at their level very easily.” Still others would indicate, “None,” or “N/A.”

After compiling the emergent communication issues, another list was compiled to find out what kinds of strategies were used to handle these problems. Four overarching

categories were derived with individual strategies listed in each category. The four main categories included: Instructional, Behavior Management, Teacher Power, and Positive Atmosphere. The following results in each category are listed in descending order of emergence in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Student Teacher Strategies Used for Handling Communication Problems

#### INSTRUCTIONAL

Tried different teaching methods; rephrased/clarified instructions; practice; one-on-one teaching; repetition; used less complicated vocabulary; used step-by-step instructions; used questioning tactics; used other students to help teach; tried to use relevant examples; prepared better; and asked students to define slang.

#### BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Threatened with work; patience; detention/kicked out; used nonverbals (face, voice, body); kept calm; moved students; and teacher would quiet down to gain attention.

#### TEACHER POWER

Spoke to individual students about it; and cooperating teacher handled it.

#### POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE

Called students by name; and made personal connection with student(s).

The final area of inquiry included an open-ended question that asked the student teachers what type of additional information they would like in order to communicate

more effectively with their students. The following results were categorized and are indicated in descending order of importance in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Information Student Teachers Would Find Helpful

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Developmental Levels of Students</li><li>2. * Classroom Management<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Grammar such as Slang and Bilingual Information</li></ul></li><li>3. Motivational Techniques</li><li>4. Technology</li><li>5. * Nonverbals<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Encouragement Methods</li><li>* First Day of School</li><li>* Delivering Instructions</li></ul></li></ol>
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Overall, the top three areas included: information on developmental and age-related levels of students; classroom management and discipline strategies; and information regarding help with understanding bilingual or slang-related grammar. Motivational techniques, computer technology, the use of nonverbals, encouragement methods, strategies for the first day of school, and information on delivering instructions more clearly are the final categories that made up the rest of the list.

## Instructor Survey

Results indicated a wide variety of examples and narratives from teachers across all disciplines and educational levels. Form 1 had six responses; Form 2 had ten responses; Form 3 had six responses; Form 4 had four responses; and Form 5 had eight responses. The survey responses that were selected can be viewed in the handbook located in Appendix C.

### Analysis

After analyzing the communication literature and the student teacher surveys, a multitude of overlapping topics surfaced. However, a few interesting needs and concerns emerged from the student teacher survey that were not a part of the background research. By utilizing and combining both the background research and the questionnaire artifacts, the following ten chapter titles materialized and will be represented in the student teacher handbook:

- Instructional Clarity
- Communicating Teacher Authority
- Classroom Management
- Adapting to Different Cognitive Levels
- Understanding Student Slang
- Intercultural Communication
- Socio-Communicative Styles
- Teacher Immediacy (Verbal & Nonverbal)

- Discussion as an Instructional Strategy
- Teacher Nervousness (Communication Apprehension)

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

After reviewing the literature within the field of Instructional Communication from two different levels—the analysis of textbooks and journal articles as well as the meta-analysis of Communication Education—an extensive list of topics emerged. In order to condense and adapt the final list, these topics were compared to the student teacher data. Questions may emerge on exactly how the final topics were chosen, especially because “Gaining Attention/Students not Listening” was a significant problem for student teachers, yet was not a specific chapter in the handbook. This is the only discrepancy within the compilation of the chapter titles in relation to the results. However, this was done knowingly because this issue can be addressed in other communication methods, such as with teacher clarity, immediacy, adapting to various cognitive levels, teacher authority, and/or classroom management. There are overlapping teacher behaviors and instructional methods that can help with this type of problem. Therefore, in actuality this is not a discrepancy within the results.

The importance of the research questions can be directly related to the importance of the handbook. By utilizing the methodology within this research study, a combination of data was utilized in order to design and tailor a handbook specifically for student teachers. In effect, the methodology used was a type of triangulation in which different viewpoints and data were incorporated into the final product in the form of: 1) Literary research; 2) Student teacher input; and 3) Instructor comments and suggestions. Although

there were not three specific methodological applications that were used due to the omission of the quantitative scale within the student teacher survey, the results illustrate a variety of applications that were utilized.

### Limitations

Due to the nature of this study, there could be room for various interpretations of the results. The data was not analyzed by an alternate coder, and therefore could pose some questions regarding the strength of its reliability. Additional limitations revolve around the student teacher surveys, the instructor survey data collection process, and the number of instructor participants. First of all, a copying error occurred on more than half of the student teacher surveys. The quantitative Likert-type scale was copied incorrectly on the continuing page, and therefore, the results were not computed for the remaining correct copies due to low numbers. Despite this minor problem, the results of the study were not affected. Secondly, the process of collecting instructor responses proved quite challenging. Two data collection processes were utilized. One process included going out to various schools and talking with principals in order to distribute them in the teachers' mailboxes. This proved to be time consuming and did not yield useful response numbers. The other process included administrative help from the school's central office. An administrative support personnel contacted specific teachers who were likely to participate and asked them personally if they wanted to participate in the study. This data collection process yielded more responses than the first method. Each type of data collection can pose its own limitations, but as a whole, the number of participants were

low in regard to how many surveys were used in the handbook. However, the low number did not equate to non-quality responses. In fact, high-quality answers were generated by contacting specific and diverse teachers that were likely to participate in the survey.

### Implications

The end result of this study is that a student teacher handbook was created. The question of concern is, “What now?” How can this communication resource get into the hands of student teachers? The marketing aspect of publishing and distributing this handbook can be done quite easily if finances were of no concern. However, due to the nature and costs associated with such a task, the goal of distributing this is not a central focus at this point in time. The future aspirations of distributing this handbook will depend on the next stage of my academic career. Despite the many factors that are involved with the distribution of such a handbook, the mere publication of this as a thesis document provides the first outlet for disseminating the material covered in the handbook. The research project as a whole has contributed to the ‘Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’ agenda, which encourages the dissemination of instructional communication knowledge to those who will benefit from it (McCroskey et al., 2002). The communication knowledge that has been presented in the handbook focuses on research that impacts the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers in the classroom. The instructional communication themes that emerged within the handbook included: Foundations for communicating and learning; Communicating to affect student

behavior; Communicating for motivation and relationship; and Communicating to enhance learning. Specific research studies, methodologies, theories, implications, behaviors, classroom examples, and applications are represented in this handbook. This expansive collection of information allows student teachers to learn about communication topics in order to: 1) understand instructional communication terminologies and definitions; 2) see how they play out in the classroom; and 3) understand how the diverse array of instructional methods can be utilized and applied within the classroom. These concepts provide student teachers with a format that is functional and comprehensible.

Another important aspect of this handbook is that it utilized action research in order to address the professional development of student teachers. The implications within Education are great. For example, this handbook can be used as a developmental tool in various workshops, teacher training programs, and even a supplement to the student teacher's Capstone course they are required to take during their student teaching assignment. These developmental programs need to be implemented in order for student teachers to be exposed to Instructional Communication research. It will not only help them enhance their communication abilities, but in doing so, they will also be able to increase the cognitive and affective learning of their students. It is advisable for student teachers to utilize this handbook as a co-requisite for their student teaching assignment. Student teachers need to be exposed to this handbook at the beginning of their student teaching assignment in order to understand the dynamics of classroom communication. Reading this handbook during their observation period would be the best time to introduce instructional communication topics to them. In this regard, they would have the

background knowledge before experimenting with the different methodologies and applications that are presented within the handbook.

On the same level, there are also implications of a joint effort between Communication and Education departments to teach Instructional Communication topics to preservice teachers. This type of collaboration would be beneficial in order to effectively implement the appropriate teacher training programs. This would not only allow for the implementation of this handbook, but also open the door for Instructional Communication courses to be offered on a more universal level within the undergraduate and post-bachelor's curriculum.

Finally, the material presented in the handbook may not be deemed as the latest or the best research available, however, the research that was utilized offers a solid foundation of knowledge that encompasses and fulfills the objective of this handbook. The handbook was created and tailored specifically for student teachers in order to educate them on the importance of communication in the classroom. Given the vast amount of methodological and research applications, this handbook can be deemed as helpful, valid, and reliable.

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APPENDIX A  
STUDENT TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

## Student Teacher Survey

**Directions:** Please fill in the appropriate number in the blank provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. What is your sex?

1 = Male

2 = Female

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. What is your certification level?

1 = EC-4

2 = 4-8

3 = 8-12

4 = All level

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. What was your educational background?

1 = Degree in education

2 = Post-Bachelor's program

3 = Other

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. What was the term of your student teaching assignment?

1 = Full (under 1 cooperating teacher)

2 = Split assignment (under 2 or more cooperating teachers)

6. What subject(s) will you be certified to teach? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Directions:** Please rate the following items in accordance of how concerned **you** are about each instructional communication topic as a preservice teacher. Use the following scale.

**Scale: 1 = Very Unconcerned**

**2 = Somewhat Unconcerned**

**3 = Neutral**

**4 = Somewhat Concerned**

**5 = Very Concerned**

\_\_\_\_\_ Handling student misbehavior (classroom management)

\_\_\_\_\_ Communication apprehension of the teacher (the teacher's fear or anxiety about communicating with students)

\_\_\_\_\_ Communication styles of the teacher (such as being more assertive or responsive)

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher clarity and relevance

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher power and influence (such as credibility and authority)

\_\_\_\_\_ Relationship between student and teacher (interpersonal communication)

\_\_\_\_\_ Listening strategies (as in teachers listening to students)

- Scale: 1 = Very Unconcerned**  
**2 = Somewhat Unconcerned**  
**3 = Neutral**  
**4 = Somewhat Concerned**  
**5 = Very Concerned**

- \_\_\_\_\_ The use of **nonverbal** behaviors to create a feeling of being physically & psychologically connected from the student's perspective (such as touching the shoulder of a student when giving them instructions)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The use of **verbal** behaviors to create a feeling of being physically & psychologically connected from the student's perspective (such as calling students by their names)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intercultural communication (teaching students from other or diverse cultures)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using humor in instruction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using lecture as an instructional strategy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using small groups as an instructional strategy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using discussion as an instructional strategy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using computer-mediated communication as an instructional strategy
- 

**Directions:** Please answer the following open-ended questions as completely as you can.

1) What kinds of communication problems with students did you face during your student teaching assignment?

2) How did you handle these problems and what were the outcomes?

3) What kinds of communication problems did you face in your methods of teaching?

4) How did you handle these problems and what were the outcomes?

5) What communication topics do you feel you need more information on to communicate more effectively with your students?

APPENDIX B  
INSTRUCTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

## Instructor Questionnaire

I am a Texas Tech University graduate student compiling a student teacher handbook for my thesis. I am exploring instructional communication needs of student teachers. If you have any questions concerning this study, please call Melanie May or Dr. David Roach in the Department of Communication Studies, TTU, (806) 742-3911, as they are responsible for this study.

**Directions:** Please write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how you have applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom. The narratives and examples will be used in a handbook for student teachers and will be chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity. Your name and title will be printed with your response. If, however, you do not want your name printed, I can include a generic title. **However, by filling this out, you agree to have your classroom experience published with or without your name. Your consent extends to any and all publications of this handbook.** Please choose one topic from the following list to respond to by explaining how *you* make this work in your classroom. (Your audience will be preservice teachers.) After this, please fill in your demographic data.

Form 1:

- Instructional Clarity
- Communicating Teacher Power

Form 2:

- Behavior Management
- Adapting to Different Cognitive Levels

Form 3:

- Understanding Student Slang
- Socio-Communicative Styles

Form 4:

- Intercultural Communication
- Teacher Immediacy (Verbal & Nonverbal)

Form 5:

- Discussion as an Instructional Strategy
- Teacher Nervousness

## Instructor Questionnaire—Form 1

I am a Texas Tech University graduate student compiling a student teacher handbook for my thesis. I am exploring instructional communication needs of student teachers. If you have any questions concerning this study, please call Melanie May or Dr. David Roach in the Department of Communication Studies, TTU, (806) 742-3911, as they are responsible for this study.

**Directions:** Please write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how you have applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom. The narratives and examples will be used in a handbook for student teachers and will be chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity. Your name and title will be printed with your response. If, however, you do not want your name printed, I can include a generic title. **However, by filling this out, you agree to have your classroom experience published with or without your name. Your consent extends to any and all publications of this handbook.** Please choose one topic from the following list to respond to by explaining how *you* make this work in your classroom. (Your audience will be preservice teachers.) After this, please fill in your demographic data.

- Instructional Clarity (how you present clearly/adapt for more clarity)
- Teacher Power (communicating influence such as credibility & authority)

**Subject you are writing about:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative:** (Feel free to write on back & please print legibly)

**Please fill in the following demographic information.**

1. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What subject(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What grade level(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where are you currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!!***

## Instructor Questionnaire—Form 2

I am a Texas Tech University graduate student compiling a student teacher handbook for my thesis. I am exploring instructional communication needs of student teachers. If you have any questions concerning this study, please call Melanie May or Dr. David Roach in the Department of Communication Studies, TTU, (806) 742-3911, as they are responsible for this study.

**Directions:** Please write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how you have applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom. The narratives and examples will be used in a handbook for student teachers and will be chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity. Your name and title will be printed with your response. If, however, you do not want your name printed, I can include a generic title. **However, by filling this out, you agree to have your classroom experience published with or without your name. Your consent extends to any and all publications of this handbook.** Please choose one topic from the following list to respond to by explaining how *you* make this work in your classroom. (Your audience will be preservice teachers.) After this, please fill in your demographic data.

- Behavior Management (Handling student misbehavior)
- Adapting to Different Cognitive Levels of Students

Subject you are writing about: \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative: (Feel free to write on back & please print legibly)**

**Please fill in the following demographic information.**

1. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What subject(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What grade level(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where are you currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!!***

## Instructor Questionnaire—Form 3

I am a Texas Tech University graduate student compiling a student teacher handbook for my thesis. I am exploring instructional communication needs of student teachers. If you have any questions concerning this study, please call Melanie May or Dr. David Roach in the Department of Communication Studies, TTU, (806) 742-3911, as they are responsible for this study.

**Directions:** Please write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how you have applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom. The narratives and examples will be used in a handbook for student teachers and will be chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity. Your name and title will be printed with your response. If, however, you do not want your name printed, I can include a generic title. **However, by filling this out, you agree to have your classroom experience published with or without your name. Your consent extends to any and all publications of this handbook.** Please choose one topic from the following list to respond to by explaining how *you* make this work in your classroom. (Your audience will be preservice teachers.) After this, please fill in your demographic data.

- Understanding Student Slang/Vernacular to increase teacher-student relationship
- Communication Styles of Teacher (such as being more assertive or responsive; or dramatic, relaxed, etc.)

**Subject you are writing about:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative:** (Feel free to write on back & please print legibly)

**Please fill in the following demographic information.**

1. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What subject(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What grade level(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where are you currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!!***

## Instructor Questionnaire—Form 4

I am a Texas Tech University graduate student compiling a student teacher handbook for my thesis. I am exploring instructional communication needs of student teachers. If you have any questions concerning this study, please call Melanie May or Dr. David Roach in the Department of Communication Studies, TTU, (806) 742-3911, as they are responsible for this study.

**Directions:** Please write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how you have applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom. The narratives and examples will be used in a handbook for student teachers and will be chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity. Your name and title will be printed with your response. If, however, you do not want your name printed, I can include a generic title. **However, by filling this out, you agree to have your classroom experience published with or without your name. Your consent extends to any and all publications of this handbook.** Please choose one topic from the following list to respond to by explaining how *you* make this work in your classroom. (Your audience will be preservice teachers.) After this, please fill in your demographic data.

- Intercultural Communication (teaching students from diverse cultures)
- Teacher Immediacy (Verbal and/or Nonverbal behaviors used to create a feeling of being physically and psychologically connected from the student's perspective such as with nonverbal gestures, calling student's by name or using humor, etc.)

**Subject you are writing about:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative:** (Feel free to write on back & please print legibly)

**Please fill in the following demographic information.**

1. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What subject(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What grade level(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where are you currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!!***

## Instructor Questionnaire—Form 5

I am a Texas Tech University graduate student compiling a student teacher handbook for my thesis. I am exploring instructional communication needs of student teachers. If you have any questions concerning this study, please call Melanie May or Dr. David Roach in the Department of Communication Studies, TTU, (806) 742-3911, as they are responsible for this study.

**Directions:** Please write a story, narrative, or classroom example about how you have applied or observed one of the following teaching strategies at work or in practice in the classroom. The narratives and examples will be used in a handbook for student teachers and will be chosen on the basis of applicability, interest, and creativity. Your name and title will be printed with your response. If, however, you do not want your name printed, I can include a generic title. **However, by filling this out, you agree to have your classroom experience published with or without your name. Your consent extends to any and all publications of this handbook.** Please choose one topic from the following list to respond to by explaining how *you* make this work in your classroom. (Your audience will be preservice teachers.) After this, please fill in your demographic data.

- Discussion as an Instructional Strategy
- Teacher Nervousness (Anxiety/Communication Apprehension)

Subject you are writing about: \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative: (Feel free to write on back & please print legibly)**

**Please fill in the following demographic information.**

1. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What subject(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What grade level(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where are you currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your participation!!***

APPENDIX C

TEACHING IS COMMUNICATING! A HANDBOOK

FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

By Melanie May

# *Teaching is Communicating!*

*A handbook for student teachers*

By Melanie May

Illustrations by Odessa Hamilton

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# Dedication

To my loving husband, Lance, who has been a supportive pillar to lean on when times were weary. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my professors at Texas Tech University, Dr. David Roach, Dr. Rob Stewart, and Dr. Margaret Price who provided guidance, support, and inspiration. Thank you for helping me strive for excellence. And finally, to my family and friends who have helped me physically and emotionally along the way. Thank you.

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# Introduction

After starting the Master's program in Communication Studies, I realized that there is a lot of interesting research within the field of Instructional Communication that student teachers could benefit from and utilize. As a student teacher myself, I can look back and recall that delivering my first lectures/discussions were a bit uninspiring. Granted, I knew what I was talking about, but I soon realized that content knowledge was only the beginning of becoming an effective teacher....

Another part lies within this handbook in the form of Communication. This handbook was compiled as a two-part research investigation that utilized the overarching design of action research. The field of Instructional Communication was researched and analyzed to determine what the prevalent communication topics were over the past 20 years. Additionally, surveys were given to student teachers to find out what kinds of communication concerns, needs, and issues they experienced during their student teaching assignment. After this data was compiled and analyzed, the current research topics found in each chapter of this handbook were created based on both of these approaches. Consequently, there are a multitude of communication topics within the literature, however, this handbook is unique in the fact that it narrows down the topics that are of specific concern for student teachers. Using a qualitative investigation of the surveys, two additional topics emerged that are not necessarily instructional communication topics—Adapting to Student Cognitive Levels and Interpreting Student Slang—however, they are of importance to student teachers and therefore will be included. Additionally, the chapter on Classroom Management, which many student teachers need additional information on, comes directly from educational research.

It is my hope that preservice teachers and beginning teachers will find this handbook helpful. Instructional Communication research within the field of Education is not very prevalent, therefore, I am excited to introduce a few new communication topics to preservice teachers. This handbook provides research-based information that is easy to read and learn about so that beginning teachers can try some of these strategies when they enter the classroom. It is my belief that effective instructional communication combined with experience and knowledge is the foundation for learning. Although preservice teachers do not have the experience yet, their journey can begin by understanding what researchers acknowledge as enhancing the learning process through Communication.

# FOUNDATIONS FOR COMMUNICATING & LEARNING

## Chapter 1 Adapting to Student Cognitive Levels

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Developmental stages
- Cognitive learning theories and implications
- Applications for the classroom

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### **Introduction**

This chapter is designed to give you an overview of the developmental stages of students along with some background information on cognitive learning theories. By understanding how students learn cognitively, the teacher can better understand the learning process as a whole. Learning is a dynamic and individualistic process that goes hand-in-hand with instructional communication. This chapter builds the foundation for communicating in the classroom and developing effective student-teacher relationships. By utilizing this foundation, we can build upon it by exploring each of the communication topics within this handbook. The main sections discussed in the

handbook include: Communicating to affect student behavior, Communicating for motivation and relationship, and Communicating to enhance learning.

To begin with, we are going to explore cognitive learning theories in relation to instructional adaptation. Again, learning is individualistic and all your students will not be on the same level. Therefore, adapting instruction to accommodate individual needs can be challenging given the numerous learning theories within educational psychology. This chapter will briefly go over a few dominant theories as well as how teachers can utilize them as they plan curriculum.

Historically speaking, instructional activities were adapted for individualized instruction during colonial times, de-individualized with mass or group instruction during industrialization due to efficiency and standardization, and then back to an individualized approach during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Grinder & Nelsen, 1985). Additionally, individualized instruction has been predominately shaped by economic, administrative, and ideological issues such as cost, class size, and learning theories (Grinder & Nelsen, 1985). Despite the pros and cons that surround this issue, Wang and Walberg (1983) offer the following definition (p. 603):

**Adaptive Instruction** = *the use of alternative instructional strategies and school resources to provide learning experiences that meet the different needs of individual students.*

The purpose of adaptive instruction is to increase the student's time on task, which should then increase student achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 1985). Effective

instruction requires a variety of procedures and learning experiences to be taken into consideration (Johnson & Johnson, 1985). To begin with, we will explore some general developmental stages and prominent cognitive learning theories, and then apply these in the classroom environment.

## **Developmental Stages**

Children and adolescents go through a multitude of developmental changes and stages. Some developmental stages include psychosocial development, moral development, and cognitive development. On average, most beginning teachers are interested in adapting instruction for students at different cognitive levels, therefore cognitive development theories will be discussed and analyzed. But first, some general developmental stages will be presented for a quick overview.

Teachers are challenged to adapt instruction according to different abilities and grade levels. Researchers have explored various models of social and behavioral development of students. Brophy and Evertson (1978) identified four general developmental stages in regard to grade level (pp. 312-313). The following list will also include some examples of student behavior within these categories and are presented in italics (Larrivee, 1999, p. 53).

**Kindergarten/Early Elementary Grades**—Students are socialized into the student role. Emphasis is on teaching them what to do, rather than getting them to comply with familiar rules. Most will do what they are told and feel gratified when they please the teachers and upset when they do not. Students turn to teachers for directions, encouragement, solace, and personal attention.

*Kindergarten teachers generally accept the fact that little can be done with impulse-ridden and motor-oriented behavior, and thus will often tolerate it given it is not wild behavior.*

**Middle Elementary Grades**—starts when basic socialization to the student role is completed and continues as long as the student is relatively compliant. Students are familiar with school routines and serious disturbances are not yet common. Creating and maintaining an appropriate learning environment remain central to teaching success.

*Students in third or fourth grade are caught between group pressure and allegiance to the teacher, and are notorious for tattling.*

**Upper Elementary/Junior High**—begin changing orientation of pleasing teachers to pleasing peers, and resent teachers who act as authority figures. Certain students become more disturbed and harder to control. As a result, classroom management becomes a prominent part of the teacher role. The teacher's primary problem is motivating students to behave, not instructing them in how to behave.

*Age-typical behavior includes primping and telling secrets of sixth grade and preadolescent girls; and sex language and behavior of adolescent boys.*

**Upper High School**—most alienated students drop out of school and the rest become more mature. Classrooms assume an academic focus again. Classroom management requires less time because students handle role responsibilities on their own. Teaching is a matter of instructing students in formal curriculum, although socialization occurs during out-of-class contacts with peers.

*However, adolescents feel the need to show increased autonomy, which may lead to verbal confrontations. They often reject adult characteristics, which can result in teasing or badmouthing.*

## **Cognitive Learning Theories & Implications**

Cognitive learning theories “emphasize making knowledge meaningful and helping learners organize and relate it to knowledge in memory” (Schunk, 1991, p. 7). In general, research has identified six assumptions or propositions about learning. By understanding how students learn, teachers can use this knowledge to improve instruction

for the advanced students as well as the slower students (Jones, Palincsar, Ogle, and Carr, 1987, p. 4).

### Research-Based Assumptions

- 1) Learning is goal oriented.
- 2) Learning is linking new information to prior knowledge.
- 3) Learning is organizing information.
- 4) Learning is acquiring a repertoire of cognitive and metacognitive structures.
- 5) Learning occurs in phases yet is nonlinear.
- 6) Learning is influenced by development.

Learning not only relates new information to prior knowledge, but it also involves strategies and patterns used for organization and memory (Jones et al., 1987). Specific cognitive development theories from Piaget and Vygotsky, along with schema theory, utilize some of the previous learning assumptions.

#### *Piaget*

Piaget's stages of cognitive development include the following (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004, p. 144):

- 1) **Sensorimotor** (Birth to 2 yrs.)—Schemes are based on behaviors and perceptions. Symbolic thought emerges near the end of the stage.
- 2) **Preoperational** (2 to 6 or 7 yrs.)—Symbolic thought and language are prominent, but child does not reason in logical, adult-like ways yet.
- 3) **Concrete Operations** (6 or 7 to 11 or 12 yrs.)—Adult-like logic appears but is limited to reasoning about concrete reality.
- 4) **Formal Operations** (11 or 12 through adulthood)—Logical reasoning processes are applied to abstract ideas as well as to concrete objects.

Key ideas surrounding this theory include: 1) Children are active and motivated learners; 2) Children organize what they learn from their experiences; 3) Children adapt to their environments through assimilation and accommodation; 4) Interaction with one's physical environment and other people are critical; and 5) Children think in qualitatively different ways at different age levels (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004).

Although Piaget may have underestimated the capabilities of preschoolers and elementary children, some practical implications for teachers include the following (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004):

- Provide opportunities for children to experiment with physical objects and natural phenomena.
- Explore children's reasoning with problem-solving tasks and probing questions.
- Keep the stages in mind when planning activities, but don't take the stages too literally.
- Present ideas and situations that children cannot easily explain using their existing knowledge and beliefs.
- Plan group activities in which young people share their beliefs and perspectives with one another.
- Use familiar content and tasks when asking children to reason in sophisticated ways.

Educational implications using Piaget's theory have also been analyzed by Byrnes (1996), who offers two principles that apply to educational practices (pp. 17-18):

**Principle 1**—In order for students to create mental structures they must internalize action schemes by repeatedly performing them to attain a goal. For example, if a teacher wants a student to read silently or perform mental computations, they need a lot of practice performing these actions overtly.

**Principle 2**—Thinking at each developmental level has unique features to take into consideration when designing educational programs. For example, when making decisions regarding when and how to present a topic, teachers can ask the following three questions:

- 1) How many dimensions or issues do students have to consider at once?
- 2) Does understanding the topic require reversible thought or an understanding of opposites?
- 3) Are there things I can point to in order to illustrate the idea sufficiently?

### *Vygotsky*

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development incorporates a more cultural approach than Piaget. The following are key ideas: 1) Through both informal interactions and formal schooling, adults convey to children the ways in which their culture interprets and responds to the world; 2) Complex mental processes begin as social activities; as children develop, they gradually internalize the processes they use in social contexts and begin to use them independently; 3) Children can perform more challenging tasks when assisted by more advanced and competent individuals; 4) Challenging tasks promote maximum cognitive growth; and 5) Play allows children to stretch themselves cognitively (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004).

Educational implications that have derived from Vygotsky's theory include the following (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004, pp. 173-176):

- Present challenging tasks, perhaps within the context of cooperative activities.
- Scaffold children's efforts. Scaffolding a task involves:
  - Demonstrating the task
  - Dividing the task into several smaller parts
  - Providing a structure (steps/guidelines) for performing the task
  - Asking questions to engage thinking about the task
  - Keeping children's attention focused on the relevant aspects
  - Giving frequent feedback on how they are progressing
- Promote self-regulation by teaching children to talk themselves through difficult situations or tasks.
- Assess children's abilities under a variety of work conditions.
- Provide opportunities to engage in authentic activities (which are similar to activities children may encounter in the adult world).
- Give children the chance to play.

Additional implications of Vygotsky's theory have also been analyzed by Byrnes (1996), who offers four educational principles (pp. 32-33):

**Principle 1**—Teachers should act as scaffolds in which they provide enough guidance to help children make progress on their own. For example, instead of telling a child how to solve a problem step-by-step, a teacher should start problems and ask the students to finish them, or give hints to allow them to find the solution on their own.

**Principle 2**—Instruction should always ‘be in advance’ of a child’s current level of mastery. If material is presented at or below the mastery level, there will be no growth. Likewise, if it is presented beyond their level, they will be confused and frustrated.

**Principle 3**—Instruction should involve ‘reciprocal teaching,’ where teachers model a skill, give students a chance to practice it, offer feedback, and slowly fade from the scene. (This is quite similar to the scaffolding approach).

**Principle 4**—Children need to be repeatedly confronted with scientific conceptions in order for their spontaneous concepts to be more accurate and general. All fields (math, social studies, science, the arts, etc.) have scientific concepts.

### *Schema Theory*

Schema theory is based on knowledge structures. A schema (schemata = plural) is a knowledge structure that organizes large amounts of information, such as objects or events, into meaningful systems (Byrnes, 1996; Schunk, 1991). Four functions of schemata include (Byrnes, 1996):

- 1) To categorize your experiences

- 2) To help us remember things
- 3) To understand and comprehend what is going on
- 4) To aid in problem-solving

One type of ordered sequence (that represents a schema) may include 'going to a restaurant' (Byrnes, 1996; Schunk, 1991). The sequence can consist of being seated at a table, looking over a menu, ordering food, being served, and so forth. In the classroom, some common schema may involve lab procedures, studying, or even comprehending a story or text (Schunk, 1991). Byrnes (1996) offers three principles that apply schema theory within educational practices (pp. 24-25):

**Principle 1**—Teachers should view learning as the acquisition and modification of schemata rather than as the acquisition of isolated facts. To form schemata, teachers should present multiple instances of a concept/problem and have students identify common features of the instances. Teachers should have students experience the same type of event and have them abstract commonalities across these events.

**Principle 2**—Teachers should expect that without various types of study aids (i.e., notes), students will sometimes retain only small portions of an experience or lesson. They might also elaborate or distort what they have retained using inferences.

**Principle 3**—Meaningful learning occurs when students can incorporate new information into an existing schema or when they can create new schemata by way of analogy to old schemata. To facilitate this, teachers should evoke appropriate schemata before presenting a new topic, such as using a short

introductory statement that details the similarities between a new topic and a topic that students already know. For example, a science teacher can use dominoes to illustrate how electricity passes through a wire.

In conclusion, the three cognitive theories presented in this section offer a wide array of educational implications that can be adapted and used in your classroom. Some common themes presented include: 1) Emphasis on the role and practice of repetition; 2) Practice helps students internalize skills and form abstractions; 3) Knowledge consists of meaningful relations; and 4) Children interpret reality and instruction, they do not merely internalize it (Byrnes, 1996, p. 33).

### **Applications for the Classroom**

One instructional strategy that was briefly mentioned was the use of cooperative learning groups (Vygotsky) as a means of adapting instruction for different levels of students. This strategy has also been referenced within the classroom management chapter. Johnson and Johnson (1985) note that cooperative learning is highly flexible.

*Cooperative learning procedures may be used with any age student (from preschool through adult education), in any subject area, with a wide variety of curriculum material and technological aids, and with any type of student. Heterogeneous and well as homogeneous groups may be used so that learning situations that involve gifted, medium-ability, and handicapped student can be created. (p. 106)*

In addition to this, the following excerpt adequately demonstrates how one teacher adapts to different cognitive levels within the classroom:

*One of the first things I do at the beginning of the year is to get a copy of my students reading level. I am very likely to have students that have a reading level from first grade to eighth grade (sometimes higher) in the same class. I also have a percentage of students that are receiving special services. Because of the high degree of variation among students, I do a couple of things that I apply to all students that seems to be effective or at least makes me feel that I have addressed this situation without drawing attention to any specific student(s).*

*(1) We as a class read aloud. The students volunteer for this. You will be surprised, no matter what level, most kids like to read aloud. I do not force any child to read. After we finish a paragraph, I discuss what we just read. Just because they can read doesn't always mean they always comprehend.*

*(2) I write my subject matter notes, make a class set and have the students copy them. This way, no matter what level, they all have the same notes. Lower level students are not capable of taking notes from a teacher standing up and lecturing. They do not know what to write. Higher level students appreciate this as well because it leaves nothing to chance. All notes as well as vocabulary assignments are kept in a spiral notebook and kept in my room. They are always there, therefore when I am discussing important subject matter, all they need to do is listen. Then if they have any questions they can feel free to ask.*

**--Shannon Edwards, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science--**

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# COMMUNICATING TO AFFECT STUDENT BEHAVIOR

## Chapter 2 Handling Teacher & Student Apprehension

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Definitions and distinctions between communication terms
- Implications and research
- Surveys to test communication apprehension
- Prevention and ways to reduce communication apprehension
- Applications for the classroom

---

### Definitions & Distinctions

As a student teacher it is quite normal to get a little bit nervous about teaching in front of a group of students. Some teachers may have occasional symptoms of what can be termed as *stage fright*, *speech fright*, or *communication apprehension*. Stage fright and speech fright are specific to giving speeches or talking in front of a group of people, while the term communication apprehension (CA) can be conceptualized as a personal trait or a response to a given situation. CA is an internalized construct that can be divided into trait-like and state-like qualities.

McCroskey (1977), a predominant researcher in this field, offers the following definitions:

**CA** = *an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.*

**Trait-like apprehension** = *characterized by fear or anxiety with respect to many different types of oral communication encounters, from talking to a single person or to giving a speech in front of a large crowd.*

**State-like apprehension** = *is specific to a given oral communication situation, such as giving a particular speech to a group of strangers or interviewing with an important person.*

What this is saying is that a person can exhibit communication apprehension in specific situations or in regard to any communication situation because of an internalized predisposition.

So you may be thinking, 'Sure I get a little nervous,' or 'I'm a little shy in front of a group of students, but it's no big deal!' Well you could be right, it may or may not be a big deal or interfere with your teaching. However, it is important to understand the communication traits that you possess.

Another concept that is similar to but different from CA, is the term *shy* or *shyness*. McCroskey and Richmond (1982) offer this compilation from a series of definitions:

**Shyness** = *an overt behavior on the part of the communicator characterized by: not talking, a tendency to withdraw, a tendency to be timid and lack confidence, and neither assertive or responsive to others.*

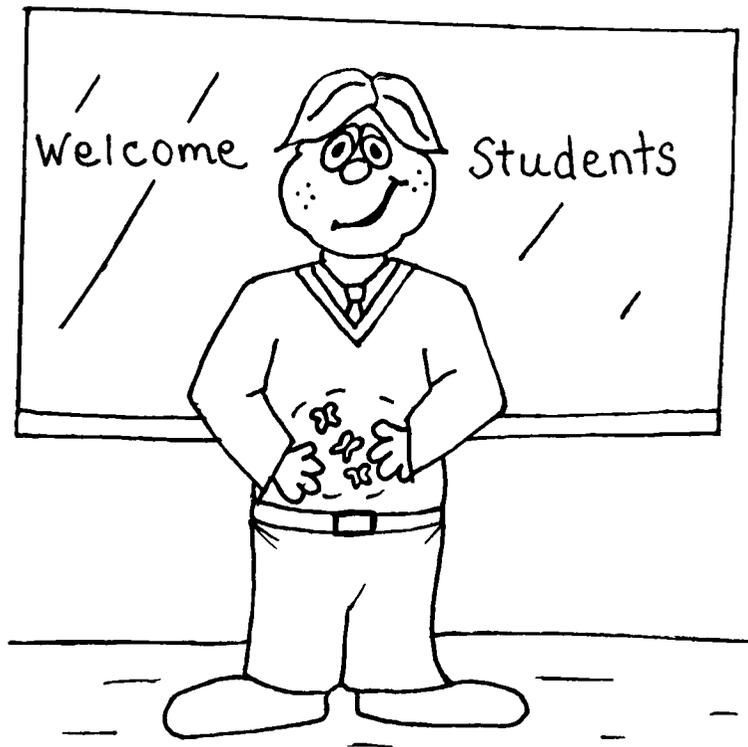
Shyness refers to the actual behavior that you can see, most notably the behavior of not communicating.

Finally, the term *nervous* or *nervousness* is characterized by bodily feelings as demonstrated in the *American Heritage Dictionary*:

**Nervous/Nervousness** = *of or affecting the nerves (in your body); uneasy; apprehensive.*

Additionally, the feeling of being nervous can be caused by fear, anxiety, stress, or apprehension. Therefore, nervousness can be caused by communication apprehension as well. Dwyer (1998) compiled a list of the physical sensations that can accompany nervous feelings and are quite common in public speaking situations:

- A pounding heartbeat
- Indigestion
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Dry mouth
- Blushing
- Shaky hands or feet



Mr. Carpenter had the jitters...his mouth was dry, his hands were sweaty, and his stomach had its fair share of the butterflies.

### **Implications & Research**

Numerous studies have been performed to see what associations there are with high and low apprehensive individuals. Studies show that about 20% of children and adults have high levels of CA (McCroskey, 1977). This 20% is likely to exhibit the following effects that are common for high apprehensive individuals (McCroskey, 1997):

- 1) Communication Avoidance
- 2) Communication Withdrawal
- 3) Communication Disruption

Additionally, McCroskey (1977) reviewed existing CA research and compiled the following negative attributes associated with high CA:

- High CA's will be perceived less positively by others.
- High CA's will be negatively impacted in terms of their economic, academic, political, and social lives.

Although this general research is inferred from empirical studies, it would benefit preservice teachers to see how CA is directly correlated with teachers in the classroom, therefore the rest of this section will focus on the classroom context.

#### *Classroom Context*

McCroskey, Anderson, Richmond, and Wheelless (1981) specifically looked at elementary and secondary students and teachers with regard to CA. The following results were found:

### Students

- K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade had lower CA scores than all other grade levels (4-12).
- K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children were more verbal and less shy than older peers.
- Notable changes in CA scores occurred during kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades.

### Teachers

- A large number of elementary teachers have high CA.
- A very low proportion of secondary teachers have high CA.
- The proportion of high to low CA's in grades 1-4 show that for every four teachers with high CA there is one teacher with low CA.

Other researchers revealed these findings pertinent to the classroom environment (meta-analysis from McCroskey, 1977):

- A strong relationship between low self-esteem and high CA was found.  
[Snively & Sullivan, 1976]
- Students with high CA were less likely to seek tutor help than those with low CA. [Scott, Yates, & Wheelless, 1975]
- High CA students tend to choose seats along the sides and back of the room.  
[McCroskey & Sheahan, 1976]
- Students with high CA have been found to have lower college GPA's overall.  
[McCroskey & Andersen, 1976]

- Students with high CA have been found to have lower standardized test scores after the completion of high school. [McCroskey & Andersen, 1976]

Additionally, some more recent studies have revealed interesting associations in both college and middle school levels:

- Drop-out patterns within the first two years of college for high CA's are more severe than for low CA's. [McCroskey & Payne, 1986]
- Students in at-risk environments (6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades) are more apprehensive about speaking in groups and dyads and have lower perceptions of their own communication competence. [Chesebro et al., 1992]
- Hispanic and Black groups (6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades) report being more apprehensive than White groups. [Chesebro et al., 1992]

## Surveys

So how do you know if you have high or low CA? A survey has been devised to measure both state and trait CA. The overall score is your measure of CA. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) has been proven reliable and valid and can be found in Table 2.1.

Additionally, now that you know what CA is and the implications surrounding it, you can use this knowledge to identify students that may have high CA as well.

Therefore, the Personal Report of Communication Fear (PRCF), which can be administered to preliterate children verbally, will also be included for your reference in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.1**

**Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)**  
**(McCroskey, J. C.)**

Directions: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning your feelings about communication with other people. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Are Undecided, (4) Disagree, or (5) Strongly Disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly; just record your first impressions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I am afraid to speak up in conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

**Table 2.1 continued**

Subscore Desired	Scoring Formula
Group Discussions	18 + (scores for items 2, 4, and 6) minus (scores for items 1, 3, and 5) = _____
Meetings	18 + (scores for items 8, 9, and 12) minus (scores for items 7, 10, and 11) = _____
Interpersonal Conversations	18 + (scores for items 14, 16, and 17) minus (scores for items 13, 15, and 18) = _____
Public Speaking	18 + (scores for items 19, 21, and 23) minus (scores for items 20, 22, and 24) = _____
<b>Overall CA = Group + Meeting + Interpersonal + Public</b>	<b>_____</b>

Overall trait CA scores range from 24-120. Typically, CA levels can fall into the following categories: (1) Low = < 50, (2) Average = 50-65, (3) Moderately High = 66-80, and High = > 80. [Other research shows: (1) Low = < 52, (2) Moderate = 51-79, (3) High = above 79.]

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**Table 2.2**

**Personal Report of Communication Fear (PRCF)**  
**(McCroskey & Richmond, 1991)**

**Directions:** The following 14 statements concern feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling your response. Mark “YES” if you strongly agree, “yes” if you agree, “?” if you are unsure, “no” if you disagree, or “NO” if you strongly disagree. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; record your first impression.

1. Talking with someone new scares me.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
2. I look forward to talking in class.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
3. I like standing up and talking to a group of people.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
4. I like to talk when the whole class listens.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
5. Standing up to talk in front other people scares me.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
6. I like talking to teachers.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
7. I am scared to talk to people.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
8. I like it when it is my turn to talk in class.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
9. I like to talk to new people.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
10. When someone asks me a question, it scares me.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
11. There are a lot of people I am scared to talk to.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
12. I like to talk to people I haven't met before.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
13. I like it when I don't have to talk.	YES	yes	?	no	NO
14. Talking to teachers scares me.	YES	yes	?	no	NO

**Scoring:** YES=1, yes=2, ?=3, no=4, NO=5

To obtain the score for the PRCF, complete the following steps:

- 1) Add the scores for the following items: 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 12.
- 2) Add the scores for the following items: 1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, and 14.
- 3) Add 42 to the total of step 1.
- 4) Subtract the total of step 2 from the total of step 3.

Your score should be between 14 and 70. Normal range is between 28-47. Students who score above 47 are most likely communication-apprehensive.

*[These are children who need very careful, special attention. Those who score below 28 are very low in CA. These children are likely to be highly verbal, and they often will be the students who are most disruptive in the classroom. They are also those who most likely will do well in a traditional instructional system. In addition, they are frequently well-liked by other students and, unless they are particularly disruptive, well-liked by their teachers.]*

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## Prevention & Reducing CA

### *Prevention*

On the basis that CA is affected by the environment as well as internal trait-like qualities, the following list is aimed at intervening within the early childhood years.

McCroskey (1977) compiled available research and devised several steps to reduce the chance of a child developing high CA.

- 1) *Extra effort should be exerted to provide children with reinforcement for their communication during their formative years, particularly in large families.*
- 2) *Children with slow language development or deficient speech skills should receive help as early as possible so that they do not lose positive reinforcement as a result of deficient skills.*
- 3) *Teachers should be trained to recognize the presence of CA in a child and provide extra reinforcement for the child's communication, particularly in the early school years.*
- 4) *Classroom teaching procedures should be modified so that children are not required to perform orally at a level beyond their skill development, such as eliminating required oral reading of material in the first and second grades that includes sounds that the child has not yet mastered.*
- 5) *When a child has been found to have high CA, treatment to overcome the problem should be made available as early as possible so that the*

*negative effects of high CA on the child's learning may be held to a minimum.*

#### *Four Major CA Reduction Techniques*

### **1) Cognitive Restructuring**

This technique will teach students how to rebuild anxious thoughts about public speaking and change the way they feel. Fremouw and Scott (1979) offer four steps to carry out this process:

- 1) *Introducing cognitive restructuring*—includes learning about the concepts and goals of this method, as well as identifying communication situations the student feels most anxious in.
- 2) *Identifying negative self-statements*—involves making a list of negative self-statements or thoughts that go through your mind such as: “They will think I sound dumb” or “Everyone is staring at me.”
- 3) *Learning coping statements*—targets the negative statements and turns them around using positive coping statements such as “I know as much as anyone,” or “It’s only a small group of students like me.”
- 4) *Practicing*—encourages practice as well as keeping a diary to analyze the use of coping statements in various situations.

### **2) Systematic Desensitization**

This technique will help students replace nervous feelings with more relaxed feelings. Again, excessive physical sensations can include a pounding heartbeat,

indigestion, sweating, nausea, dry mouth, blushing, and shaky hands or feet (Dwyer, 1998). This reduction technique involves three steps (Dwyer, 1998):

- 1) Create a hierarchy of feared events
- 2) Train your body in progressive muscle relaxation
- 3) Condition relaxation by adding mental pictures from the hierarchy

The main goal is to learn muscle relaxation techniques. Friedrich and Goss (1984) offer the following strategies for learning how to relax your muscles:

- Muscle relaxation is achieved by successively tensing and releasing muscle groups throughout the body.
- Once in a state of relaxation, anxiety-provoking stimuli is presented to the subject, and if there is tension, the subject should return to a state of relaxation.
- This would repeat in a cycle until relaxation is achieved with the anxiety-provoking stimuli.

Although there are variations in the delivery procedures of systematic desensitization, numerous studies have supported group practice of this technique (Friedrich & Goss, 1984), and thus could be implemented within a classroom setting.

### **3) Visualization**

This technique was originally derived to help athletes mentally prepare for an event or game. Visualization consists of a mental rehearsal that prepares your mind and body to alleviate anxiety (Dwyer, 1998). Ayres, Hopf, and Edwards (1999) found that visualization includes the following techniques:

- 1) Relaxation techniques
- 2) Guided cognitive restructuring
- 3) Behavior modeling

Combining imagery and positive thinking to imagine speaking well can help reduce stress and anxiety associated with CA. Positive thinking is crucial because high apprehensive students produce more negative self-images than low apprehensive students (Ayres & Heuett, 1997).

#### **4) Skills training**

Skills training assumes that students experience anxiety because they lack effective speaking skills (Robinson, 1997). Skills training revolves around public speaking and therefore includes items such as developing the introduction, outlining, compiling effective research (Robinson, 1997), and developing nonverbal delivery techniques such as rate, gestures, and eye contact (Neer & Kirchner, 1989). Most basic public speaking courses offer instruction that is structured around enhancing preparation and delivery skills. In addition, for skills training to be effective, the methods used should address specific deficiencies that need improvement (Pelias, 1991).

#### **Applications for the Classroom**

*“Face it, you cannot control your nerves...the adrenaline is pumping through your body. So why try to control your nerves—contain them and use them to your advantage. Nervousness means adrenaline, and adrenaline means energy—use the energy. Do not try to fight it, go with it.” – Douglas Parker, 2003*

By understanding the implications and differences of CA, shyness, and nervousness, the beginning teacher will be better equipped to handle such communication issues. The following excerpts are suggestions from middle and high school teachers in regard to teacher nervousness:

*New teachers need to know that most instructors were nervous at the beginning of their first year in a classroom. Take deep breaths and think before speaking. Be prepared! Be prepared! Be prepared! You may even practice the lesson beforehand the first few days. Try to think about all the things that might go wrong or problems that may arise. Anticipate possible responses and solutions.*

**--Toni Woody, Demonstration Teacher--**

*Focus on the students' needs. Once one begins to be more concerned about the needs of the students and the subject content, the nervousness will gradually fade away. Also, walking and moving around helps the teacher work out stress and relieves total class tension by becoming acquainted with individual students.*

**--Joe J. Martinez, Secondary Government/Economics--**

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## Chapter 3

# Communicating Teacher Authority

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Definitions
- Teacher Power
- Student Power
- Implications and research
- Applications for the classroom

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### Definitions

Teacher power is identified as an instructional communication process that can enhance learning in the classroom. Hurt and others (1978) offer the following definition:

**Power** = *refers to a teacher's ability to affect in some way the student's well-being beyond the student's own control.*

Power can be a central component to teacher effectiveness and often goes hand in hand with classroom management. However, this chapter will focus directly on teacher power strategies and Chapter 4 will cover classroom management strategies inherent within educational literature.

Five power bases have been derived from French and Raven (1959) and put into the classroom context by McCroskey and Richmond (1983):

1. **Coercive Power**—*a teacher's coercive power is based on a student's expectations that he/she will be punished by the teacher if he/she does not conform to the teacher's influence attempts.*
2. **Reward Power**—*based on a student's perception of the degree to which the teacher is in a position to reward him/her for complying with the teacher's influence attempt. Rewards may involve something positive or removing something negative.*
3. **Legitimate Power**—*based on the student's perception that the teacher has the right to make certain demands and requests as a function of her/his position as the teacher. Referred to as 'assigned' power.*
4. **Referent Power**—*the foundation of referent power is the student's identification with the teacher; it is based on the desire of the less powerful person (student) to identify with and please the more powerful person (teacher).*
5. **Expert Power**—*stems from the student perceiving the teacher to be competent and knowledgeable in specific areas.*

## Teacher Power

Using the five power bases as a foundation, researchers compiled a list of Behavior Alteration Techniques (BATs) that correspond with various Behavior Alteration Messages (BAMs). Elementary and secondary teachers reported that they use the following seven techniques (out of 18), and find them effective in the classroom (Kearney et al., 1985):

1. **Reward from Behavior**—*promotes specific behaviors by suggesting such behaviors are rewarding.*
2. **Reward from Source**—*teachers offer direct rewards for student compliance.*
3. **Personal Responsibility**—*teachers emphasize the student's unique abilities in relation to the class, whereas the student shares in assuming class responsibilities.*
4. **Expert**—*compliance requires the perception that the teacher is qualified to request a particular behavior in question.*
5. **Self-Esteem**—*the teacher appeals to the student's self-worth relative to a given task.*
6. **Altruism**—*(similar to personal responsibility but omits the student's unique abilities) suggests others will benefit from the student's compliance; teacher encourages unselfish support for others by appealing to a student's concern for the welfare of others in the class.*

7. **Duty**—(extends personal responsibility and altruism) *used in a group context in which the teacher promotes a team spirit by suggesting the rest of the class cannot achieve without the student's compliance.*

As you can see this list encompasses all positive techniques. However, it would be beneficial to see what techniques are seen as negative as well. The following 18 prosocial and antisocial BATs were categorized by teacher usage according to different research scenarios (Kearney et al., 1988) and encompassed a slightly larger list of BATs (22) than the previous study (also cited in Plax & Kearney, 1992).

<b>Prosocial BATs</b>	<b>Corresponding BAMs</b>
Immediate Reward from Behavior	You will enjoy it. It will make you happy. Because it's fun. You'll find it rewarding/interesting. It's a good experience.
Deferred Reward from Behavior	It will help you later on in life. It will prepare you for college (or high school, job, etc.). It will prepare you for achievement tests. It will help w/ future assignments.
Reward from Others	Others will respect you if you do. Others will be proud of you. Your friends will like you if you do. Your parents will be pleased.
Self-Esteem	You will feel good about yourself if you do. You are the best person to do it. You are good at it. You always do such a good job. Because you're capable!
Responsibility to Class	Your group needs it done. The class depends on you. All your friends are counting on you. Don't let your group down. You'll ruin it for the rest of the class.
Normative Rules	We voted, and the majority rules. All of your friends are doing it. Everyone else has to do it. The rest of the class is doing it. It's part of growing up.
Altruism	If you do this, it will help others. Others will benefit if you do. It will make others happy if you do. I'm not asking you to do it for yourself; do it for the good of the class.

<b>Prosocial BATs continued</b>	<b>Corresponding BAMs</b>
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Peer Modeling	Your friends do it. Classmates you respect do it. The friends you admire do it. All your friends are doing it.
Teacher Modeling	This is the way I always do it. When I was your age, I did it. People who are like me do it. I had to do this when I was in school. Teachers you respect do it.
Expert Teacher	From my experience, it is a good idea. From what I have learned, it is what you should do. This has always worked for me. Trust me—I know what I’m doing. I had to do this before I became a teacher.
Teacher Feedback	Because I need to know how well you understand this. To see how well I’ve taught you. To see how well you can do it. It will help me know your problem areas.

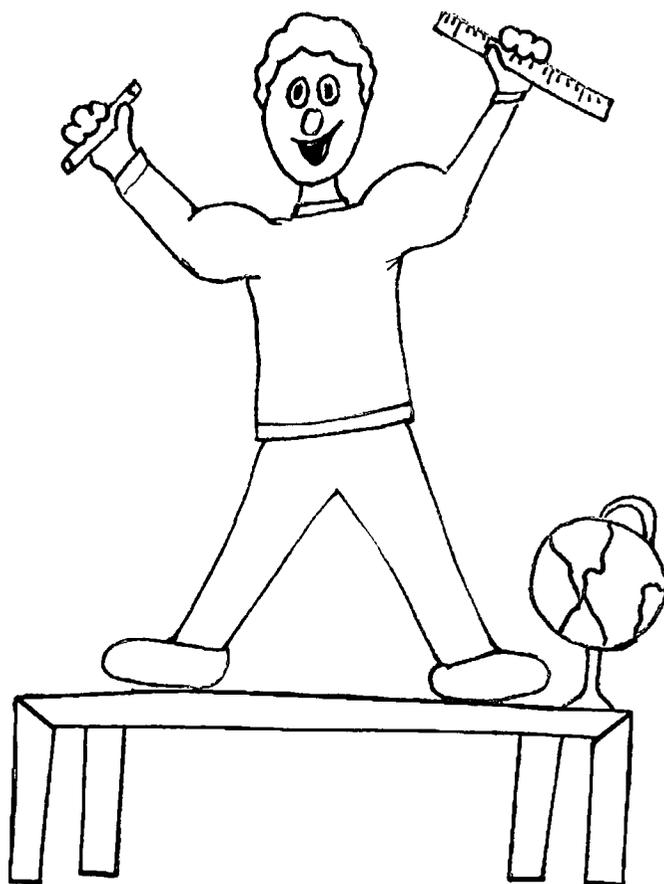
<b>Antisocial BATs</b>	<b>Corresponding BAMs</b>
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Punishment from Teacher	I will punish you if you don’t. I will make it miserable for you. I’ll give you an ‘F’ if you don’t. If you don’t do it now, it will be homework tonight.
Punishment from Others	No one will like you. Your friends will make fun of you. Your parents will punish you if you don’t. Your classmates will reject you.
Guilt	If you don’t, others will be hurt. You’ll make others unhappy if you don’t. Your parents will feel bad if you don’t. Others will be punished if you don’t.
Teacher-Student Relationship: Negative	I will dislike you if you don’t. I will lose respect for you. I will think less of you if you don’t. I won’t be proud of you. I’ll be disappointed in you.
Legitimate Higher Authority	Do it, I’m just telling you what I was told. It is a rule, I have to do it and I will have to give you an ‘F’ if you don’t. If you don’t do it now, it will be homework tonight.
Legitimate Teacher Authority	Because I told you to. You don’t have a choice. You’re here to work! I’m the teacher, you’re the student. I’m in charge, not you. Don’t ask, just do it.

Debt

You owe me one. Pay your debt. You promised to do it.  
I did it last time. You said you'd try this time.

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Mr. Chavez is mistaken...teacher power does not mean that he  
needs to flex his muscles!

## Student Power

In addition to teacher power, there is the concept of student power. In an interpersonal relationship, such as teaching, it is imperative to look at power from both the teacher and the student's points of view. The following list of BATs and BAMs represent the top five (of 19) that students most frequently use with their instructors, starting with the most used (Golish & Olsen, 2000).

### Student Behavioral BATs

### Corresponding BAMs

Private Persuasion

You first run by your request with your professor through e-mail, telephone him/her, or go see him/her during office hours to discuss the matter privately.

Group Persuasion

We, the class, were talking before class and came to the conclusion that we need more time to study for this exam. Most of us aren't ready to take on this project. As a group, we don't fully understand what we are supposed to do for this assignment.

Evidence of Preparation/Logic

Looking at my essay again, I think I clearly lay out my arguments by using evidence from the text and lecture. I followed the criteria you gave us for how to receive a good grade on this paper.

Honesty-Sincerity

To be totally honest, I was sick and didn't have enough time to study. I didn't have enough time to complete the assignment. I wish I had an excuse, but I just didn't get it finished.

Flattery

This assignment has been very helpful, but it might be improved by... You have taught this material to us well, but there are a couple of things you could do differently.

## Implications & Research

In a classroom with about 30 students a teacher can expect a resistance rate of about 16%-20% (Kearney & Plax, 1992). Usually it takes only a few students to disrupt the entire class, and as the teacher, you are in charge of stopping it, ignoring it, or letting it snowball out of control. Now that you have read a quick overview of what student and teacher power is, we can now get a better idea of how it has been related to other variables in the classroom.

A series of 'Power in the Classroom' studies were performed in the mid-to-late 1980's that were designed to explore the bases of social power inherent in the communication process. This research program as well as other studies devoted to this agenda found some very interesting associations and implications within the classroom.

For example:

- Teachers and students perceived that reward, referent, and expert power were used more frequently than legitimate or coercive power. [McCroskey & Richmond, 1983]
- Coercive and legitimate power were negatively related to learning outcomes, while referent and expert power were positively related. [Richmond & McCroskey, 1984]
- Teachers in K-6 employed 'Reward from Source' more often than teachers from other grade levels [Kearney et al., 1985]
- The following BATs contributed positively to affective learning—  
Immediate Reward from Behavior ('*You will enjoy it*'), Deferred Reward

from Behavior (*'It will help you later on in life'*), Self-Esteem (*'You will feel good about yourself if you do'*) and Teacher Feedback (*'Because I need to know how well you understand this'*). [McCroskey et al., 1985]

- The following BATs were associated with learning loss—Punishment from Teacher (*'I will punish you if you don't'*), Teacher/Student Relationship: Negative (*'I will dislike you if you don't'*), Legitimate Teacher Authority (*'Because I told you to; You don't have a choice'*), and Personal (Student) Responsibility (*'It's your obligation; Everyone has to do his/her share'*). [Richmond et al., 1987]
- Experienced teachers report using more prosocial and antisocial BATs than prospective teachers. Overall, both report using prosocial BATs for passive misbehaviors and antisocial BATs for active misbehaviors. Male teachers (both prospective and experienced) were associated with more antisocial techniques than females. [Kearney et al., 1988]
- Referent and expert power were positively related to student motivation to learn. A positive relationship with prosocial BATs and student motivation was also demonstrated. Also, the perceived use of power and BATs are associated with cognitive and affective learning. [Richmond, 1990]

In summary, prosocial behavior alteration techniques have been related to increased student affect toward the teacher and the course, increased learning, as well as a positive correlation with student motivation. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the

antisocial behavior alteration techniques, namely coercive and legitimate power, have been associated with decreased cognitive learning, affect, and motivation.

In order for the concept of teacher power to work, the student must perceive and accept that it exists and that the teacher is using it. “It is through teacher-student communication that power is developed, attributed, and maintained,” (Staton, 1992, p. 173). When used correctly, this power has many benefits within the classroom, particularly by enhancing teacher effectiveness and student learning.

### **Applications for the Classroom**

Now that you have had a quick overview of what teacher and student power can encompass, as well as what implications it has in the classroom, here are a few narratives from teachers in the classroom:

*The most important thing I have learned as a beginning teacher is how to conduct yourself on the first day of school. I remember thinking that I wanted my students to see me as their friend, not as their authority figure. How else can I say it but, “Big Mistake.” You only get one chance to make a first impression. My students saw right through me and it was a rough semester.*

**--Dea Watson, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading--**

*Credibility—Never act like you know everything. If you do, as soon as you make a mistake you’ve lost their respect. Besides, older students will look for ways to discredit you and they’ll get a big kick out of watching you fail. Admit that you*

*are human and that learning is life-long—you continue to grow everyday and you are THRILLED to learn new things from your students. If a student asks a question that you do not know the answer to, admit that and then find the answer together or let the student know that you will find out.*

*Authority—Dress professionally. Be yourself and ACT like a teacher. Students automatically endow their teachers with respect and will continue to give it until the teacher proves they do not deserve it. Students often look to their teachers to be the stalwart or constant in their lives. When teachers fail to live up to their profession, they disappoint their students. Follow the rules.*

**--Melinda McGaugh, Secondary Education--**

*One principle is the value of speaking respectfully and appropriately to your students and parents. It is crucial for a teacher to form a positive relationship with their students and their families in order to manage behavior and achieve academic success. To earn respect of students and parents, a teacher must model that respect through their own attitudes and actions toward them.*

**--Mitzi Ziegner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade--**

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## Chapter 4

# Communicating for Classroom Management

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Preventive measures for classroom management
- Classroom management techniques
- Applications for the classroom

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### Introduction

'Management' revolves around the idea of handling student misbehavior successfully, as opposed to the use of terms such as discipline or control (Good & Brophy, 2000). Lemlech (1988) utilizes the following definition:

**Classroom Management** = *the orchestration of classroom life: planning curriculum, organizing procedures and resources, arranging the environment to maximize efficiency, monitoring student progress, anticipating potential problems.*

Classroom management can range from a variety of topics and techniques that involve preventive measures to on-the-spot management. Some techniques reflect a traditional approach, while other ideologies incorporate a more authentic type of system. The majority of classroom management methods stress the key elements of organization and

preparation within the class environment as well as when you are teaching. However, before specific methodologies are introduced, it would be helpful to see what common management errors teachers employ in order to get a better idea as to what teachers should focus on when deciding what kind of management strategies they should use.

### *Common Management Errors*

Brown (1960, 1962) has identified a short list of common teaching errors concerning classroom management for elementary and secondary teachers.

#### **Elementary**

1. Too much time may be spent taking the roll, collecting milk money, cleaning up after an activity, etc.
2. Teacher may either pace 'like a tiger in a cage' or stay 'glued to one spot.'
3. Teacher may not insist on attention from his(her) class when beginning a lesson.
4. Procedures for homework, pencil sharpening, roll calling, lavatory dismissal, cleaning up, etc., may not be established, or adhered to if established.
5. Teacher may not have sufficient supplies on hand to carry through a lesson.

#### **Secondary**

1. Too much time may be spent taking the roll and getting the class under way.
2. Teacher may not know the names of his(her) pupils.
3. Teacher may either pace 'like a tiger in a cage' or stay 'glued to one spot.'
4. Teacher may not insist on immediate attention from the class at the bell or may permit class to leave without formal dismissal.
5. Procedures for homework, pencil sharpening, roll calling may not be established or adhered to if established.

These lists are very similar and mostly revolve around classroom organization and behavior such as teacher immediacy (Ch. 5). Nevertheless, you should keep these in mind when trying to improve and analyze how you want to manage your classroom.

## Preventive Measures

The key to any problem revolves around prevention—to try to prevent misbehavior before it happens. Classroom organization is one key to preventing misbehavior. Good and Brophy (2000) offer four general management principles that revolve around classroom organization (p. 128):

1. Students are likely to follow rules that they understand and accept.
2. Discipline problems are minimized when students are regularly engaged in meaningful activities geared to their interests and aptitudes.
3. Management should be approached with an eye toward establishing a productive learning environment, rather than from a negative viewpoint stressing control of misbehavior.
4. The teacher's goal is to develop inner self-control in students, not merely to exert control over them.

These principles revolve around establishing clear rules and procedures that are demonstrated to the students first and then given the opportunity to practice them (Good & Brophy, 2000). Additionally, lessons should be organized and planned well. A variety of independent and group activities should be utilized with minimal delays. For example, if students are waiting with nothing to do, four things may happen (Good & Brophy, 2000, p. 131):

- 1) Students may remain interested and attentive;
- 2) Students may become bored or fatigued, losing the ability to concentrate;
- 3) Students may become distracted or start daydreaming; or
- 4) Students may actively misbehave.

Three out of four have negative implications, thus, increasing your odds of class disruption.

### *Building a Positive Classroom Climate*

Another prevention technique revolves around building a positive classroom environment. The key for building such a climate is that the teacher needs to realize the importance of keeping a positive perspective on things, instead of constantly focusing on student misbehavior (Evertson, Emmer, & Worsham, 2000; Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2003). A positive climate is characterized by: 1) communicating positive expectations to students; 2) praising good performance; and 3) using additional rewards at times (Evertson et al., 2000; Emmer et al., 2003).

Communicating positive expectations shows the students that the teacher is interested in them succeeding and accomplishing new goals. Teachers can communicate these expectations in the following ways (Emmer et al., 2003, p. 135):

- Identify appropriate instructional goals and discuss them with students so that they are clear about what is expected.
- Insist that students complete work satisfactorily.
- Refuse to accept excuses for poor work.
- Communicate acceptance of imperfect initial performance when students struggle to achieve new learning.
- Convey confidence in the students' ability to do well.
- Display an encouraging, "can do" attitude that generates student excitement and self-confidence.
- Avoid comparative evaluations, especially of lower ability students, that might cause them to conclude that they cannot accomplish the objectives.

Praising good performance is another key in creating a positive classroom environment. Praise is uplifting and encouraging and will help students become more motivated to do their work. However, the teacher should be careful to use praise spontaneously and genuinely as opposed to a fake attempt to control the student (Good & Brophy, 2000). Good and Brophy (2000) offer seven guidelines for praising effectively (pp. 142-44):

### **Praising Effectively**

- 1) Praise simply and directly in a natural voice, without gushing or dramatizing.
- 2) Praise in straightforward declarative sentences such as “*I never thought of that before,*” instead of gushy explanations such as “*Wow*” or rhetorical questions. The latter is more condescending and may embarrass the student.
- 3) Specify the particular accomplishment and recognize any noteworthy effort, care, or perseverance such as “*Good! You figured it out all by yourself. I like the way you stuck with it without giving up.*” Call attention to new skills or progress such as “*I notice you’ve learned to use different kinds of metaphors in your compositions. They’re more interesting to read now. Keep up the good work.*”
- 4) Use a variety of phrases. Overused stock phrases begin to sound insincere and give the impression that the teacher has not really paid much attention to the accomplishments.
- 5) Back verbal praise with nonverbal gestures of approval, such as a smile or tone that communicates appreciation or warmth.
- 6) Avoid ambiguous statements that students may take as praise for compliance rather than for learning such as “*You were really good today.*” Instead be specific such as “*I’m very pleased with your reading this morning, especially the way you read with so much expression. You made the conversation sound very real. Keep up the good work.*”
- 7) Ordinarily students should be praised privately. Public praise will embarrass some students and may cause them problems with their peers. Delivering praise during private interactions helps show the student that it is genuine and

avoids the problem of sounding as though you are holding the student up as an example to the rest of the class.

Lastly, a positive classroom climate is enhanced with the use of rewards and incentives. Activities, material incentives, grades/symbols, and recognition are common types of rewards that help motivate students. **Activities** can range from: free time at the end of class, going to the library, getting to work with a friend, or helping decorate a bulletin board. **Material incentives** are objects, such as food, games, toys, books, or school supplies. **Grades** are probably the most prevalent form of incentive because they are perceived as a direct reflection of the student's accomplishments (Emmer et al., 2003). For elementary teachers, symbols are also a big incentive that communicates a positive evaluation for students (Evertson et al., 2000). **Symbols** can include happy faces, stars, stickers, and checks. For younger children this feedback should be given as soon as possible (Evertson et al., 2000). Finally, the use of **recognition** may include displaying student work and giving out certificates of accomplishment/progress etc. Elementary students may also have a class system of awards that are given out weekly or monthly, while secondary students may be given awards at the end of the year for attendance, citizenship, effort, conduct, etc. (Evertson et al., 2000; Emmer et al., 2003). One note of caution with the use of rewards and incentives is that some research has noted that this could erode the student's intrinsic motivation for external rewards (Emmer et al., 2003). Therefore, the teachers need to be careful and thoughtful with their use of rewards. Perhaps when rewards are used, "the teacher can counteract the potential for negative effects on intrinsic motivation by making the reward contingent on some desired level of performance" not just completion of the task (Emmer et al., 2003, p. 141).

## **Classroom Management Techniques**

As a beginning teacher it is often hard to distinguish what type of behavior warrants your attention and intervention. Are you going to stop in the middle of a lesson for two students whispering back and forth to each other? Or will you deal with it immediately? Determining when to intervene is not always an easy decision. The following information will help guide you in distinguishing what kind of behavior warrants delayed or immediate intervention. Additional classroom management techniques will also be discussed to offer more ideas and suggestions.

### *Minor to Moderate Intervention*

Problems that seem to be related to surface misbehavior can be managed with minor or moderate intervention techniques. The following list is compiled from Good and Brophy (2000), Emmer and company (2003), and Larrivee (1999):

#### **Minor to Moderate Intervention Techniques**

- 1) Ignore the problem. It may go away on its own.
- 2) Use nonverbal cues such as: eye contact, proximity with your body, touch (tap on shoulder), or gestures (shaking head or finger on lips).
- 3) Use humor to diffuse a tense situation.
- 4) Ask student to stop and/or redirect their behavior.
- 5) Use "I" messages. This describes the problem and its effect on others. For example: "*When you (state the problem), then (describe the effect), and it makes me feel (state the emotion).*"

- 6) Restructure the class such as getting the activity going, providing needed instructions, or changing/adapting lesson.
- 7) Appeal to values such as: 1) **student-teacher relationship** (“*You seem angry with me. Have I been unfair with you?*”); 2) **reality consequences** (“*I know your angry, but if you break that, you will have to replace it with your own money*”); 3) **peer approval** (“*Your classmates will get pretty angry if you continue to interrupt them*”); 4) **the teacher’s power of authority** (*Tell the student that as a teacher you cannot allow a behavior to continue, but that you still care about the student*); and 5) **self-respect** (“*I know you’ll be upset with yourself if you tear up that paper you worked on all period*”).
- 8) Withhold privileges such as free time.
- 9) Isolate or remove students.
- 10) Assign detention.

### *Immediate Intervention*

In certain situations, a student’s misbehavior needs to be addressed right away. Of course, with all situations, be sure and follow your school policies, since they will have specific consequences for a certain type of behavior. Redl (1966) offers a list of situations that could warrant immediate intervention. Here are a few common situations:

- 1) Reality dangers such as fighting.
- 2) Psychological protection such as calling another student a derogatory name.

- 3) Protection against too much excitement, anxiety, or guilt where things may get out of control such as an activity getting out of hand.
- 4) Protection of property such as destroying a desktop.
- 5) Highlighting a value area or school policy such as smoking in the bathroom.
- 6) Avoiding conflict with the outside world such as not following rules on a field trip.

### *Additional Classroom Management Methods*

Research has identified many different classroom management approaches for both elementary and secondary teachers. The following three models incorporate all teachers and can be adapted or mixed with other methods.

The first model involves conflict resolution strategies and focuses on cooperative, problem-solving attitudes. Gordon's *Teaching Effectiveness Training* (1974) is used for students who have repeated behavior problems and cannot be handled with on-the-spot management techniques. This model differentiates between student-owned problems and teacher-owned problems; whereas if the student owns the problem the teacher can provide active listening, and if the teacher owns the problem he or she can use "I" messages (described in 'Minor to Moderate Intervention') (Gordon, 1974). When teacher-student conflicts arise, the teacher and student should put their heads together to search for a possible solution (Gordon, 1974). Gordon (1974) applies John Dewey's problem-solving process to the classroom to help teachers in finding a solution to possible conflicts (p. 228):

## **Problem-Solving Methodology**

- 1) Teacher should define the problem.
- 2) Teacher and student should generate possible solutions.
- 3) Evaluate the solutions.
- 4) Decide which solution is best. Do not vote or adopt a solution until both/everyone agrees to at least try it.
- 5) Determine how to implement the best solution.
- 6) Assess the effectiveness of this solution after it is implemented. ('Has the problem disappeared?' 'How effective was the decision?') If it is not working satisfactorily to all concerned, begin again and negotiate a new agreement.

The second model involves a ten-step approach that describes the whole process (beginning to end) of dealing with a student who persistently violates the rules. Glasser's (1977) ten-step approach utilizes the idea that students will be held responsible for their behavior at school (pp. 62-63).

### **Glasser's Ten-Step Approach to Good Discipline**

- 1) List your typical reactions to the student's disruptive behavior.
- 2) Analyze the list to see what techniques do or do not work and resolve not to repeat the ones that do not work.
- 3) Plan a better tomorrow for your student. Improve your relationship with the student by providing extra encouragement, asking the student to perform special errands, showing concern, or implying that things will improve.
- 4) When a problem occurs, focus the student's attention on the disruptive behavior by requiring the student to describe what he or she has been doing. Continue until the student describes the behavior accurately and then request that it be stopped.
- 5) If the problem continues, call a short conference and again have the student describe the behavior. Then have the student state whether or not the behavior is against the rules or recognized expectations, and ask the student what he or she should be doing instead.

- 6) If the short conferences are not working, repeat step 5, but this time add that the student will have to formulate a plan to solve the problem. The plan must be more than a simple agreement to stop misbehaving and must include commitment to positive actions designed to eliminate the problem.
  - 7) If the student disrupts again, isolate the student from the class until he or she has devised a plan for ensuring that the rules will be followed in the future, gotten the plan approved, and made commitment to follow it.
  - 8) If this does not work, the next step is in-school suspension. Now the student must deal with the principal or someone other than the teacher, but this person will repeat earlier steps in the sequence and press the student to devise a plan that is acceptable. The student will either follow the reasonable rules in effect in the classroom or continue to be isolated outside of class.
  - 9) If the student is totally out of control and cannot comply with the in-school suspension rules, the parents are called to take him or her home for the day, and the student will resume in-school suspension the next day.
  - 10) Any student who does not respond to the previous steps are removed from school and referred to another agency.
- 

Glasser (1986) presents another model, the learning-team model, that incorporates some of the same ideologies as cooperative learning methods. This model is based on control theory. Control theory is based on human needs and satisfaction (Glasser, 1986). It claims that students choose not to work because it does not satisfy their needs internally, and instead, teachers should restructure their class so that students choose to work because it is satisfying to do so (Glasser, 1986). Glasser's (1986) learning-team model has eight characteristics and is compared to a more traditional teaching approach, which is presented in boldface (pp. 76-78):

#### **Glasser's Learning-Team Model vs. the Traditional Approach**

- 1) Students can gain a sense of belonging by working together in learning teams of two to five students. The teams should be selected by the teacher so that they are made up of a range of low, middle, and high achievers.

- **Students work as individuals.**
- 2) Belonging provides the initial motivation for students to work, and as they achieve academic success, students who had not worked previously begin to sense that knowledge is power and than want to work harder.
    - **Unless they succeed as individuals, there is no motivation to work and no ability to gain the sense that knowledge is power.**
  - 3) The stronger students find it need fulfilling to help the weaker ones because they want the power and friendship that go with a high-performing team.
    - **Stronger students hardly even know the weaker ones.**
  - 4) The weaker students find it is need fulfilling to contribute as much as they can to the team effort because now whatever they can contribute helps. When they worked alone, a little effort got them nowhere.
    - **Weaker students contribute little to the class initially and less as they go along.**
  - 5) Students need not depend only on the teacher. They can (and are urged to) depend a great deal on themselves, their own creativity, and other members of their team. All this frees them from dependence on the teacher and, in doing so, gives them both power and freedom.
    - **Almost all students, except for few very capable ones, depend completely on the teacher. They almost never depend on each other and there is little incentive to help each other. Helping each other now is called cheating.**
  - 6) Learning-teams can provide the structure that will help students to get past the superficiality that plagues our schools today. Without this structure, there is little chance for any but a few student to learn enough in depth to make the vital knowledge-is-power connection.
    - **The students' complaints that they are bored are valid. Bored students will not work.**
  - 7) The teams are free to figure out how to convince the teacher and other students (and parents) that they have learned the material. Teachers will encourage teams to offer evidence (other than tests) that the material has been learned.

- **The teacher (or the school system) decides how the students are to be evaluated and they are rarely encouraged to do any more than to study for the teacher-designed tests.**
- 8) Teams will be changed by the teacher on a regular basis so that all student will have a chance to be on a high-scoring team. On some assignments, but not all, each student on the team will get the team score. High-achieving students who might complain that their grades suffered when they took the team score will still tend consistently to be on high-scoring teams so as individuals they will not suffer in the long run. This will also create incentive regardless of the strength of any team.
- **Students compete only as individuals, and who wins and who loses is apparent in most classes, except some honors classes, after only a few weeks of school.**
- 

### **Applications for the Classroom**

Now that you have reviewed some research and methods to better handle student misbehavior, here is a short checklist to assess your intervention patterns. The following eight criteria can help broaden your response options given the diversity of student misbehavior (Larrivee, 1999, p. 349):

#### **Criteria for Assessing Interventions**

Criteria	Self-Reflective Questions
Escalating	Am I following a sequence beginning with an unobtrusive response and escalating progressively?
Respectful	Does my response maintain my dignity and treat students respectfully?
Contextual	Does my response take into account the effect of the instructional context and setting on the student's behavior?
Instructive	Do I provide students with guidance in accomplishing the desired ways to behave?

Facilitative	Do I provide students with assistance in learning more appropriate ways to behave?
Reflective	Does my response consider how my reaction to the student may have an impact on the student's behavior?
Responsive	Does my response consider that the student's behavior might be a reaction to a personal or academic need not having been met at the time?
Preventive	Does my response go beyond a single episode to anticipating and planning for the future?

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The following narratives and guidelines show how public school teachers utilize additional ideas to help them manage their classrooms and student behavior:

*I use three short, positive rules: Be a good learner; Respect yourself and others; and Let others learn. These rules cover any unacceptable or inappropriate behavior. A list of "don'ts" can be difficult to enforce and apply. These rules have been effective in my classes from kindergarten through junior high school. A set of clear, reasonable, enforceable, and age appropriate consequences also needs to be determined. The teacher needs to relate a student's misbehavior to the rules and then enforce the appropriate consequence. Consistency in behavior management will focus the classroom on learning.*

**--Judy Cowan, Elementary & Junior High School Demonstration Teacher--**

*I put "Looks Like," "Feels Like," and "Sounds Like" on the board. As a class we discuss a particular behavior such as walking into the cafeteria or entering the classroom. The students give a concrete answer of what it 'looks like,' 'sounds like,' and 'feels like' on three separate index cards, then attach them to the board*

*under each heading. We discuss each student's example and may even role-play some. The 'feels like' column is more difficult for them to understand, so it helps if I give an example first. I have adapted this activity from the Champs book by Sprick, Garrison, and Howard.*

**--Lisa Bryant, 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade Special Education--**

*I have found that the most important thing I can do to improve a student's behavior is to develop a positive relationship with him/her. Discovering their interests, talents, problems, and coping strategies give me an advantage when it comes to requiring the student to meet my higher behavior expectations. This requires taking a few minutes in the day to just visit with the student. Traveling to and from different classes or to lunch is a good time for this because they are more open and relaxed and so am I. I do my best to correct a student individually and out of the proximity of "big ears." I begin by letting them know how important their success in school is to me; that I want the best possible experience for them. I put the focus on their ability to control the situation and ask questions that require "yes" answers. If the student does not make the necessary changes in behavior, I make certain they understand they are giving their "control power" to me. I give two options—either/or. No other options will work. I try to make it easy for them to choose appropriately. Consistency is key.*

**--Linda Hamman, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher--**

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# COMMUNICATING FOR MOTIVATION & RELATIONSHIP

## Chapter 5 Teacher Immediacy

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Nonverbal Immediacy
- Verbal Immediacy
- Implications and research
- Applications for the classroom

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### **Introduction**

This is one of the most exciting chapters because there is some extremely useful information for beginning teachers. Additionally, this area of research has been significantly dominant within instructional communication literature for the past 30 years or so. The concept of immediacy focuses on the interpersonal relationship between the student and the teacher. Thweatt and McCroskey (1996) have defined the overall concept of immediacy as “those communication behaviors that reduce perceived distance between people,” (p. 198). Immediacy can be further broken down into nonverbal and verbal immediacy. Nonverbal immediacy plays a huge role in how you present material to your

class in terms of your physical movements. On the other hand, verbal immediacy does not play as big of a role as nonverbal immediacy, but there are some important concepts that could enhance the way you say things to your students. The majority of the research that is presented in this chapter revolves around two of Bloom's (1976) learning outcomes—the cognitive (comprehension and retention) and affective (positive/negative attitudes toward teacher or subject) learning dimensions. These learning processes have shown significant relationships with teacher immediacy in the classroom.

### **Nonverbal Immediacy**

Throughout the day, a teacher will engage in numerous bodily behaviors while teaching. Andersen (1979) offers the following definition for nonverbal immediacy:

**Nonverbal Immediacy** = *teacher nonverbal behaviors that increase or decrease the degree of psychological or physical distance between the teacher and the students.*

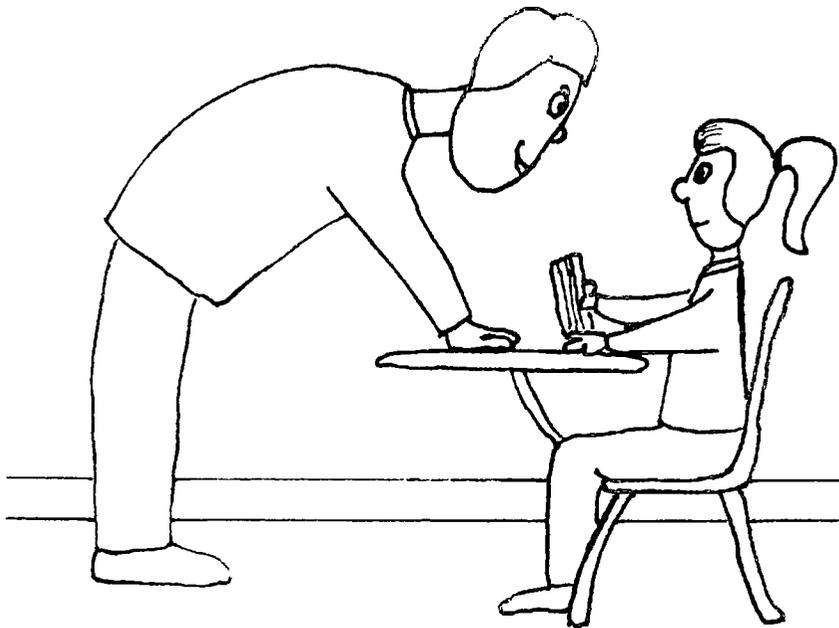
Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) and Richmond (2002) have compiled a list of nonverbal behaviors and descriptions that are routinely recognized as nonverbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom. They include:

#### *Gestures*

Gesturing is the use of hand and arm movements that accompany verbal messages. Teachers who do not gesture very much may be seen as boring and unanimated. Gesturing is one method of achieving a more animated and dynamic teaching style. Therefore, teachers should **gesture when talking to the class.**

## *Eye Contact*

Eye contact is one of the best indicators of attention and interest. The teacher that rarely employs eye contact may suggest that they are not interested in their students and may imply that the teacher is not very approachable. Additionally, try to avoid talking with your back to the students. Therefore, the teacher should **look at the class, as well as individual students when talking.**



Mr. Jefferson is trying a little too hard! I think his immediacy level is a little too immediate. You don't necessarily want to be a space invader!

### *Facial Expressions*

Facial expressions can affect the classroom environment. A teacher with a dull, boring expression on his or her face may communicate that the subject and the students are boring to the teacher. Teachers who use pleasing facial expressions, positive head nods, and smiling behaviors are perceived as friendly and likeable. Therefore, the teacher should **engage in positive head nods and smile at the class, as well as individual students.**

### *Vocal Behavior*

Vocal behavior is usually characterized as the rate, volume, and pitch of your voice. The most objectionable behavior tends to be teachers who teach in a monotone voice. This kind of teacher is portrayed as boring and dull. Teachers who use a lively, animated voice are seen as more immediate and interested in the class. Therefore, the teacher should **use a variety of vocal expressions when talking to the class.**

### *Touch*

Touching students is an acceptable form of reinforcement. Touching students on the arm, hand, or shoulder should be acceptable in the classroom. Keep in mind, however, that touch norms within the schools should always be followed. If the teacher finds that a student does not like someone touching them (are touch-avoidant), the teacher should leave the student alone. Teachers who engage in appropriate touch behaviors may establish a more effective student-teacher relationship. Therefore, the teacher should **engage in appropriate touch behaviors, such as touching the student's arm, hand, or shoulder.**

### *Movement & Space*

Moving around the classroom and among the students promotes a more positive image to the students. The teacher who sits or stands behind a desk or podium may be seen as unfriendly, unreceptive, and unapproachable. Additionally, teachers who fold their arms or keep a closed body position are seen as unapproachable as well. Therefore, the teacher should **move around the classroom when teaching, as well as exhibit a very relaxed body position when talking to the class.**

### *Instructor Appearance*

The way a teacher is dressed can also communicate immediacy to the students. Teachers dressed formally may be seen as competent, organized, and prepared, however, they may also send the message that they are not receptive to the students' needs. On the other hand, teachers who dress casually (not sloppy) are perceived as more open and friendly. Therefore, the teacher should **dress formally for a few weeks until credibility is established and then dress more casually.**

### **Verbal Immediacy**

Teachers most likely engage in verbal immediacy behaviors without consciously knowing that they are. Verbal immediacy involves the same concept as nonverbal immediacy, but with language instead of bodily behaviors.

**Verbal Immediacy** = *teacher verbal behaviors that increase or decrease the degree of psychological distance between the teacher and the students.*

Verbal behaviors have been classified and studied by Gorham (1988), who composed the following list of verbal immediacy items that teachers commonly employ.

- 1) Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class.
- 2) Asks questions or encourages students to talk.
- 3) Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when it doesn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan.
- 4) Uses humor in class.
- 5) Addresses students by name.
- 6) Gets into conversations with individual students before or after class.
- 7) Refers to class as 'our' class or what 'we' are doing.
- 8) Provides feedback on students' individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.
- 9) Asks how students feel about an assignment, due date, or discussion topic.
- 10) Invites students to meet with him/her before or after class if they have questions or want to discuss something.
- 11) Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.
- 12) Praises students' work, actions, or comments.
- 13) Will have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.

As you can see, some of these behaviors may already come naturally to you, and you will not have to consciously try to implement them. However, this list is a good guide for beginning teachers to follow in order to become a more immediate teacher. As a side note, this list was mainly attributed for higher education, therefore, a few items were omitted and edited to make it more applicable for elementary and secondary educators.

### **Implications & Research**

Teacher immediacy has been researched in conjunction with a variety of other educational variables within the classroom. The majority of the research focuses on learning outcomes and motivation in relation to teacher effectiveness. The following is a compilation of some pertinent immediacy research as well as its implications.

- The use of vocal expressiveness, smiling at the class, and having a relaxed body position had the highest association with cognitive learning. [Richmond et al., 1987]
- Verbal and nonverbal immediacy were significantly correlated with affective learning and perceptions of cognitive learning. Specifically, verbal immediacy items such as humor; praising student work/comments; and engaging in conversations with students before, after, or outside of class are of significant importance to the learning process. [Gorham, 1988]
- Teachers who were perceived as more verbally and nonverbally immediate had greater levels of class motivation. Additionally, nonverbal

immediacy was more predictive of learning than verbal immediacy.

[Christophel, 1990]

- Student and teacher perceptions of immediacy are closely related and similar in comparison. Teachers with 1-5 years of experience are seen as more verbally immediate than those with 11 or more years of experience. [Gorham & Zakahi, 1990]
- Students perceive nonimmediacy equivalently to a teacher engaging in 'misbehaviors' (behaviors that interfere with student learning), even if the teacher did not perform such 'misbehaviors.' [Thweatt & McCroskey, 1996]
- A teacher's communication skills along with immediacy behaviors were significant predictors of learning and motivation. [Frymier et al., 2000]
- Higher nonverbal immediacy produced greater student recall, less learning loss, and greater affect than lower nonverbal immediacy. Additionally, it was concluded that nonverbal immediacy overrides verbal immediacy in affecting learning outcomes. [Witt & Wheelless, 2001]

In summary, the more nonverbally and verbally immediate a teacher is, the higher the educational learning outcomes their students seem to engage in. Specifically, immediacy has been related to higher cognitive learning, higher affect for the teacher and the subject, as well as higher student motivation. Additionally, nonverbal immediacy is more predictive of learning outcomes than verbal immediacy. This is because nonverbal

messages can exist without a verbal message, whereas a verbal message is usually accompanied by nonverbal messages (Richmond, 2002).

Although there are a lot of positive implications surrounding teacher immediacy, it is important to note that there are a few drawbacks as well. For example, other teachers and/or students may view you as a pushover or that you do not have control over your classroom (Richmond, 2000). You can be approachable **and** stick to your standards at the same time. Richmond (2000) offers the following advice (p. 80):

*“...not everyone can be immediate in the same way. Select the behaviors you are most comfortable with and use those. To be immediate, you do not have to perform all of the behaviors...but you do need some of them. If you try to use behavior that makes you uncomfortable, you will appear awkward and uncomfortable rather than immediate. False immediacy is worse than none at all.”*

### **Applications for the Classroom**

Now that you have learned some specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors, here is a look at other behaviors current teachers have engaged in to be more immediate in their own classrooms.

*I stand at the classroom door as the children are arriving each morning. I smile, call them by name, and make a positive comment to each child. Comments can be about something good they did the day before either relating to academics or behavior, something good that I am expecting from them for the current day, cool*

*shoes, clothing, jewelry, hairstyle, etc. I send them home each day by standing at the door giving them a pat, hug, and/or positive comment. Some non-verbal communication I use when everyone excels include: Thumbs up; Funny faces (everyone makes one); Back pats; Rabbit ears; Sketch 10 in the air (scale of 1 to 10 and we're always a 10); Throw a kiss; Tell yourself "I'm awesome" in your mind; Standing ovation; and Take a bow.*

**--Sue Thomas, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher--**

*I learn my students' names as quickly as possible and interact with them constantly during each class period. I love to make my students laugh...the way I use humor is through stories about either myself and my shortcomings, popular culture, something I've read, or odd stories from history. They remember the point I'm trying to make when I use humor to make it. Many are the methods we can use to form immediacy. The crucial thing is to actually care about each student, and the bonding opportunities will come naturally.*

**--Linda Wickersham, Secondary English--**

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## Chapter 6

### Communicator Styles

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Teacher communicator styles and research
- Socio-communicative styles and research
- Applications for the classroom

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#### **Introduction**

There are two areas of research that will be explored in this chapter. The first deals with research surrounding the concept of teacher communicator styles, while the second is termed socio-communicative styles. Early research beginning in the 1970's was primarily concerned with basic communication styles that were rooted in psychology and the social sciences (Sallinen-Kuparinen, 1992). It wasn't until the mid-1980's that the concept went a little further and these style-based approaches were divided into two dimensions that make up an individual's socio-communicative style. The two dimensions include *assertiveness* and *responsiveness*. It will be beneficial to look at each type of communicator style separately. However, keep in mind that socio-communicative style research is more prevalent in today's classroom literature. Additionally, teachers should be aware that certain style-based behaviors offer correlations to various student

outcomes/behavior, but research has not shown if subject matter has any effect with regard to communicator style. For example, do effective communicator styles differ according to what subject is being taught? Nevertheless, the research presented in this handbook offers an overall analysis of communicator styles.

## Teacher Communicator Styles & Research

Your teaching style is unique and definitely a part of you and your personality. It may also reflect behavior you have seen and adopted. Your style is the way in which you communicate to your students. Norton (1983) offers the following definition:

**Teacher Communicator Style** = *how a teacher interacts verbally and nonverbally to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood.*

Teaching styles can be classified according to different characteristics. Norton (1983) defines and identifies the following types of styles in Table 6.1:

**Table 6.1**

### Teacher Communicator Styles (Norton, 1983, pp. 64-73)

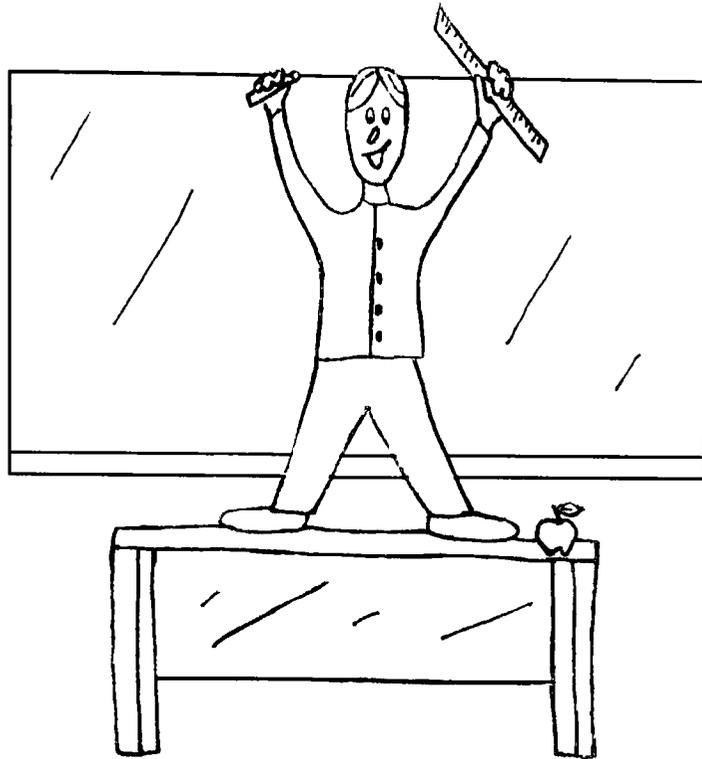
**Dominant**

*May be physical, nonverbal, or psychological dominance. Manipulated by eye contact, congruent body movements, loudness of voice, voice modulation, rate of information and undue hesitations. Relates to assertiveness.*

**Table 6.1 continued**

<b>Dramatic</b>	<i>This communicator manipulates exaggerations, fantasies, stories, metaphors, rhythm, voice, and other stylistic devices to highlight content. Most visible style component. Clues the listener in on how to interpret the intensity, truth, or quality of the context. This behavior emphasizes and secures attention.</i>
<b>Contentious</b>	<i>Argumentative. Closely associated with dominant style.</i>
<b>Animated</b>	<i>Provides frequent and sustained eye contact, uses many facial expressions, and gestures often to exaggerate or understate the content. (Very similar to immediate teacher behaviors.)</i>
<b>Impression Leaving</b>	<i>Centers around whether a person is remembered or not. A person who leaves an impression should manifest a visible or memorable style of communicating.</i>
<b>Relaxed</b>	<i>If a person does not manifest anxiety, a relaxed style will be achieved. Suggests calmness, peace, confidence, and comfortableness.</i>
<b>Attentive</b>	<i>This communicator makes sure that the other person knows that he or she is being listened to. Being empathetic.</i>
<b>Open</b>	<i>Characterized by styles that are conversational, affable, convivial, unreserved, unsecretive, somewhat frank, extroverted, and approachable. Reveals personal information about themselves.</i>
<b>Friendly</b>	<i>This communicator confirms and positively recognizes the other. Ranges in meaning from simple lack of hostility to deep intimacy.</i>
<b>Communicator Image</b>	<i>Represents the overall evaluation of the person's perception of whether the self is a good communicator.</i>

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This teacher is displaying a very dramatic and animated communicator style. However, I think standing on your desk may very well scare the students.

## Research

There are numerous studies surrounding the previous communicator styles in relation to other variables. However, the following research will focus on the relationships between communicator styles with effective and ineffective teaching outcomes. For example, Norton (1983) found that:

- Ineffective teachers are significantly **less** friendly, dramatic, precise, attentive, relaxed, and animated.

- Effective teachers are strongly associated with the dramatic style. In particular, being entertaining, getting others to fantasize, catching people up in stories, and doing double takes (reacting to the classes reaction) are strong linear variables.
- A teacher with a high dramatic style score shows to score high on three variables: 1) Uses energy, 2) Catches attention, and 3) Manipulates the mood.

The following are recommendations for teachers who want to be a more effective in regard to communicator styles (Norton, 1983, p. 260).

**1) Use more energy when teaching.**

Energy most likely entails being more dynamic, active, open, mentally alert, enthusiastic, and forceful. The dynamic speaker uses vocal variety and nonverbal variety to increase expressiveness. (Again, very similar to immediate teaching behaviors.)

**2) Anticipate how to catch attention.**

Behaviors include the use of humor, curiosity, suspense, emotion, analogy, metaphors, surprise, and narratives.

**3) Learn how to make a class laugh.**

You do not need to be a comic or clown, however, audience analysis is key. Learning how to make someone laugh requires understanding shared premises.

**4) Learn what entertains a class.**

Find out what it takes to entertain your class. Also, it should be easily adaptable to any subject matter.

**5) Learn how to manipulate the mood of a class.**

This entails many complexities, including a sense of timing, a quickness at seeing connections to all sorts of things and processes, and confidence to try such maneuvering.

In summary, the concept of teacher communicator styles should not be taken in isolation because they can overlap and intertwine. As you can see, numerous characteristics make up each communicator style and therefore you may possess a little of each style depending on the context and situation. The research offered in this chapter has mainly focused on what styles are related to effective and ineffective teaching behavior. Effective teachers know how to make the style variables work for them, while ineffective teachers may not realize the impact that communicator styles may have on their teaching behavior. As stated previously, some of the teacher communicator styles directly relate to immediacy behaviors (discussed in Chapter 5). Immediacy research has a lot in common with some of the concepts and behaviors that are rooted in these communication styles. The similarity and overlap only demonstrates the importance of each research area within the realm of instructional communication.

### **Socio-Communicative Styles & Research**

Behaviors known as *Socio-Communicative Styles* are presumed to communicate distinct impressions of the individual to others (Thomas et al., 1994). Thomas and others (1994) offer the following definition:

**Socio-Communicative Style** = *refers to a communicator's skill in initiating, adapting, and responding to the communication of others.*

Socio-communicative style (SCS) is most commonly measured using the two dimensions of “assertiveness” and “responsiveness.” The third dimension, “versatility,” will not be

discussed due to lack of research in the field. However, the majority of student teachers already realize that any teaching position is filled with situations that call for such flexibility and versatility. For without this characteristic, you will have a hard time adapting to the students, and teaching for that matter.

### *Assertiveness*

Assertiveness is characterized as “someone willing to take a stand and use effective and appropriate communication to advocate or defend her or his position” (Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998, p. 44). Richmond and McCroskey (1990) show assertive descriptors to include the following characteristics:

1) Has a strong personality, 2) Assertive, 3) Dominant, 4) Aggressive, 5) Competitive, 6) Independent, and 7) Forceful.

Within an instructional environment, Thomas and colleagues (1994) found that assertiveness often involves nonverbal behaviors such as:

- Direct eye contact
- Direct body position
- Moving physically closer
- Gesturing towards another
- Raising voice to be heard
- Having more vocal variety

Again, these nonverbal descriptors have a lot of similar characteristics with nonverbal immediacy. One study found a direct connection with each teacher

characteristic (immediacy and socio-communicative styles), whereas highly assertive teachers were viewed as more immediate, and thus, more communicatively competent (Thomas et al., 1994). The same study also found that an instructors' level of assertiveness was found to be very likely to have an impact on whether or not students trust them. Additionally, Wooten and McCroskey (1996) found highly assertive teachers produced the most trust in students who were also highly assertive.

### ***Responsiveness***

Responsiveness is identified as the second construct used to measure SCS and Richmond and McCroskey (1990) characterize this construct by items such as:

1) Sensitive to the needs of others, 2) Helpful, 3) Sincere, 4) Gentle, 5) Sympathetic, 6) Compassionate, 7) Warm, and 8) Friendly.

Responsive teachers are concerned about the relationships with their students and are significantly associated with positive affect toward themselves and the course (Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998). Additionally, an instructors' level of responsiveness was directly related to how immediate and competent they were when perceived by their students (Thomas et al., 1994).

### **Research**

- Both assertiveness and responsiveness were positively associated with instructor effectiveness. Assertiveness is mostly associated with teacher competence and cognitive learning, while responsiveness is mostly

associated with affective learning, trust, and teacher affect.

[McCroskey et al., 2002]

- An instructor's socio-communicative style in the classroom was found to affect student perceptions of teachers and course material. [Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998]
- Perceived instructor socio-communicative style affects the classroom environment. [Myers et al., 2002]

In summary, socio-communicative style can be seen as one of many dimensions of your teaching behavior. Assertive behaviors are characterized by the ability to “initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations,” according to one’s goals (Richmond, 2002, p. 105). Responsive behaviors are characterized by considering the feelings of others, listening to what they have to say, and recognizing their needs (Richmond, 2002). An instructor’s socio-communicative style can enhance student trust, affect, and cognitive learning. The positive outcomes for each dimension are apparent, however, it is up to you to learn how to balance each communicator style accordingly. This is where the real challenge is, which all goes back to being versatile and flexible.

### **Applications for the Classroom**

The following are excerpts from public school teachers and how they perceive their own communicator styles. This is what works for them:

*I think a successful classroom teacher has a blend of styles that is uniquely their own. I have found that my students are typically more aggressive in the area of*

*communication. If I were aggressive all the time in response to them, we would never develop a comfortable, safe learning environment needed to expand in the classroom. I use a moderate, straightforward tone most of the time during instruction to ensure clear boundaries where the students know I expect their cooperation. There is a time and place for all styles, but students respond best when applied consistently.*

**--Crystal Boles, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher--**

*I teach in a more relaxed style and very dramatic since I am associated with the arts. There are times that we write acrostic poems to music words created by students. I also use their creativity in dancing and interpretive movements to the lyrics of their selection. We definitely seem to have an attitude of “play” at times yet the classroom remains conducive to learning. My style of teaching could be attributed to the fact that I learn from the students and allow them to express themselves through music, the use of improvisation of harmonies, rhythms, and other cultural avenues.*

**--Barbara Jackson, 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Choir--**

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## Chapter 7

# Communicating Interculturally

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Ethnic identity
- Teacher perceptions
- Instructional strategies
- Applications for the classroom

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### Introduction

The culturally diverse classroom is becoming more and more of a reality within all levels of education. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1991) documented growth rates of ethnic groups from 1980 to 1990 and found the following results (as cited in Lasley, II & Matczynski, 1997, p. 4):

European Americans	6%
African Americans	13.2%
Hispanic Americans	53.6%
Asian Americans	107.8%
Native Americans	37.9%

Although the Bureau of the Census also reports that the total population is still dominantly European Americans with 75% of the total population, by the year 2020, 50% of the student population will be students of color (Meacham, 1996). Therefore, the need

for cultural sensitivity and multicultural instructional strategies within the classroom is paramount within the next few decades and beyond.

In order to better understand some of the terminology that surrounds intercultural communication, Meacham (1996) offers the following explanations (p. 113):

**Multiculturalism** = *refers to the fact that our society is composed of numerous cultures, that this is a strength of our society, and that each of these cultures deserves to be fully valued.*

**Diversity** = *refers to all of those dimensions of difference that provide the foundation for the construction of meaning in our lives.*

Thomas-Maddox (2002) goes on to define diversity in relation to cultural differences whereas the term culture is expanded upon (p. 174):

**Culture** = *the social, cognitive, and/or physical factors that are shared by an identified group.*

By using these definitions, it will be easier to understand some of the topics within intercultural communication. This chapter will give you insight into the foundations of ethnic identity, the role of the teacher, intercultural research, as well as instructional strategies that can be applied in the classroom.

### **Ethnic Identity**

The study of ethnic identity revolves around how we interpret our own ethnicity (Phinney, 1996). Students and teachers alike have different images of who they are and

what racial and ethnic group they feel apart of. This development can be influenced by their family, community, societal level, and their experiences (Phinney, 1996). Phinney (1996) compiled the following stages of minority ethnic identity (p. 147):

### **Stages and Attitudes Toward Own & Other Groups**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Relationship to Own Group</b>	<b>Relationship to Other Groups</b>
Unexamined ethnic identity (diffusion or foreclosure; preencounter)	Positive, negative, or neutral, depending on socialization (in family, community).	Positive, negative, or neutral, depending on socialization. Possible White identification.
Moratorium or exploration (immersion/emersion; resistance)	High involvement; high salience; typically positive attitudes but possible mood swings.	Increased awareness of racism; possible anger toward Whites and empathy for other minorities.
Achieved ethnic identity (internalization)	Secure sense of group membership; realistic appraisal of own group; salience may be high or low.	Can vary from acceptance and positive involvement (integration) to preference for separatism as rational approach to discrimination.

The first stage reflects that minority group members are likely to show a preference for the White culture; the second stage can be depicted as an exploration process where experience with discrimination and/or other cultures play a dominant role; and the third stage is where the minority individual develops a secure image of themselves within their ethnic group (Phinney, 1996). These stages are conceptual and hard to validate with empirical research (Phinney, 1996), however, they provide a foundation to help you understand what your students may be experiencing when they are identifying who they are and what ethnic group they align with.

### **Teacher Perceptions**

As student populations are becoming more diverse, the teaching population is becoming more homogenous (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). Some teacher

preparation programs are utilizing this information to facilitate intercultural sensitivity and learning among preservice teachers (Causey et al., 2000). Two research studies specifically focus on such intercultural perceptions:

- One program, utilizing “diversity treatment,” was established in order to promote cognitive change by taking responsibility for one’s own growth and ownership for one’s own beliefs. Results indicated that although it is difficult to influence long-held cultural beliefs, “prospective teachers who display a disposition to thoughtfulness and reflection are the most likely candidates for such cognitive restructuring and new learning,” (Causey et al., 2000, p. 43).
- Another study explored the perceptions of preservice teacher’s intercultural sensitivity. The program focused on exploring attitudes about diverse student populations; developing skills in various areas including instructional and curriculum development; and reflecting on the ethics and morals of their practice. Results indicated that preservice teachers increased their confidence in planning multicultural instruction, evaluating materials for bias, and understanding basic knowledge relating to educating ESL (English as a second language) students. However, this did not always translate into actual practice when these teachers encountered the classroom culture and established curriculum (Wilhelm, Cowart, Hume, & Rademacher, 1996).

Exploring your perceptions concerning diversity is a vital first step in understanding yourself. Thomas-Maddox (2002) offers a list of questions that you can answer and analyze in order to become a better communicator with students from diverse backgrounds (p. 176):

- What are my attitudes toward my students of diverse backgrounds?
- How do these attitudes influence my communication with these students?
- How have my own cultural experiences shaped these attitudes?
- Does my communicative behavior denote respect for students who are different from myself?
- Does my teaching style and classroom communication allow for diverse learning and communication styles?

By exploring your beliefs and attitudes about multiculturalism, you can begin to uncover some potential barriers that may be influencing your teaching. After this, you can explore some of the various instructional strategies that may be appropriate for you and your class.

### **Instructional Strategies**

All teachers face the challenge of communicating with students from other cultures that they are not familiar with, as well as developing curriculum in response to these multicultural needs. The following general guidelines and specific instructional strategies will help you with these challenges.

## *General Guidelines*

*Immigrant Students.* Valadez (2001) offers three elements of effective cross-cultural communication when the teacher and student do not share a common language:

1) Demonstrate mutual respect.

- Nonverbals such as direct eye contact, body language, and timed silences can indicate respect.
- A teacher should demonstrate a willingness to:
  - Be awkward/clumsy in dialogue with students;
  - Use body language and voice intonation to convey meaning;
  - Investigate the cultural heritage of a child from another country;
  - Be sensitive to the hardships faced by immigrant children and their families.

2) Demonstrate ‘intentness,’ which means you are focused on every aspect of the interaction.

- Intentness is often a survival skill for immigrant children.
- A teacher should observe the students’ interactions very carefully and create a friendly classroom atmosphere. This may include addressing the other children about the unique challenges that immigrant children are faced with.

3) Demonstrate commitment.

- A teacher can do this by:
  - Making special efforts to provide visual aids, props, etc.
  - Spending time talking with these students.

*ESL students.* Although most schools place ESL students in special programs, they are still immersed within a classroom setting. In regard to communicating with ESL

students, a teacher should keep in mind a few key points (Thomas-Maddox, 2002, p. 183):

- Language differences are at the root of academic problems, not intelligence.
- Allow extra time to complete their work or exams.
- Arrange meetings outside of class to discuss what assignments/concepts they may not understand.
- Pace group activities according to level of participation and comprehension by ESL students.
- Help parents understand their child's academic progress as a result of language barriers.

Minority students may have accent or pronunciation differences, therefore the teacher should (Chesebro et al., 1992):

- Help students enhance their self-esteem by assuring them that their present speech is fine for many purposes, but that you will help them develop a more mainstream style of speech for other purposes.
- Teach others that 'everyone's speech is special.'

*African American students.* Champion (2003) offers a few tips for teaching

African American children and references the Ladson-Billings study:

- It is important for African Americans to see themselves within the curriculum.
- Teachers in successful classrooms have practiced three overall concepts

(Ladson-Billings, 1994):

- 1) Conception of self and others. This indicates the philosophy that all children can learn.
- 2) Social relationships in the classroom. Relationships are seen as flexible and teachers focus on the whole class for academic success.
- 3) Knowledge of self. Teachers and students construct shared knowledge and students engage in various forms of analyses.

Additionally, Lazley, II and Matczynski (1997) offer a list of ideas for teachers to utilize regarding African American dispositions (p. 39):

- 1) Develop a classroom climate characterized by warmth and encouragement.
- 2) Utilize oral modes of expression within the classroom.
- 3) Structure the classroom in formal rather than informal ways.
- 4) Utilize collaborative work environments that promote social interaction.
- 5) Provide overviews and rationales to help place academic content within a context to be studied.
- 6) Provide concept learning that moves from the concrete to the abstract.
- 7) Design learning activities that promote kinesthetic/tactile modalities.
- 8) Be aware of the affective dimension of the classroom environment as well as how the teacher relates to all students.
- 9) Utilize people-oriented examples and situations in the learning activities presented.
- 10) Utilize as many positive role models as possible in the lessons presented to the students.

*Hispanic American students.* There are some discrepancies within classifying individuals of Spanish decent because there are numerous countries that exhibit Spanish culture and individuals can refer to themselves in various ways such as Latino, Mexican American, or Hispanic (Lazley, II & Matczynski, 1997). The following list are suggestions that will help teachers capitalize on Hispanic American Dispositions (Lazley, II & Matczynski, 1997, p. 43):

- 1) Emphasize the use of social integration within the classroom.
- 2) Utilize collaborative work environments that promote verbal tasks.
- 3) Provide overviews and rationales to help place academic content within a context to be studied.
- 4) Utilize the family, its role, and its importance in the lives of youngsters.
- 5) Develop a personal relationship with students.
- 6) Utilize positive role models in all classroom activities.

*Asian American students.* At the beginning of this chapter, statistics showed that Asian Americans had the greatest percentage of growth within the United States. Asian Americans come from many backgrounds including Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Asian Indians (Lazley, II & Matczynski, 1997). A common stereotype is that Asian Americans are hardworking and quiet. Suzuki (1983) cautions that this can lead to a reinforcement of conformity; can stifle student creativity; can be channeled disproportionately into scientific fields; and students may not develop the ability to assert and express themselves verbally (as cited in Lazley, II & Matczynski, 1997). The following guidelines can help teachers teach Asian American students (Lazley, II & Matczynski, 1997, p. 46):

- 1) Emphasize visual-spatial skills within classroom lessons.
- 2) Utilize analytic skills in the tasks designed for students.
- 3) Provide learning activities that provide opportunities for students to take parts and/or components and design new wholes and/or solutions.
- 4) Provide time and space for thinking and personal reflection.

### *Specific Strategies*

Teachers can also engage in specific instructional strategies that have been tailored for a diverse classroom. The following techniques represent a compilation from Hare (1999), Timm and Armstrong (2000), and Weist (2003) that some teachers have found helpful.

- 1) Weekly e-mail assignments to a student from another culture. Teacher can direct the topics of discussion as needed.
- 2) Explore cultural differences by:
  - Examining multicultural marketing techniques
  - Examining different ethnic magazines
  - Examining film segments/movies in another language and compare to the English version
  - Invite guest speakers from various cultural backgrounds
  - Host a food event that features dishes from various cultures
- 3) Write a short story about a world where everyone was the same.
- 4) Interview a person from another culture and turn into an essay.

- 5) Examine stereotypes and where they come from. Teachers can direct specific questions in regard to this.
- 6) Discussions about possible reasons for cultural conflict. For example, “What social, political, or other factors underlie conflict between the upper and middle classes?” Students can then propose solutions to some of these problems.

### **Applications for the Classroom**

Now that we have examined some of the important concepts that surround intercultural communication, it is important to see how teachers use their own knowledge and experience they have gained within the classroom:

*Whether teaching in South Texas, Houston, Austin, or West Texas, I have found two successful means for positively promoting the culture of my very diverse student populations: (1) I have included proverbs from their respective culture(s) among the “Quotes of the Week” that I put on the board and play CD’s of music from various ethnic origins; (2) I also prominently display and talk about art and literary works from the countries and/or cultures of my diverse student populations. (Sometimes the students will even write the proverb in their native languages or read poetry in their language of origin for their classmates.) To have their own traditions/cultural expressions recognized is often a very compelling affirmation for these students!*

**--Shirley Web, 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Grade English—**

*Children can be taught to appreciate and understand those who are not part of the majority culture. The following are suggestions for teachers:*

*(1) Teacher, know thyself. Check your own biases and prejudices. Educate yourself.*

*(2) Create a safe, open environment conducive to learning. One day in my class, a child whose parents are from India told the class that he had been called a disparaging name. The students engaged in a wonderful discussion, including the history of the insult and why another student might use that derogatory name.*

*(3) Remember students do not want to be constantly singled out or marginalized because of their religion, ethnicity, or national origin.*

*(4) Always emphasize what students have in common as human beings. I suggest reading People by Peter Spier to students in elementary school.*

*(5) It is also important to celebrate differences by learning about holidays and customs. To be inclusive around the Christmas holiday, call the party a Winter Holiday Party.*

*(6) The class might create a bulletin board titled, "I AM AN INDIVIDUAL/WE ARE A GROUP." Individuals can put up things unique to them and the class can decide things that are unique to the group.*

**--Gail Tutino, 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Gifted & Talented Classes--**

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## Chapter 8

### Interpreting Student Slang

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Slang characteristics
- Top forty slang terms
- Slang and dialect

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#### Introduction

*“Every self-contained community or homogenous group of persons tends to develop a peculiar speech, a language or jargon of its own. Different trades and professions, different cultural or social groups, even different families, have their own distinctive vocabularies, for the most part unintelligible or unfamiliar to outsiders, and among other things tending to hold the group together by emphasizing its individuality, just as the use of a common tongue is one of the most powerful factors in binding national communities together.” --- Morris Marples, 1950*

Slang is an inherent part of our culture and has exhibited both positive and negative connotations. For example, in the early nineteenth century, slang was considered ‘the language of fools’ (Marples, 1940). On the contrary, Eble (1996) says slang is within the ordinary competence of language users and is not improper grammatical construction. Nevertheless, slang is a part of our everyday language and defined by Eble (1996) as:

**Slang** = *everchanging words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness of a group.*

### **Slang Characteristics**

In *Public School Slang* (1940) and *University Slang* (1950), Morris Marples looks specifically at school slang and makes some of the following observations:

- 1) Slang is a manifestation of youth and implies a juvenile philosophy of life.
- 2) Slang is a linguistic adventure.
- 3) Slang expresses discontent with society's predecessors.
- 4) Slang implies a desire to startle or shock the older generation.
- 5) Slang reflects interests, aversions, preoccupations of daily life, problems at school, and the people encountered there.
- 6) Most categories of slang revolve around:
  - The townspeople
  - Food
  - Punishment/Discipline
  - Schoolwork
  - Satisfaction
- 7) One motive behind slang is to achieve originality.
- 8) Another motive may include secrecy.
- 9) The popular press has affected the revolution of slang dispersal. The ease of which slang is transmitted has caused a general standardization and regional differences are becoming eliminated.

In *Slang & Sociability* (1996), Eble makes the following observations in relation to slang and its characteristics:

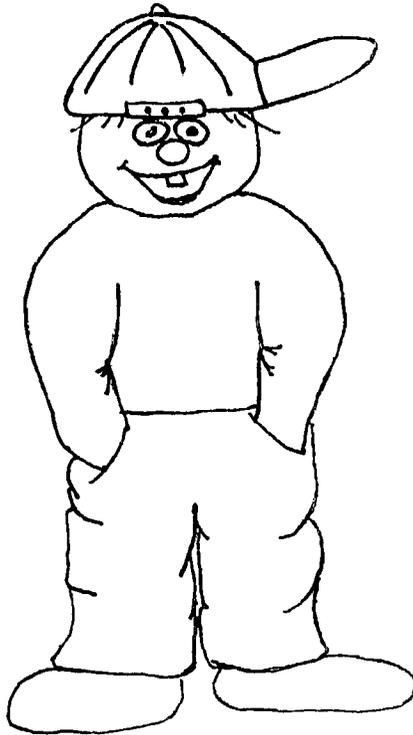
- 1) Some studies of slang show a complete change within a five-year period.
- 2) The mass media has provided the means for an influx in slang usage.
- 3) Slang is representative of social relationships that create shared knowledge between the speaker and listener.
- 4) Slang can be used to identify a style, attitude, or members of a group.
- 5) Slang expressions are used in:
  - Beginnings & endings of conversations such as with greetings and goodbyes (*What's up?, Yo, 'S up?, What's shaking?---Catch you later, It's been real, Later tater, Chow for now, or hasta la bye bye*)
  - Keeping the conversation going (*Gotta love that, I'm down with that, Cool beans, Get off, That bites, or Get outta here*)
  - Addressing the relationship between speaker and listener (*Bro, Brother, Cuz, Homegirl, Homebiscuit, Dude, or Man*)

### Top Forty Slang Terms

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1972-1993) identified the top forty slang terms (Eble, 1996):

1. *Sweet* = excellent, superb
2. *Chill/Chill out* = relax

3. *Slide* = easy course
4. *Blow off* = neglect, not attend
5. *Bag* = neglect, not attend
6. *Killer* = excellent, exciting
7. *Jam* = play music, dance, party
8. *Scope* = look for partner, sex, or romance
9. *Wasted* = drunk
10. *Clueless* = unaware
11. *Diss* = belittle, criticize
12. *Pig out* = eat voraciously
13. *Bad* = good, excellent
14. *Crash* = go to sleep
15. *Cheezy* = unattractive, out of favor
16. *Hook/hook up* = locate a partner for sex or romance
17. *Trip/trip out* = have a bizarre experience
18. *Dweeb* = socially inept person
19. *Buzz/catch a buzz* = experience slight intoxication
20. *Cool* = completely acceptable
21. *Grub* = kiss passionately
22. *Geek* = socially inept person
23. *Granola* = one who follows the lifestyle of the 60's
24. *Homeboy/homegirl/homey* = friend, person from home
25. *Not!* = no, sentence negation
26. *Ace* = perform well, make an 'A'
27. *Dude* = male, any person
28. *The pits* = the worst
29. *Bagger* = fraternity member
30. *Flag* = fail
31. *Hot* = attractive, sexy
32. *Slack* = below standard, lazy
33. *Trashed* = drunk
34. *Veg/veg out* = do nothing
35. *Word/word up* = I agree
36. *Awesome* = excellent, superb
37. *Book* = leave, hurry
38. *Turkey* = socially inept person
39. *Fox/foxy* = beautiful, sexy
40. *Sorority Sue/Sue/Suzi* = sorority member



Yo, Miss, this class is phat, but me and the homedogs think the test was bunk even though we pulled a cramomatic.

### **Slang and Dialect**

Although language variation is all around us, sometimes individuals aren't necessarily using slang, but a variation of nonstandard dialects and pronunciations. In this situation, it is important to realize that standard English should not be forced upon the student or exposed to constant correction (Delpit, 1990). In order to help students acquire alternate oral forms in a more positive light, a teacher can utilize some of the following examples (Delpit, 1990):

- An Alaskan teacher analyzed features of formal and informal oral language with the students. On a bulletin board, side-by-side, were the labels “Our Heritage Language” and “Formal English.” Students engaged in discussion over the nuances of each. Additionally, students participated in a formal class dinner where they dressed up and spoke only formal English, as well as a picnic where only informal English was allowed.
- Other teachers have had students create bidialectal dictionaries of their own language and formal English.
- Various kinds of role-play or drama productions have been utilized to allow students to practice speaking standard English without the threat of correction.
- Younger students can create a puppet show or use cartoon characters to role-play various situations where they are able to use different forms of oral communication.

The basic ideology is to expose students to alternate forms of language and “allow them the opportunity to practice that form in contexts which are non-threatening, have a real purpose and are intrinsically enjoyable” (Delpit, 1990, p. 253).

In approaching unique dialects within the classroom, the instructor should consider the following (Chesebro et al., 1992):

*1) Dialects are frequently viewed as a reflection of one's personal identity, family, and community.*

- 2) *By the age of 8 or 9, students have the ability or competence to express themselves in standardized forms but may choose not to.*
- 3) *Mixing two dialects (code-switching) is a characteristic of fluent bilingual speakers.*
- 4) *When learning variations in another dialect, focus the new dialect on doing something rather than on language drills.*
- 5) *Avoid negative stereotyping of another dialect.*

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## Additional Slang Resource:

- Partridge, E. (2002). *A dictionary of slang and unconventional English* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Edited by Paul Beale. London: Routledge.

# COMMUNICATING TO ENHANCE LEARNING

## Chapter 9 Teacher Clarity

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Teacher clarity
- Research and implications
- Applications for the classroom

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### **Introduction**

Teacher clarity has been researched extensively within both the Education and Communication disciplines since the early 1970's. Since then, researchers have been trying to pinpoint what clarity is in order to measure and study this behavior more accurately. Rosenshine and Furst (1971) reviewed 50 studies of teacher behaviors and found that teacher clarity was a one of the strongest teacher-effects variables related to student achievement. The ultimate goal within this area of research is to identify specific teacher behaviors that can be taught to preservice teachers in order to enhance student learning and teacher effectiveness. The following chapter will present some specific

'low-inference' behaviors (behaviors that are easily identified through direct observation) that teachers can learn and implement within their classrooms.

## Teacher Clarity

Teacher clarity has numerous definitions and descriptions. The following list is a compilation of characteristics that will help define and explain what clarity is.

### Teacher Clarity

- *Being clear and easy to understand.* [Bush, et al., 1977]
- *A cluster of teaching behaviors that result in learners' gaining knowledge or understanding of a topic, if they possess adequate interest, aptitude, opportunity, and time.* [Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1986]
- *Refers to the ability of the teacher to provide instruction...which helps students come to a clear understanding of the material.* [Metcalf, 1992]
- *A relational variable which arises through a combination of source, message and receiver factors...Clarity...is a continuum which reflects the degree to which a source has narrowed the possible interpretations of a message and succeeded in achieving a correspondence between his or her intentions and the interpretation of the receiver.* [Eisenberg, 1984]
- *A variable which represents the process by which an instructor is able to effectively stimulate the desired meaning of course content and processes in the minds of students through the use of appropriately-structured verbal and nonverbal messages.* [Chesebro, 1998; as cited in Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998]

### *Teacher Clarity Behaviors*

In an unpublished manuscript, Cruickshank, Myers, and Moenjak (1975) identified 12 specific behaviors of teacher clarity after synthesizing 5,000 descriptions of clear teachers by junior high students (as cited in Cruickshank, 1985). They include:

- 1) Orient and prepare students for what is to be taught.
- 2) Communicate content so that students understand.
- 3) Provide illustrations and examples.
- 4) Demonstrate.
- 5) Use a variety of teaching materials.
- 6) Teach things in a related step-by-step manner.
- 7) Repeat and stress directions and difficult points.
- 8) Adjust teaching to the learner and topic.
- 9) Cause students to organize learning in meaningful ways.
- 10) Provide practice.
- 11) Provide standards and rules for satisfactory performance.
- 12) Provide students with feedback or knowledge of how well they are doing.

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Additionally, using the previous 12 teaching behaviors, an additional list was compiled that divided teacher clarity into four dimensions with specific behaviors in each dimension (Kennedy et al., 1978). This list provides a look at behaviors in a more sequential fashion in regard to the learning process.

## **Four Factors Contributing to Teacher Clarity and Specific Behavioral Indicators**

**Factor I: Assesses student learning.** The teacher actively attempts to determine if students understand the content or task and as appropriate makes instructional adjustments.

- ❑ Tries to find out if learners understand content.
- ❑ Gives specific details when teaching.
- ❑ Answers questions.
- ❑ Asks learners if they know what to do and how to do it.

**Factor II: Provides opportunity to learn.** The teacher structures classroom activities to allow time for students to think about, respond to, and synthesize what they are learning.

- ❑ Teaches at a pace appropriate to the topic and learners.
- ❑ Shows pupils how to remember or recall ideas.
- ❑ Provides examples and explanations.
- ❑ Gives pupils time to think.
- ❑ Gives sufficient time for practice.
- ❑ Determines level of pupil understanding.
- ❑ Stays with the topic. Repeats as necessary.

**Factor III: Uses examples.** The teacher frequently uses examples, especially on the chalkboard.

- ❑ Shows examples of both how to do classwork and homework.
- ❑ Gives explanations pupils understand.
- ❑ Goes over difficult homework on the chalkboard.
- ❑ Stresses difficult points.

**Factor IV: Reviews and organizes.** The teacher frequently reviews prior work and prepares pupils for up-coming work.

- ❑ Prepares pupils for what they will be doing next.
- ❑ Describes the work to be done and how to do it.

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### *Student Clarity Behaviors*

The communication process in the classroom involves both the teacher and the students, therefore, it is not only important to understand teacher behaviors that provide clear instruction, it is also relevant to understand how students communicate with

teachers in order to clarify information. However, before we look at the students' clarifying tactics, it would be beneficial to differentiate between the definitions of 'misunderstandings' and 'non-understandings' (Kendrick & Darling, 1990).

**Misunderstandings** = *occurs when a receiver constructs or develops a point not intended by the sender (i.e. student develops a different idea, focus, or purpose).*

**Non-understandings** = *refers to an experience in which the receiver gets no point or more than one point.*

Misunderstanding and non-understanding situations will occur in the classroom at some point in time by your students. When this happens, the student will generally use a clarifying tactic to try and understand the material or assignment. A list of eight clarifying tactics were compiled and college students indicated the top four that were most commonly used (Kendrick & Darling, 1990):

#### **Student Clarifying Tactics**

- 1) Asked the teacher to elaborate on something she/he said (Elaborate).
- 2) Asked the teacher for an example (Example).
- 3) Asked the teacher to repeat something she/he said (Repeat).
- 4) Indicated that you didn't understand with a quizzical look or some short expression such as "huh" (Indicate Confusion).

Although these are most commonly used, it is also important to note that given the type of misunderstanding or non-understanding, students frequently employ the following as their first tactic:

- Ignoring the problem
- Asking for elaboration
- Asking the teacher to repeat something
- Indicating confusion

As you can see, the list is the same except for 'asking for an example' is replaced by 'ignoring the problem.' This demonstrates that not all students will use these clarification tactics and instead will ignore the problem. This can create learning comprehension problems, and if the majority of your students use this technique, the teacher is left in the dark as to their lack of understanding. However, keep in mind Factor I from the teacher clarity behaviors that show how to assess student learning.

### **Research & Implications**

Teacher clarity has been researched in relation to various learning constructs as well as to teacher training programs. The following is a representative compilation of the research in both the Education and Communication fields.

- Low-inference (observable) behaviors related to clear teaching included:  
takes time when explaining; stresses difficult points; explains new words;  
gives example on board of how to do something; works difficult

homework problems chosen by students on the board; and gives students an example and lets them try to do it. [Bush et al., 1977]

- Clarity behaviors most strongly related to learner achievement and satisfaction include (student and observer data): using relevant examples during explanation; asking questions to find out if students understood; providing students with sufficient examples of how to do the work; providing time for practice; explaining things and then stopping so that students could think about it; informing students of lesson objectives; and presenting the lesson in a logical manner. [Hines et al., 1985]
- A review of literature revealed consistent findings that clear teachers are perceived as effective and clarity benefits student achievement. [Civikly, 1992]
- Teacher clarity (both oral and written forms of clarity) was positively correlated with student affect toward the instructor and the course. Additionally, teachers perceived as clear were also perceived as more immediate, responsive, and assertive (socio-communicative styles from Ch. 6). [Sidelinger & McCroskey, 1997]
- Clear or immediate teaching can help reduce student state receiver apprehension (anxiety associated with listening competently), and together can reduce apprehension to a greater extent. [Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998]

- Clear teaching was associated with positive affect for the instructor and the course material; and greater student recall. [Chesebro, 2003]

In addition to the previous studies that relate clarity to greater teacher effectiveness, it is vital to take these behaviors and explore the utility of them within teacher training programs. Therefore, the following studies provide great insight into how it has been accomplished.

- Preservice teachers in an undergraduate education class received eight weeks of training in the use of 17 clarity behaviors. Training showed significant improvements in their clarity and their ability to produce student learning. No significant effects were found for student satisfaction. [Metcalf & Cruickshank, 1991]
- As an extension of the previous study, trained preservice teachers employed clarity behaviors more frequently and extensively than untrained teachers, and facilitated greater student learning. [Metcalf, 1992]

Additionally, an outline of *The Clarity Training Program* from the previous studies show how preservice teachers are introduced to teacher clarity topics within the framework of a series of written, videotaped, and laboratory experiments (Metcalf & Cruickshank, 1991; Metcalf, 1992).

### **Clarity Training Program Skills**

#### Unit One

- 1) Inform students of lesson objectives in advance.
- 2) Present content in a logical manner.
- 3) Teach in a step-by-step manner.

## Unit Two

- 4) Point out what is important for students to learn.
- 5) Repeat things that are important.
- 6) Write important things on the board/chart.
- 7) Summarize the material presented in class.

## Unit Three

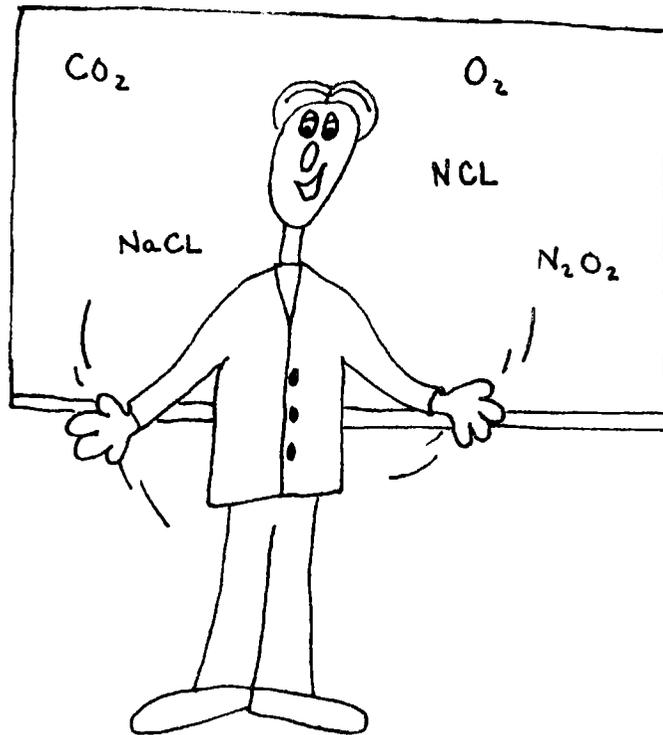
- 8) Use examples.
- 9) Work examples and explain them.
- 10) Explain what unfamiliar words mean.
- 11) Show similarities and differences between things.
- 12) Explain something and then pause to allow students time to think.

## Unit Four

- 13) Repeat things when students do not understand.
- 14) Ask questions to find out if students understand.
- 15) Allow time (pause) for students to ask questions and answer students' questions.
- 16) Provide opportunities for students to practice (or work examples).
- 17) Examine students' work.

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In summary, the research on teacher clarity shows to be associated with increased student learning and teacher effectiveness. Although some studies have found differing results associated with student affect and satisfaction, it is safe to contend that clear teachers have students who like them more (Chesebro, 2002). Additionally, clear teachers are also associated with immediacy, socio-communicative styles, and reducing student state receiver apprehension. Beyond these studies, research shows that training teachers to teach more clearly is effective and most importantly enhances student learning.



Mr. Confucious was throwing around too many science terms for the students to understand. After they were utterly confused, they began daydreaming and doodling on their papers.

### **Applications for the Classroom**

Although the information concerning teacher training programs shows you what is covered, it doesn't really show you how to apply those concepts to your teaching behavior. Therefore, Chesebro (2002) offers a list that can help teachers improve their clarity behaviors.

## Preparing to Teach Clearly

### 1) Think Immediacy

- Immediacy is not a component of clarity, however, it is a precursor to clear teaching. It gains students' attention and creates a positive classroom atmosphere.

### 2) Make Content Relevant

- This is also a precursor to clear teaching. In order to make content relevant try starting with an example, story, activity, etc. that will engage students into wanting to learn more about the subject.

### 3) Consider Students' Prior Knowledge

- Consider the students' backgrounds, experiences, and what they need to know. Use this to prepare class material. This will help with the following steps.

### 4) Organize the Session Carefully

- Try and limit class material to three to five main points; try to arrange the material in the most logical or interesting manner; and consider transitions that will help students go from one point to the next. This will create a focus.

### 5) Develop Explanations

- After the session is organized, examine the material for difficult or unclear points. Develop explanations ahead of time.

### 6) Develop Examples

- Additionally, develop two or three examples of any important concepts that will be taught. Remember the value of in-class activities as additional examples.

### 7) Review

- Review the previous session or two. Repetition is good for memory and focusing attention. Reviews can be interactive by asking students questions about previous material as well.

## 8) Preview

- After reviewing previous classes, preview the current session.

## 9) Teach with Variety

- Remember to do more than just lecture. Questions, discussions, and activities can help students gain a clearer understanding of the material.

## 10) Clarify Visually

- The board, PowerPoint, overheads, skeletal outlines, etc. can make the material more clear.

## 11) Review Again

- At the end of class, review the main points again. Make the review important by requiring their participation so they are not busy putting away their books.

## 12) Ask Students for Feedback

- After a few weeks, ask for anonymous feedback from the students on your teaching.

## 13) View Quizzes and Tests in a New Way

- Teachers can use tests and quizzes as feedback on their teaching as well. Examine the questions that most or all students missed, it could mean the students didn't understand the material very clearly.

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This list was mainly devised for higher education, however, it is applicable to K-12 as well. Primary educators may have more sessions to teach, but the format is easily adaptable. In addition to this list, the following teachers offer more tips and guidelines for teaching clearly:

*In our primary classes it is so hard for student teachers and even seasoned teachers to remember just how basic we need to make the instruction for our students. We caution them to not assume they have prior knowledge of anything. The teacher must demonstrate and model with the actual materials and supplies in the way the student will be expected to act. For instance, if you expect the student to cut out a picture and place it in a particular area, the teacher would need to demonstrate where to find the scissors, where to cut for the picture, and how much glue would be used. Modeling and visual cues are extremely important to give each step of the way.*

**--Marilyn Gilbert, Kindergarten Demonstration Teacher--**

*One of the routines we learn is using the hand they write with. They are to put their elbow on the desk and their pencil in the air to show they are ready. Their cue is "elbow down, pencil up." This eliminates the need for oral instructions to be repeated, reduces confusion, and off-task behavior such as playing with their pencil. I require all eyes and ears to be on me when I give instructions. Teaching procedures takes time, but eliminates the loss of instruction time later on.*

**--RoseMary Cardenas, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher--**

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## Chapter 10

### Facilitating Class Discussion

This chapter will cover the following main topics:

- Introduction
- Planning the discussion
- Discussion strategies
- Applications for the classroom
- Handbook conclusion

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#### Introduction

Discussion as an instructional strategy can be challenging for beginning teachers. The term discussion is somewhat broad and perhaps ambiguous. A discussion does not consist of a teacher asking a question and the students answering them (Wilén, 2004b). In fact, discussions are much more in-depth, as Wilén (2004b) describes in the following definition (p. 35):

**Discussion** = *An instructional conversation consisting of higher order questions asked, and statements made by the teacher and students with responses given by both teachers and students for the purpose of applying knowledge and stimulating critical thinking to enhance understanding about an issue, problem, or other content.*

Additionally, Hyman and Whitford (1990) explain five types of discussion structures:

### **Five Types of Discussions**

1. **Explaining**—analyzes the causes, reasons, procedures, etc. for what has occurred. Ex.)  
“Why have terrorist activities increased in the past 20 years?”
2. **Problem Solving**—seeks to answer a conflict or problem facing the group or community. Ex.) “How can the federal government win its battle against drugs?”
3. **Debriefing**—reflects on the facts, meanings, and implications of a shared activity such as a field trip, viewing a film, participating in a mock 4-H convention, or listening to a guest speaker. Ex.) “Let’s now discuss the film...”
4. **Predicting**—predicts the probable consequences of a given situation, condition, or policy. Ex.) “If the greenhouse effect continues, what will happen to plant and animal life as we know it today?”
5. **Policy Deciding**—sets policy on how the group should act or recommends policy for the larger community outside the classroom. Ex.) “Should we as a class participate in our town’s protest against the state government building a dam here?”

No matter what kind of discussion is involved, you need to know how to plan and implement them effectively. The following chapter will cover these topics, as well as various discussion strategies and guidelines that can enhance your teaching.

## Planning the Discussion

In order to plan an effective discussion, the teacher should first recognize the importance of preparing questions effectively and strategically, since questioning is part of a discussion.

### *Questioning Taxonomies & Guidelines*

Questioning should incite and revolve around higher-order thinking skills (Cooper & Simonds, 1999; Vogler, 2004; Wilen, 2004b). Cooper and Simonds (1999) have used Bloom's taxonomy in relation to adapting discussion questions for your students (p. 154). A brief overview is presented in Table 10.1.

<b>Table 10.1</b>
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### **Bloom's Taxonomy Related to Typical Questions**

**Knowledge:** Questions that require simple recall of previously learned material.

Ex.) "Name, tell, list, define, describe, label..."

**Comprehension:** Questions that require students to restate or reorganize material in a literal manner to show that they understand the meaning.

Ex.) "What is the most important idea, compare, contrast, translate, defend..."

**Application:** Questions that require students to use previously learned material to solve problems in new situations.

Ex.) "Solve, apply the concept to..., prepare, produce, modify, classify..."

**Analysis:** Questions that require students to break an idea into its component parts for logical analysis.

Ex.) "What does the author believe, breakdown, differentiate, distinguish..."

**Synthesis:** Questions that require students to combine their ideas into a statement, plan, product, etc. that is new for them.

Ex.) Create, combine, propose, diagram..."

**Evaluation:** Questions that require students to judge something based on some criteria.

Ex.) "Evaluate in terms of..., what reasons do you favor..., justify, assess..."

Another way to learn how to adapt and develop questions revolve around the use of cartoons. Vogler (2004) uses political cartoons to teach preservice teachers how to develop skilled questioning patterns and sequences using different questioning taxonomies. Teachers have found that this technique helps them improve their verbal questioning skills (Vogler, 2004). As a side note, this could also be an effective strategy to use within the classroom.

Using the different discussion strategies and questioning taxonomies as a guide, you can now structure your own questions according to your subject and grade level. However, you may also want to consider some additional guidelines that may help you develop and improve your questioning skills. Cooper and Simonds (1999) offer some of the following tips (pp. 158-161):

- Write out a sequence of ‘major’ questions.
- Have a clear purpose.
- Phrase questions clearly.
- Know your subject matter.
- Don’t answer your own questions.
- Ask probing questions.
- Guide the flow of the discussion.
- Respond in a way that fosters the discussion process by:
  - Responding positively and constructively
  - Accept and develop students’ feelings
  - Use active listening

- Encourage student input
- Accept student mistakes and help clarify, such as, “Could you explain your answer further?”
- Discourage students who monopolize the discussion.

### *Teacher Characteristics*

Sometimes just asking better questions are not enough to produce meaningful discourse (Frykholm & Pittman, 2001). Rather teachers need to display appropriate characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes. Sawyer (2004) suggests that a teacher should receive training in improvisation (an acting technique) in order to facilitate more effective collaborative discussions. This approach steers clear of a scripted-type of instruction. On the other hand, Frykholm and Pittman (2001) offer five practical suggestions that do not require specific training and can contribute to more effective discussions (p. 221):

- 1) **Have faith in the students.** Teachers should believe their students have the capability to take ownership of their learning.
- 2) **Be prepared to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty.** Teachers must let go of their perspectives to allow students adequate control.
- 3) **Exercise patience.** Students need time to think, reason, and share.
- 4) **Model authentic engagement.** Teachers should model thinking, reflecting, or questioning that they use to solve a problem, etc.
- 5) **Provide easy access to the discourse.** Inviting students into discussion should be done carefully. Ask challenging questions, but don't set them up for failure.

Wilén (2004a, 2004b) expands on numbers three and five from the previous suggestions to further emphasize their importance in discussion implementation. For example:

- **Patience**—“Teachers cannot conduct a discussion at a quick pace because, with higher cognitive-level questions, more time is necessary for students to understand the question, connect the content to past knowledge and experiences, formulate a response, and express it” (Wilén, 2004b, p. 35). Additionally, research has shown wait times of **three to five seconds** can increase the quality and quantity of student responses (Wilén, 2004b).
- **Easy Access**—This concept can get tricky. Should everyone be required to participate? How do you encourage reticent students? Some educators may believe that requiring non-volunteers to speak as undemocratic (Wilén, 2004a). However, research “supports involving students in classroom discussions of public issues,” (Wilén, 2004a, p. 52). Despite your personal stance on the issue, Townsend (1998) offers the following methods to help reticent students speak up:

*Methods for Encouraging Reticent Students*

- 1) Have students write down topics and issues they would like discussed in class.
- 2) Allow students 5-10 minutes to review their notes and gather their thoughts before starting a discussion.
- 3) Before discussion, have students write out their reactions to their readings and then ask them to assess the influence of the class talk on their thinking.

- 4) Organize pairs of students or small groups to generate open-ended questions for discussion.
- 5) Encourage students to explain their responses to questions with reference to the text.
- 6) Give students a chance to rehearse their thinking with a congenial partner.
- 7) Allow 'run-overs' by continuing the discussion of an issue from one class to the next.

### **Discussion Strategies**

Now that the some basic guidelines for planning discussions have been covered, we can now turn to a few specific pedagogical strategies that some teachers find effective. The strategies that will be discussed include using a reverse jigsaw as well as some teacher and student-generated strategies. Additionally, the notion of utilizing assessment within the discussion method will be touched upon.

#### *Specific Strategies*

**Reverse Jigsaw.** The elements of this strategy integrate active involvement and student interdependence in order to enhance learning through cooperation and discussion (Hedeen, 2003). Basically, it facilitates learning through sharing interpretations, perceptions, and judgments on various topics (Hedeen, 2003). Hedeen (2003) outlines the Reverse Jigsaw process (p. 328-328):

- 1) Students gather in groups of four, where each student is provided a unique module consisting of a case study with questions, a complex question or some other prompt. Each student facilitates group discussion of his/her topic or

question, capturing the main points and any outcomes/decisions in writing. A fixed amount of time (5-15 min.) is allotted to each topic.

- 2) Students gather in topic groups (from all the groups), so that all the students who facilitated and recorded on the same topic are together. Students share the highlights of their mixed group discussion and develop a report identifying the common and divergent themes in the class. It is useful to have each topic group prepare a visual record and short oral presentation of these themes (which may take 10-25 min.). The last task for each group is to select a reporter.
- 3) The entire class reconvenes and each reporter delivers the topic group's report. Following the reports, the instructor may wish to debrief the exercise with the class to review/highlight dynamics of group interaction or to conduct an evaluation of the process.

**Teacher-Generated Strategies.** Here are a few instructional strategies that can help students contribute to higher-order thinking skills (Wilén, 2004b, p. 36):

- 1) *Response cards.* Pass out index cards and ask for anonymous answers to discussion questions.
- 2) *Polling.* A verbal survey by show of hands on positions related to an issue. Follow up with discussion based on their positions.
- 3) *Whips.* Go around the group and get each student's point of view. Use when you want to obtain something quickly from each student. May be used to form small groups representing different opinions.

- 4) *Informal panel.* Invite small number of students to present their views in front of the class.
- 5) *Discussion chips.* Distribute same number of chips/pennies (3 to 5) to each member of a small group. They are to use one chip for every answer, comment, or question as part of a discussion. Students need to use all chips or redistribute for discussion to continue.
- 6) *Talking ball.* Toss a small foam ball to students. The student who has the ball must provide an answer, comment, or question to the discussion. Then the student passes the ball to another student.

**Student-Generated Strategies.** Students in higher education have found that certain faculty behaviors/characteristics can enhance quality participation and effectiveness of discussions (Dallimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2004). They include the following: 1) required and graded participation; 2) incorporating instructor and students' ideas and experiences; 3) active facilitation; 4) asking effective questions; 5) creating a supportive classroom environment; and 6) affirming student contributions and providing constructive feedback (Dallimore et al., 2004). This research has beneficial implications at least on the level of secondary education.

### *Assessment*

Teachers are faced with the dilemma of whether or not to count participation for a discussion grade. Of course you can give participation/activity points or some other specified grade if the student contributed to the discussion or not. If you want to get more

involved, you could follow a discussion rubric. Harris (1996) created the following rubric based on (as cited in Wilen, 2004b):

- Performance criteria—did the student 1) Present accurate knowledge related to the issue? 2) Employ skills for stating and pursuing related issues? 3) Engage others in constructive dialogue?
- Scores—unsatisfactory, minimal, adequate, effective, or exemplary. Scores will reflect the positive and negative components of the dialogue (such as if the student contributed or provided irrelevant/distracting statements).

### **Applications for the Classroom**

Additional strategies for facilitating and implementing discussions include the following:

*Communication involves 'giving, receiving, and understanding' information. One way to assess the understanding of information given in a classroom is to conduct classroom discussions. It is not enough to 'give' information. Teachers must determine if the information has been understood. Additionally, discussions provide opportunities for students to listen to the ideas/reasoning/opinions expressed by other students. It is important that the teacher resist simply correcting students when misinformation is presented. If the teacher does not resist simply correcting students, students will eventually stop contributing. Instead, the teacher should prompt with questions, leading students to correct*

*misunderstandings. If they cannot be corrected through discussion, the teacher will need to take additional action, such as re-teaching a lesson. The following steps are effective for both class and small group discussions (from Classroom Discussions, Using Math Talk to Help Students Learn, Grades 1-6 by Chapin, O'Conner, & Anderson):*

*(1) **Revoicing:** The teacher repeats some or all of what the student has said to help clarify the reasoning. The teacher then asks the student to verify that the revoicing is correct.*

*(2) **Asking students to restate someone else's reasoning:** The teacher asks one student to rephrase what another student has said. The teacher must then ask the first student if the rephrasing is accurate.*

**--4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Teacher--**

*Dr. Marcia Tate, the author of Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites, states that discussion is one of the best instructional strategies for engaging the brain. The first and second grade students that I teach participate in many kinds of pre-writing discussions before we actually begin a formal writing workshop. The students begin to formulate and discuss ideas for their own stories after making connections to the books I have read. As the students begin to tell their stories orally, the class discusses any questions and suggestions we might have for the storytellers. When these young authors start to record their ideas, we then begin*

*to discuss as a class what good writing looks like and what we can do to improve their pieces. In my opinion, classroom discussions are vital to student success.*

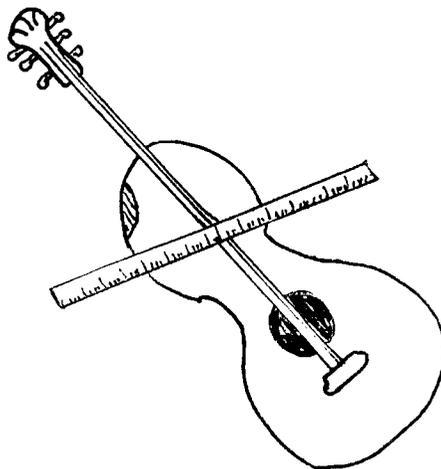
**--1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Reading/Writing Teacher—**

### **Handbook Conclusion**

In order to come to a closure, it is important to realize that all the communication topics and strategies discussed within this handbook can be interrelated and built upon to create the best possible communicative environment. For example, if we look at the last concept, Facilitating Class Discussion, we must also take into account each chapter topic to communicate and teach our students effectively. For example, in order to enhance learning through discussion, it is important to understand that all students are at different cognitive levels. Perhaps utilizing small group discussion would be more beneficial to utilize in order to adapt to multiple levels of cognition. We also need to know how to recognize and deal with teacher and student communication apprehension if you find that some students are not participating in the discussion. We need to recognize how we are communicating our authority and credibility within the classroom to create an environment where students and teachers feel empowered with knowledge and respect. We need to understand the rules and procedures that can be used for effective classroom management so students who are disruptive will not hinder the classroom discussion. We need to be aware that our verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors affect how the students feel about us as the teacher. We need to understand that our communication styles may change according to the situation and learning objective. We need to be

familiar with the communication differences of diverse student populations in order to create a learning environment that all students will feel comfortable participating in, despite cultural differences. We need to be aware that students may speak with slang or informal English, and we as the teacher should not look down upon this. We should also incorporate different questioning strategies within the discussion in order to enhance teacher clarity. Finally, discussion itself could be a strategy to help students gain further clarity on the subject matter.

As you can see, these instructional communication topics are used to build upon each other and overlap. The classroom is a very dynamic environment that requires the use of all of these strategies interchangeably, or all at the same time. Communicating with your students interpersonally and instructionally is a multifaceted job and requires knowledge, dedication, and experience. Teaching is communicating, and a teacher who communicates effectively can create a successful learning environment for their students.



By using multiple instructional communication strategies, teaching can become an orchestrational event.

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