Effect of Immediacy on Teacher's Acceptance in University Students

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"Immediacy" refers to actions or words that encourage a feeling of physical or psychological closeness between people. Teachers who show immediacy to their students tend to enhance likeliness, motivation, confidence, enthusiasm and better learning achievement in students. Immediacy is categorized in two types; non-verbal immediacy that includes overt behaviors like smiling, gesturing, maintaining eye contact, having relaxed body position and verbal immediacy refers to calling students by name, using humor and encouraging student's responses in the class etc. The present study aims to investigate how university students with high self-esteem and independent style of learning, accept and like their teachers the most, and why and how teachers become favorite ones? A survey questionnaire having 30 items was used to collect students' opinion about the immediacy characteristics of their favorite teachers. Two hundred students from three public and private universities were randomly selected as a sample of the study. The major findings of the study were that the teachers who used relaxed body posture, smiled at students, moved around the class for closeness, spoke softly, used positive and frequent facial and body expressions, encouraged students' responses by appropriate nods, were liked more by the students. They felt free to see them before and after the class. They were not happy with the teachers who didn't call them with their names, were indifferent, and did not maintain an eye contact with them.

Keywords: Immediacy, verbal gestures, nonverbal gestures, teacher's acceptance.

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Immediacy, first coined by Mehrabian (1971) is the patronizing communicative behavior of teachers which enhances closeness and interaction with students. The principle of immediacy reveals that "people are drawn towards person and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they do not like, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer" (p.1).

Communicational channels like eye contact, facial expressions, postures, body movements, tone of voice and body distance reveal the level of immediacy in general human interaction. Instructional immediacy is the mental, psychological and physical closeness of instructor with the student. It invites high trust, dependability and honesty on the part of both student and instructor. Immediacy displayed is verbal as well as non- verbal.

Instruction in the university classrooms is basically a communicative interaction between teachers and students. Pakistan is a developing country and we need sufficient talented individuals. This need cannot be met until there is a strong relationship between student and teacher. Although a student's academic success is dependent upon a host of qualities that are both external and internal to the student, a large body of education and communication research points to a strong teacher-student bond as an important predictor of student learning and success regardless of age, gender, income, or race of the student. Specifically, immediacy behaviors or actions that signal closeness have been found to be the prerequisite in developing successful teacher-student interactions (Andersen, 1979).

University students, being adults, are mature, self- motivated and self-directed. They want to participate in class activities and contribute their opinions and feelings with teachers. For the reason they demand self- respect from their teachers and want relationship with them at equal status due to less difference of age and maturity.

Review of Literature

Instructional immediacy is the psychological, emotional and social closeness with students to patronize them and reduce the distance. Teachers who have positive attitudes towards students tend to enhance their motivation, which in turn lead to better learning.

Students usually want to learn more and are more open to different learning experiences when they perceive that their teacher is interested in them and likes them.

There are two types of immediacy;

1. Nonverbal immediacy which includes facial and body expressions and gestures etc.

2. Verbal immediacy which includes voice tone and intonation etc.

According to Mehrabian (1971), maxim of immediacy states "people are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer".

Teacher's immediacy: Andersen (1979) perceived immediacy role of teacher at postsecondary level and elaborated, "Teacher immediacy is conceptualized as those nonverbal behaviors that reduce physical and/or psychological distance between teachers and students" (p. 544). Immediacy comprises both verbal and nonverbal communication, therefore, the situation and environment are important how interactants behave and give space to others. How human psychological and sociological factors influence in deciding the role of interactants. The physical environments like class, office or workplaces have different impacts on behaviors disclosed by people.

Several researches provide evidence that immediate teachers may enhance motivation for learning (Gorham, 1988; Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Myers et al, 1998, Menzel & Carrell, 1999; Cristophel, 1990). Richmond, Gorham & McCroskey (1987) discovered that teacher's non-verbal cues as keeping eye contact, smiling, getting closer, positive leaning, pleasant nods, open arm gestures while explaining and patting for successes are associated with cognitive learning. Verbal immediacy like calling by names, encouraging questions, friendly conversation before and after the class significantly contributes to learning. Research proves there is a strong relationship between teacher's immediacy; and cognitive learning is nonlinear and diverse (Gorham & Zakahi 1990; Witt, Wheeless, & Allen 2004). A meta analytical review of 81 researches provides evidence that immediacy has a significant relationship with students' positive attitude and perceptions about content.

Student's immediacy: Although teacher immediacy has received considerable attention, there is a large gap in instructional research regarding students' immediacy behaviors (Pogue & Ah Yunk 2006). Most of the researches have focused on how teachers' behaviors influence students' learning and motivation, with little attention being paid to how students reciprocate and affect teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, only a few studies have attempted to examine teachers'

emotions toward students, or how teachers and students affect each other's enjoyment in the classroom (Carrell & Menzel, 2001).

Some studies have analyzed the outcomes of student immediacy on teachers (Frymier, 1994). A short study by Frymier (1993), revealed that student's feedback also had a positive effect on teachers'perceptions of student competence, overtness, openness, likeliness, closeness, worth, attitude, and overall educational success. Feedback was categorized as being either negative or positive. Feedback was described as specific non-verbal immediacy behaviors, including positive head nods, eye contact, attentive postures, and repeated interactions or questions during and after class. These student behaviors were hypothesized to express agreement, approval, and interest in the teacher and the material being presented (Chesebro & McCroskey 2001).

Chesebro & McCroskey's (2001) study analyzed the relationship between student immediacy and teachers' perceptions of themselves and the classroom. Specifically, Chesebro and McCroskey thought that student immediacy would boost teachers' perceptions of student credibility, attraction, affect, and overall success.

Additionally, it was hypothesized that teachers would feel more motivated from students expressing positive immediacy. It was presumed that this relationship created more enjoyable classroom climates that are conducive for enhanced teaching and learning. Thus, teachers are more likely to engage and facilitate students who appear involved and engaging back (Zuria & Salleh 1990).

Results from these detailed studies reveal the potential for further research on student and teacher immediacy. Student immediacy and teacher motivation show a strong similarity to prior studies that have confirmed the relationship between teacher immediacy and student motivation (Cheseberg & McCroskey, 2001). This suggests that there is a positive link between immediacy and motivation, regardless of who the sender or receiver is. Khanam (2012) by an experimental study on prospective teachers, concluded that teachers immediacy has a positive effect on learning achievement of prospective teachers. Rogers (1983) has found that teachers' immediacy reveals his genuineness with his students who become self-initiated, self-directed, self-confident and less anxious learner. "As a result, students experience the comfort and enjoyment of learning and much more, positive instructional outcomes are likely to occur" (Sorensen & Christophel, 1992; Richmond & McCroskey, 2006).

Affective   Learning: The majority of previous research has focused on the relationship between teacher immediacy and student affective learning (Witt et al., 2004). Affective learning is a student's attitudes, beliefs, and values toward the teacher, or the coursework presented in class (Bloom, 1956).

Relationships between immediacy and other classroom variables: A lot of researches have provided evidence that teacher's immediacy influences a number of student related variables within the classroom:

- Immediacy is positively related with student affective learning even if number of students is large or workload is high (Gorham, 1988; Pogue & Ah Yun, 2006; Messman & JonesCorley, 2001).

- Immediacy is positively related with students' cognitive learning though it is less influenced than affective learning (Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Christophel, 1990; Cheseberg & McCroskey, 2001; Titsworth, 2001).

- It is positively related to students' perception about teacher's competence, caring and trustworthiness (Thweatt, 1999).

- It is positively related to student's level of motivation (Frymier, 1994; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995).

- Students' and teachers interpersonal physical, social and task attraction (Rocca & McCroskey, 1999).

- Students perceptions about teachers' assertiveness, being influential and important (Thomas et al.1994).

- It is positively related with students' attendance and class participation (Rocca, 2004)

- Immediacy is positively related with student-teacher communication before and after the class (Jaasma and Koper, 1999)

Immediacy has negative correlation with verbal aggression, student resistance and student's indifference (Carrell & Menzel, 2001; Kearney et al., 1988; Rocca & McCroskey, 1990).

University students in Pakistan have certain cultural, social and cognitive characteristics which are influenced and affected by teachers' behaviors. Being adult, they have self- esteem and self-

efficacy. They are mature people and want relationship with teachers at equal basis. They learn more through democratic, participatory and collaborative settings.

They hold strong perceptions about their teachers either positive or negative depending upon their interpersonal relationships with them and the feedback they are given by them.

Statement of the Problem

For resolving the above discussion, the study was aimed to investigate the effect of teacher's immediacy on teacher's acceptance in university students.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore teacher's immediacy at university level

2. To determine the most favorite verbal or nonverbal behavior of teachers among students.

3. To examine the effect of immediacy on teacher's acceptance in university students.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to provide empirical evidence and better understanding of the effects of immediacy on teacher's acceptance.

1. It will be useful to highlight the important factors of immediacy that increase teacher's acceptance for students.

2. The study will help university teachers to adopt appropriate behaviors in the classroom.

3. This study will give a deeper understanding about students and their feelings about immediacy.

4. Teachers may use this research in enhancing their immediacy and closeness with students that increase student's learning.

5. The study will help teachers to improve classroom management and student teacher relationship.

6. The study will provide review of researches on immediate verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

Methodology

The researchers conducted a descriptive survey research to find out the effect of immediacy on teacher's acceptance.

Population: In order to determine the effects of teacher's immediacy, University students of City Lahore, Pakistan, were taken as the population of this study.

Sample: Total 200 students were selected as sample from Forman Christian College University, Lahore College for Women University and University of the Punjab. One hundred students of Lahore College for Women University, 50 students from Punjab University and 50 students from Forman Christian College University were randomly selected as the sample of the study.

Tool of investigation: The researchers prepared a questionnaire by themselves after exhaustive study of teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviors in the literature. It was prepared at three point Likert scale having options as; always, mostly and never. The questionnaire contained total 30 statements of which 14 were items of verbal immediacy and 16 items of non-verbal immediacy. That is, the research included 11 items about teacher's expressions and body positions in class to create immediacy and 14 items about teacher's talks and responses to student's activities in the classroom. Five items were related to other actions of teachers that created immediacy between students and teachers. Twelve statements were negative and rest of the 18 statements were positive. The tool was validated statistically after pilot testing. Reliability coefficient, Chronback Alpha value was .63.

Administration: Researchers collected their data from Forman Christian College University, Lahore College for Women University and Punjab University personally.

The participants were requested to fill the questionnaire according to their personal experience about their teachers. Researchers ensured them that their information would be kept confidential.

Data analysis and interpretation: Frequencies and mean score were calculated for each statement separately. The data has been tabulated below. An overall mean score was calculated for cumulative result of immediate and non-immediate behaviors. The grey rows show negative statements in table one.

Table-1: Participants' responses

Sr. No	Statements	Always	Sometime	Never	Mean (Max = 3)

1	Your teacher calls you by name.	107	62	31	2.38
2	Your teacher uses variety of favorable facial expressions	67	118	16	2.26
3	Your teacher has a very tense body position while talking to the class	23	81	96	1.40
4	Your teacher gives you feedback on your activities	116	59	25	2.46

5	Your teacher moves around the class to check student's performance	63	106	29	2.18
6	Your teacher restricts you to ask question or make discussion	43	52	105	1.69
7	Your teacher uses humor to avoid boredom during lecture	58	119	23	2.18
8	Your teacher smiles at individual students	54	93	53	2.01
9	Your teacher does not encourage students to answer questions when they are not participating	32	57	111	1.60
10	Your teacher gives you punishment of any type on late submission of assignment	32	91	77	1.77
11	Your teacher avoids to make eye-contact with students during lecture	23	50	127	1.48
12	Your teacher always uses appropriate touch when dealing with students	53	90	57	1.98
13	Your teacher invites you to telephone or meet with him/her outside of class if you have any question or want to discuss something	70	81	49	2.12
14	Your teacher wears professional but more casual dresses which enforce you to be attentive in class	77	83	40	2.19

| 15	Your teacher criticizes your actions or comments	21	97	82	1.69
16	Your teacher restricts you to discuss things that are not r elated to your studies	26	89	85	1.70
17	Your teacher uses monotonous/dull voice while talking to the class	59	46	95	1.82
18	Your teacher always sits on chair while teaching	12	57	131	1.40
19	Your teacher stands close to students to remove barrier	60	105	35	2.12
20	Your teacher looks very little at notes & board while talking to the class	57	90	53	1.98
21	Your teacher shares his/her personal experiences with class to enhance your knowledge	85	92	23	2.31
22	Your teacher does not give feedback to your answer and moves toward another student	23	55	122	1.50
23	Your teacher speaks softly	117	63	20	2.48
24	Your teacher does not congratulate you on your success.	23	62	115	1.54
25	Your teacher makes gestures with her hands and body to explain the concepts.	124	55	21	2.51
26	Your teacher hides herself behind the dais all the time.	28	71	101	1.63
27	Your teacher participates/ encourages you for co-curricular activities.	85	94	21	2.32
28	Your teacher welcomes you to discuss your problems out of class.	94	74	32	2.31
29	Your teacher shakes hands with you	26	46	128	1.49
30	Your teacher nods at your response.	56	102	42	2.07

Research Findings

In the light of above analysis, following findings have been drawn:

- Majority of students agreed that their favorite teacher always called them by their name (M=2.38), used variety of positive facial expressions (M=2.26), gave them positive feedback (M=2.46) and moved around the class to check their performance (M=2.18).

- Most of the students agreed that their favorite teacher used humor (M=2.18), and smiled on the individual students (M=2.01). They were somehow agreed that their favorite teacher used appropriate touch (1.98), invited them communication out of class (M=2.12) and dressed properly (M=2.19).

- Most of the students were of the opinion that their best teachers stood close to them to remove barriers (M=2.12) and shared their personal experiences (M=2.31). Some of the students were reluctant to decide whether their teacher sees notes or board during class (M=1.98).

- Majority of the students agreed that their favorite teachers spoke softly (M=2.48), made gestures with his/her hands and body to explain things (M=2.51) and encouraged them for co-curricular activities (M=2.32).

- Most of the students agreed that their teacher invites them to talk out of class (M=2.31) and nods at their response (M=2.07). Somehow half of the students agreed that their teachers shook hands with them while others did not agreed (M=1.49) that seems probably for gender difference.

- On the other hand, most of the students did not agree that their teacher had tense body position (M=1.40), restricted them to ask questions (M=1.69), did not encouraged participation (M=1.60), gave them punishment (M=1.77), avoided eye contact (M=1.48), criticized them (M=1.69) or restricted for discussion (M=1.70). They also disagreed that their favorite teachers used monotone (M=1.80) or confined to their chair (M=1.40).

- The students disagreed that their favorite teachers ignored their feedback (M=1.50) or did not congratulate them at their success (M=1.54). They also disagreed that their favorite teacher was restricted to the dais (M=1.63).

Cumulatively students agreed on the immediate behaviors of their favorite teachers with mean= 2.186 and disagreed with non-immediate behaviors with mean= 1.60.

The following graph shows ratio of immediate and non-immediate behaviors present in university students' favorite teachers.
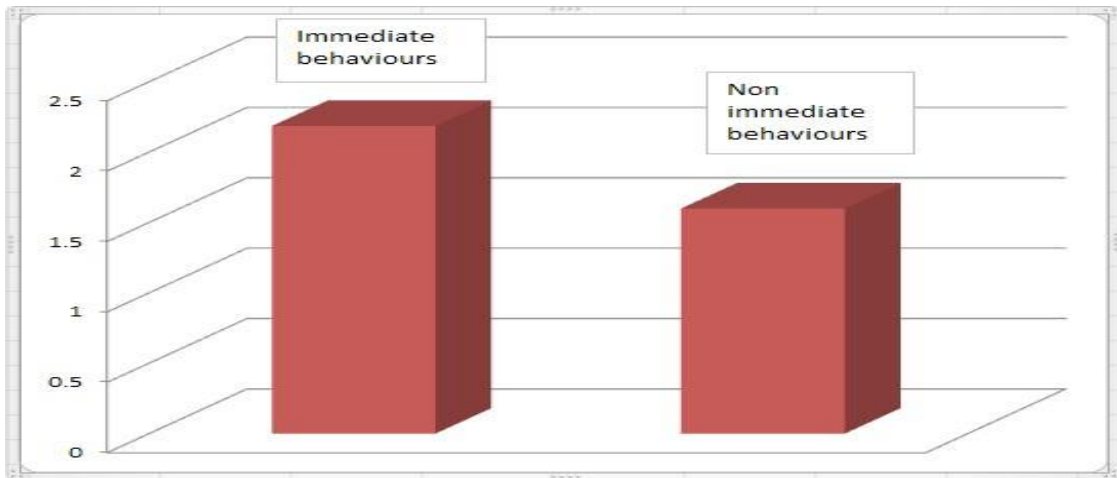
The most common features of students' favorite teachers were that they gave them appropriate feedback and explained content with open hand gestures. On the other hand the least practice done by their favorite teachers were that they avoided eye contact or showed tense body position during the class.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that immediacy behaviors are the major cause of teachers' acceptance among university students and vice versa non-immediate behaviors can result disapproval on the part of students. Teacher should lessen the psychological distance from students, speak softly, encourage their responses, should call them by their names, appreciate them and use diverse tones and intonations to remove monotony in the class. They should express themselves with open hand and body gestures, smiling face, and getting closer to students. Teachers should provide positive verbal and non- verbal feedback to student's responses and discussions in the class. Teachers should use humor to avoid boredom during lecture, move around the class, should be relaxed with affectionate eye contact and appropriate patting on students' success. Teachers should avoid punishment, rigidness, stern facial expressions and being fixed to the rostrum. Enjoyable classrooms have positive effects on teachers' acceptance and students' motivation as well. Teachers should allow students to phone or meet outside of class to clarify confusing

content. Sharing personal examples is also an interactive activity in the class to encourage discussions about daily life problems.

Thus immediacy can help teachers to popularize them among university students and get better results.

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