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Listening Education

Editor: Margarete Imhof

International Listening Association

Listening Education

Editor

Margarete Imhof

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Editorial Policy

Listening Education aims to enhance the practice in listening education by providing a wide range of research and practical information through the publication of papers concerned with the description of methods for teaching listening in primary, secondary, and post secondary education and with the analysis of the pertaining research. This online journal will recognize that many disciplines – education, communication science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, - have important contributions to make to the achievement of its goals, and the Editors welcome contributions from them. The online-journal invites papers which offer descriptions of classroom practice, empirical research, and reviews of high quality.

The papers are searchable in three categories:

a. Teaching listening: Methods for the classroom
b. Research on teaching listening
c. Reviews of material and textbooks suggested for teaching listening

Papers should be concerned primarily with listening education whatever grade, level, or purpose.

Guide for Authors

Authors are requested to submit their papers electronically by using the links provided on this Listening Education Author website.

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Carefully consider the category in which you wish to submit your paper. Each category follows a special format which you can inspect if you follow these links:

Teaching listening: This is how to teach listening in the classroom
Research article on teaching listening
Review of teaching material

Submission of an article implies that you own the copyright for the work and that it your own creative work. Please follow the instructions as you prepare your manuscript. Compliance with the instructions will ensure full searchability of your paper.

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Teacher Immediacy in the College Classroom Setting

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Summary:

Teacher immediacy in the classroom is the subject of much research and discussion in the field of classroom instruction. Although a significant portion of the research emerges from the field of communication studies, research shows that immediacy can enhance student cognitive learning and reported levels of satisfaction with class participation across departments and fields of study. A recent model of Communication Connection Theory introduces advancement in immediacy theory development.

This paper looks at some of the defining research on teacher immediacy and its implications in learning, motivation, evaluation, and in situations of teacher misbehaviors. The relationship between immediacy and levels of perceived teacher caring trustworthiness, credibility and competency are presented. The connection of assertiveness and responsiveness in the socio-communicable style provide insight into the function of immediacy. Specific verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors are provided, along with implication for future direction of research.

TEACHER IMMEDIACY IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM SETTING

Teacher Immediacy Defined

Thomas, McCroskey, and Richmond (1994) conducted a study to define the concept of teacher immediacy. Immediacy is often defined as a psychological closeness to students, and occurs most frequently in nonverbal communication. Teachers with immediacy styles tend to smile more frequently, make eye contact, move around the room while teaching, and exude a likeable presence. The researchers assert that immediacy is not the same construct as responsiveness.

Interpersonal communication competence in the classroom is described as consisting of the three components of responsiveness, immediacy, and assertiveness (p. 109). Assertiveness includes more dominant behaviors and responsiveness includes more submissive behaviors. The authors submit that since immediacy occurs most frequently in nonverbal behaviors, they are not completely controllable and will reflect the individual's socio-communicable style. Socio-communicable style consists of the following traits (p. 109):

Assertiveness -Independent Dominant Aggressive- Competitive Forceful	Responsiveness - Helpful Sympathetic Compassionate- Sincere, Friendly

The authors create a study that assumes that teachers who are high in immediacy will also be high in assertiveness and responsiveness, and will be evaluated by students as having high communication competence. If the study shows only a strong relationship with responsiveness, then immediacy could be considered redundant. In this situation students would perceive the teacher as high in responsiveness but low in assertiveness.

The participants (n=230) were undergraduate students who were asked to complete a non-verbal immediacy measure based on either the previous or upcoming class. Next, they completed a Socio-Communicative Style address measuring perceived levels of the teacher's assertiveness and responsiveness. The characteristics and related measures listed below are used in the Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (p. 110):

Assertiveness	Responsiveness
Defends own beliefs	Helpful
Independent	Responsive to others
Forceful	Sympathetic
Has strong personality	Compassionate
Assertive	Sensitive to the needs of others
Dominant	Sincere
Willing to take a stand	Gentle
Acts like a leader	Warm
Aggressive	Friendly
Competitive	Tender

The results show a significant correlation between all items on the immediacy scale and both characteristics on the Socio-Communicative Style measure. Some individual measures correlated more highly with either assertiveness or responsiveness. For example, using vocal variety as opposed to monotone was more highly correlated with assertiveness, while smiling was more highly correlated with responsiveness (p. 111). The overall correlation of assertiveness (.48) and responsiveness (.46) to the immediacy measure showed that both are highly related to immediacy.

Implications for this study include the suggestion that teachers receive training on communication competence involving both assertiveness and responsiveness skills. Teachers are in positions of leadership and are expected to possess skills of classroom management and to provide direction while also staying tuned in to relational needs of the students. The authors suggest that more research in broader contexts could reveal the value of immediacy in other communication contexts.

Perceived Caring, Teacher Competence and Trustworthiness

Teven and Hanson (2004) conducted a study of teacher caring, one of the three dimensions of teacher credibility: competence, trustworthiness, and perceived caring (p 40). Competence refers to the teacher's expertise on the topic, ability to explain difficult material, and good classroom management skills. Trustworthiness refers to fairness in grading, timing of feedback, and just behavior towards students. Teachers with high immediacy skills are perceived as high in trustworthiness. Caring refers to the overall goodwill towards students and the ability of the teacher to communicate this to the class. Caring may be shown through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, but is primarily shown through nonverbal immediacy.

Although caring is closely related to immediacy, the two share some distinctions. The purpose of the Teven and Hanson study is to define and explain differences between teacher

immediacy and caring, and the possible interactive effects of both. The first study involves verbal caring and immediacy (both high and low), while the second involves nonverbal caring and immediacy (both high and low) and the resulting effect on perceptions of teacher credibility. In the first study, participants first watch scenarios and then complete credibility surveys. The first study validated the manipulations of immediacy and verbal caring used in the second study.

For the second study, four videotapes were scripted and created using the scenarios in the first study. Videotaped lectures involved scripts for both the teacher and student interaction. The scripted behaviors were scripted as follows (p. 43):

High immediacy – Teacher smiles frequently, walks around the classroom, has vocal variety, makes direct eye contact and uses gestures.	Low immediacy – Teacher does not smile or walk around the classroom, has a monotone voice, doesn't make eye contact or use gestures.
High verbal caring – Explicitly praises students with comments such as: "Good job," "That's a good point," and offers extra help on an upcoming exam	Low verbal caring – Teacher makes negative comments such as: "You're one of many", "No one will get an A in this class" "You might find me in my office"

Immediacy and caring were manipulated to include all behaviors in the highly immediacy condition. Low immediacy condition teachers display no immediate behaviors. The other two videos show various levels of immediacy, as with teacher caring indicators. Combinations of immediacy and caring form the following matrix of scenarios (p. 44):

High Immediacy/ High Verbal Caring	Low Immediacy/ High Verbal Caring
Low Immediacy /Low Verbal Caring	High Immediacy/ Low Verbal Caring

Participants (n=275) included undergraduate students enrolled in basic communication courses either read one of the four scenarios or viewed one of the four videotapes. Next, the participants completed a credibility instrument. Participants then completed Tevin and McCroskey's perceived caring instrument (used by authors as a manipulation check) as well as a 10 item immediacy scale to rate the behaviors of the instructor in the video.

Significance was observed on teacher's level of caring and perception of competence and trustworthiness. Level of immediacy also showed significance on perception of competence and trustworthiness. The third hypothesis that combined levels of immediacy and caring would increase teacher credibility was also significant. Teachers in the high

immediacy/high caring level showed high significance on the perception of caring. There was not a significant difference in perceptions of caring and trustworthiness in teachers with high immediacy/low caring or low immediacy/low caring.

The findings show that instructors who don't indicate caring verbally to students will be perceived negatively no matter the level of immediacy. Non immediate teachers can increase credibility by using clear verbal caring messages. Teachers who are able to show more immediacy and caring behaviors will not only receive higher evaluations but will affect more positive learning outcomes.

Suggestions for future research include observer research within actual classroom settings with various settings for culture, teacher and student gender, teacher power, and student evaluations.

Learning, Motivation and Teacher Immediacy

Frymier (1994) studied the relationship between immediacy, motivation and learning. She defines immediacy as a communication characteristic that results in a feeling or perception of students of psychological and physical closeness (p. 134). Research shows support for a causal relationship between cognitive learning and teacher immediacy. In order for cognitive learning to occur, one must utilize recall and memory. Teacher immediacy (both nonverbal and verbal) increases arousal and attention to information, which increases recall and memory, and leads to cognitive learning (p. 134).

Frymier based her research on an earlier model called The Learning Model of Christophel (1990) suggesting that teacher immediacy has a positive effect on student motivation to study. Furthermore, Christophel asserts that immediacy affects state motivation more than trait motivation. Trait motivation consists of students' general levels of motivation toward study or learning, while state motivation refers to the situational level or attitude of motivation within or toward a particular class, task, or area of concentration at a particular time. State motivation changes while trait motivation tends to remain constant (p. 135).

Building on student motivation to study, Frymier developed The Motivation Model suggesting that teacher immediacy may be an effective moderator of state and trait motivation, necessary for learning. Two additional factors discussed involve the areas of effort and performance in relation to motivation. Effort is related to the level of engagement and involvement within motivation, while performance is related to intelligence and ability. Frymier's study looks at effort but not performance. The Learning Model and The Motivation Model are compared within this study for the better match to the existing knowledge.

Researchers utilized a panel design to test the two causal models. Measures of teacher immediacy and motivation were conducted at three points during the semester to student participants (n=178). Students reflected on the class immediately following the

current class to get a broad range of instructors across disciplines. Instruments included the Verbal Immediacy Scale, the Nonverbal Immediacy Scale, Richmond's (1990) motivation scale, and the Affective Learning Scale. Students self reported how much they had learned in the class on a 0-9 scale for cognitive learning measurement.

Although several participants dropped out during the semester, The Motivation Model proved to be the better fit to the data informing immediacy, motivation, and learning. Trait motivation did not show as much effect on state motivation as teacher immediacy. Students with a high immediacy teacher were more satisfied overall and reported they could not have learned more with an ideal teacher. Immediacy alone is not sufficient in building student motivation, as other teacher/student factors come into play, but serves more as an attention-getting device. The authors suggest more research into teacher communication strategies targeted toward student motivation in the areas of attention, "making the content relevant, creating positive expectancies, and producing student satisfaction" (p. 143).

Witt (2008) studied the relationship between teacher immediacy and cognitive learning. In an earlier study, Witt suggested that although students liked immediate teachers more, there was no proof that more cognitive learning was taking place. Other factors that muddle cognitive learning measurement include the difficulty of validating grades when non-cognitive factors such as attendance, participation, and deadlines are included in grades. Although students may learn subject matter, oftentimes more rigorous application and ability to manipulate data is absent from evaluation criteria (p. 3). Perhaps students feel more comfortable in immediacy environments when they wish to ask questions for clarifications or participate in open discussion in the classroom. Witt introduces a Communicative Connection Theory to address the importance of interpersonal communication and connection in creating a learning environment. The underlying assumptions of the CCT theory are as follows (p. 8):

1. Humans desire interpersonal connection.
2. Communication is the means by which humans create, sustain, express, and dissolve interpersonal connection.
3. Interpersonal connections are achieved differently according to context and communicator.

Propositions of CCT theory are as follows:

1. A communication connection may either achieve or express psychological closeness between teachers and students. Examples from the classroom could be the quality of the first day or week of classes and the initial meeting. Other incidents during the semester may increase or decrease psychological closeness due to events during or outside the classroom. Students who display a positive attitude toward the teacher may receive more attention that is positive.

2. Communicative connection may be extended or momentary, deep or shallow, physical or emotional. Examples of temporary connections could include feelings when receiving a high or low grade, delivering a well-prepared speech, or disappointment when not prepared. Teachers who call students by name establish a personal connection.
3. Communicative cues that enable connection once may not do so every time. If extra credit activities are given every day, they become less meaningful than those given infrequently do. Teachers should use a variety of communication skills to establish connections with students.
4. Frequent communicative connections serve to reaffirm and reinforce psychological closeness in ongoing relationships. The authors suggest that some teachers display more immediacy during the beginning of the semester, which diminishes in frequency during the semester. Some student's desire varying levels of interpersonal interaction with teachers and this may also change during the semester.
5. During periods of physical separation, connection can be initiated, maintained, or enhanced through long-distance communication. Relationships can be enhanced with mediated communication such as e-mail, phone calls. Students report appreciation when teachers e-mail them to express concern after absences or to congratulate them for an accomplishment.

CCT theory helps to explain how immediacy behaviors result from a human desire to form relationships. These relationships help form a more intimate learning environment and a more likely place for learning to occur. Positive affect for the teacher can translate to positive affect for learning material (p. 13). Researchers may look for the relationships between the "frequency and variety" of immediacy cues in the future as a means for measuring the depth of interpersonal connection (p. 15).

Misbehavior and Teacher Immediacy

Thweatt and McCroskey (1998) conducted a study to determine the effect of teacher misbehavior in the classroom on perceived credibility by students. Source credibility is a vital condition when attempting to increase student positive affect and attitude toward learning class materials. Students who perceive teachers as having high levels of competence and character tend to learn and internalize more while reporting a higher positive affect. Students also show higher levels of learning when hearing other students they perceive as possessing high credibility give presentations. Furthermore, students who possess a high affinity for teachers report a higher opinion of the teacher's credibility. Affinity is the level of positive or negative attitudes of a student towards the teacher. Teachers with high affinity-seeking behaviors are perceived by students as more likable, social, and satisfied with their lives (p.

349). Levels of affinity-seeking behaviors may positively or negatively affect student perception of teacher credibility and competence.

Misbehaviors are those actions that might interfere with classroom instruction and negatively affect the learning process. The research design included two studies, the first to define teacher misbehaviors, and the second to validate frequency factor structure of misbehaviors. Four scenarios were presented to university students in a large lecture type setting. Through factor analysis, three categories of teacher misbehavior were established and labeled "incompetence, offensiveness, and indolence (p. 350). Each of the three categories in Study One contained specific items as listed below:

Incompetence	Offensiveness	Indolence
Confusion/unclear lectures	Sarcasm/put-downs	Absent
Apathetic to students	Verbally abusive	Tardy
Unfair testing	Unreasonable/arbitrary rules	Unprepared/disorganized
Boring lectures	Sexual harassment	Deviates from syllabus
Information overload	Negative personality	Late returning work
Does not know subject matter	Shows favoritism/prejudice	Information under load
Foreign or regional accents		
Inappropriate volume		
Bad grammar/spelling		

Study Two validates the categories listed in Study One and determines a meaningful factor structure. A previous study provided research defining teacher misbehaviors and the relationship to "cognitive learning, affective learning, and student resistance and was utilized in design (p. 350). Earlier research showed that although teacher misbehavior was infrequent, students reported lower levels of learning, and less positive affect towards the teacher, and which diminishes teacher credibility.

Results of Study One showed teachers perceived as highly immediate without misbehaviors were also perceived as highly competent (m= 35.80, p<0.0001, p. 353). Highly immediate teachers with misbehaviors were also perceived as highly competent (m=22.80, p< .0001, p. 353). Teachers low in immediacy with no misbehaviors (m=25.50) and teachers low in immediacy with misbehaviors (m=21.56) did not have a significant difference in perceived credibility when compared with each other. Teachers perceived as caring presented a significant difference when paired with highly immediate teachers, but not with low immediate teachers.

Results of Study Two showed significance with variance in that both categories of teachers (high and low immediacy) with no misbehaviors were considered more highly competent than those teachers with misbehaviors. When comparing teachers with high immediacy and misbehaviors with low immediacy and no misbehaviors, there was no significant difference. Teacher immediacy behaviors have a stronger effect on students perception of teacher caring than misbehaviors. If teachers present high levels of immediacy, they will not suffer as much from occasional misbehavior and can maintain credibility.

A study by Kelsey et al (2004) examined teacher misbehaviors through the lens of attribution theory. The practice of student surveys and evaluation brings claims that outside biases such as teacher personality or appearance may unfairly influence results. Teachers who misbehave may cause changes in student classroom performance and attitude based on the attribution made by students for explaining teacher misbehaviors. Teacher immediacy is also examined as a factor in formation of attribution.

Attribution theories attempt to describe how "humans come to know self and one another" (Kelsey et al., p. 41). The authors describe the three assumptions for attribution theory:

| 1. People seek to interpret or understand self and others' behavior in terms of its causes. |
| 2. People assign causes systematically. |
| 3. Attributed causes play an important role in determining reactions to those behaviors. |

Some possible explanations commonly given for behavior attribution include the situation, unintentionality or chance, and intentionality or disposition. These explanations combine with the frequency, or the number of times this behavior occurs. If a behavior occurs frequently, it will be associated with an internal attribution, if infrequently; it will be associated with an external attribution. Students will use a systematic process to assign attribution. The context of the behaviors, along with the saliency will determine which attribution or explanation will set guidelines for present and future attributions. When new or different information becomes available, students will select according to situational factors.

Researchers indicate that students and teachers both tend to make biased attributions based on personal behavior by highlighting internal attributions when explaining others, but highlighting external attributions when explaining their own behaviors. Although students claim responsibility for motivation, they blame students for demotivation (p. 43). Students were also quicker to point out negative behaviors of teachers than positive behaviors. Teachers tend to take credit for student motivation and responsibility for demotivation on students.

Kelsey et al. (2004) define teacher misbehavior as those behaviors that interfere with instruction as well as learning. The categories of incompetence, offensiveness, and indolence, described in the teacher misbehavior scale in the previous article by Thweatt and McCroskey (1998), as well as the subcategories were applied to attribution theory. Viewing teacher misbehavior through attribution theory suggests that students will judge negative teacher behaviors as more salient than positive behaviors (p. 43).

Students will also view negative behaviors as caused by internal factors, similarly to the way teachers most often view student's reason for performance. The authors theorize that students will attribute behaviors to the teacher's personality, rather than external sources such as circumstance. Behaviors occurring more consistently will be attributed to internal sources, while those less consistent behaviors will be deemed to be the result of external sources. Researchers further theorize that immediacy behaviors, such as smiling, eye contact, open movement, and gestures will inversely affect student perceptions of teacher misbehaviors.

Two samples of college students representing a variety of majors completed questionnaires focusing on the class that met before or following the current class. Sample one is college freshmen, and Sample two is higher level students. Researchers surmise that the older students will have a stronger baseline of comparison for teacher behavior than incoming freshmen. Students were asked their opinions regarding the likelihood of teacher immediacy behavior and misbehaviors.

The results showed that more students gave responses pointing to internal causes (n=237, 67.9%) compared to external causes (n=112, 32.1%) when explaining teacher misbehaviors (p. 49). The second hypothesis predicted that consistency of teacher misbehaviors would also be judged by students to be related to internal factors, and was supported statistically. The significance was higher for the older college group than the freshmen group. The third hypothesis suggested that teacher immediacy would be inversely related to the likelihood of teacher misbehavior and was supported by the findings. The final hypothesis predicted that perceived teacher immediacy and misbehaviors would predict student attributions of internal versus external causes.

This finding was not supported, other than misbehaviors only contributed to attribution of causality for internal reasons. Researchers suggest that both internal and external factors may be considered as factors in the same cases, and that causality can be more complicated than it appears. Attribution theory suggests that people search for explanations for behaviors and those students are not very forgiving of their teachers when they misbehave.

Lannutti, Laliker, and Hale (2001) conducted a study of teacher-student touching, expectancy violation, and professor evaluations. Touching behavior is a specific behavior

category within the area of nonverbal immediacy, but is not often discussed due to the grey area between appropriate touch and sexual harassment. The authors propose that a violation of the level of student expectations, shown in the expectancy model of nonverbal communication, can help explain why touch may be viewed negatively in some situations but positively in others.

The expected levels of teacher touch may result from past experiences, social norms, or knowledge of a person's idiosyncrasies. Furthermore, whether or not the touch is viewed negatively or positively will be determined through the reward value of the communicator (attractiveness) and derived interactional behaviors (politeness). For example, a high reward communicator who touches a student may be viewed more positively than a low (unattractive) communicator. The latter could be viewed as overly aggressive and receive a negative evaluation from the student.

Three categories of touch in educational settings combined with high or low reward styles set the stage for the study of student's levels of expectancy violation. The combinations are as follows:

No touching	Low reward professor	Sex of student
Touching on arm	Low reward professor	Sex of student
Touching on thigh	Low reward professor	Sex of student
No touching	High reward professor	Sex of student
Touching on arm	High reward professor	Sex of student
Touching on thigh	High reward professor	Sex of student

Undergraduate students (n=398) were administered scenario questionnaires and asked to imagine that he or she was the student in the scenario. The high reward professor was described as someone you "like and admire" and the low reward professor was described as someone you "dislike and disdain" (p. 73). All of the scenarios depicted opposite sex situations within the student-professor interaction.

Students evaluated the touch on the thigh as a significantly higher violation of expectancy (m=6.81) compared to the arm touch (m=5.51) and no touch (m=4.70) (p. 74). Female participants reported increased levels of expectancy violation as touch increased, while male participants had a higher expectancy that low reward professors would touch them on the arm, and rated those professors who did not touch lower on evaluations.

The reward value of the professors significantly affected perceptions of character, but not of expertise. Male participants viewed high reward professors much more highly than female participants on character, and they also viewed these professors higher in expertise

than the female participants. The study showed that there are areas of tolerance and no tolerance for the appropriateness of touch between students and professors. Professors with high reward who use minimal touch will receive the highest evaluations. The authors advise that no touch is the appropriate level of immediacy between professors and students and they do not advocate the introduction of touching in educational settings.

The authors suggest that more research should be done in the areas of same sex teacher-professor touching and evaluations. They also suggest more research in the area of the unexpected difference between female and male students and levels of expectancy of touching with low reward professors. The authors suggest that possibly male students perceive female professor arm touching as nurturing, while females perceive male arm touching as harassment.

Conclusion

Teacher immediacy is one of the most commonly studied subjects in the field of instructional communication. Appropriate levels of nonverbal and verbal teacher immediacy in the classroom can help gain and retain student attention, motivation levels, increase likeability, and approachability of teachers, and lead to more learning of subject matter. Although immediacy creates a sense of physical and psychological closeness, too much immediacy or physical contact could have an adverse affect on student learning and evaluations of teacher credibility and character.

Male students report different levels of expectancy of touch in interactions with female teachers than female students with male teachers. Attribution theory suggests that students tend to attribute causation more often to internal sources if the teacher has low immediacy, but is more forgiving if the teacher has high immediacy behaviors. Teacher training can help teachers appreciate boundaries while increasing teaching effectiveness and student evaluations.

A great deal of research on immediacy is conducted by collecting student perceptions of teacher performance. A number of effective survey instruments have been developed and validated because of research over the years. Researchers should move toward direct observation of teachers in the classroom to record details of actual incidents of teacher behaviors over time. Specific examples can be recorded in "real time" without relying on student memory of the last class or the next class scenarios. The development and refinement of teacher interpersonal immediacy skills will promote a more intimate environment that is conducive to learning.

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Teaching Listening In the Classroom: Listening Practice: Understanding the Role of Self Talk In Listening

Authors: Carole and Jennifer Grau, Taliaferro/Grau Associates

Type/Aspect of listening in focus: Internal Distractions and Self Talk

Goals: To raise awareness of self talk as a potential listening challenge

To use the speech-thought gap productively

To develop a supportive listening focus

Description: This exercise helps people monitor the internal conversation many people have while listening and consider how it impacts the quality and effectiveness of their listening.

Preparation & procedures: There are four parts to this experience.

1. Facilitate a group discussion re: distinguishing "hearing" from "listening".
2. In small groups, discuss 10 Effective Listening Habits. [see Steil & Bommelje: Listening Leaders: The Ten Golden Rules to Listen, Lead & Succeed, p. 75/76].
3. Ask each individual to complete the attached worksheet
4. Facilitate a group discussion responding to the questions that follow

Understanding the Role of Self Talk In Listening

Often, when people listen to others, they are simultaneously having an internal conversation with themselves. These conversations are often called "self talk".

Read the self-talk statements below and decide if the listener who has these thoughts is operating at level one hearing, or level two listening. Place a check in the appropriate column. Use a question mark on both sides when it is not easy to make a clear decision.

Level One: Hearing passive involvement going through the motions	SELF TALK STATEMENTS	Level Two: Listening Active engagement Getting the most from the speaker
	Today we'll probably cover	
	It's so hot in here	
	What a voice	
	So far I've heard that	
	This is boring	
	This is of value for	
	What's that noise	
	That happened to me once	
	I disagree	
	I can't follow this	
	The point being made is	
	Where is this going?	
	The speaker is attractive	
	I can see it in my mind	
	So that word means	

Tips and Debriefing:

1. Form small groups to discuss choices made, reach consensus.
2. Compare and share findings.
3. Which pieces of self talk were helpful to the listener?
4. Which pieces of the self talk were interfering to the listener?
5. Which pieces of self talk were difficult to label? Why?
6. How does one distinguish between helpful v. interfering self talk?
7. What is the speech-thought gap? How does it impact listening?
8. What steps can one take to become ready, to prepare for listening?

Title: "Now You're Speaking my Language": Teaching Students to Translate Scholarly Research into Lay Vernacular

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Grade level: Undergraduate

Courses: Any Upper-level Communication Course (this example is specifically geared toward an introductory Interpersonal Communication course)

Goals: The purpose of this assignment is to help students become more familiar with academic journal articles and their relevance to everyday practices. Specifically, this assignment is designed to instruct students how to (1) locate research articles, (2) read and comprehend research articles, and (3) interpret challenging material and present relevant findings for a lay audience.

Rationale: Students are exposed to findings from scholarly research through their contact with textbooks, news media, magazines, popular press books, and a host of other sources. In our experience, however, students are largely unfamiliar with reading and interpreting the primary source of this information, academic journal articles. Indeed, there is a disconnect between research conducted in academe and student understanding of its significance to their lives. This disconnect is important insofar as students often take recommendations from sources such as *Cosmopolitan, Elle, Men's Health, and Maxim* as "the final word" on relational maintenance, communication, and other important skills. Even when these columns are based on some recent finding, the advice is only as good as the primary research.

In their textbooks, students are often introduced to the relevance of scholarly research through "research in action" sections that summarize scholarly findings. Unfortunately, students often skip over these textbook sections or quickly devalue research findings as having no relevance in the "real world" (particularly those that contradict personal views).

To combat the disconnect problem, instructors often assign students to read original work. Unfortunately, however, this is often not an optimal solution as this material can be above the average undergraduate's reading comprehension level. Thus, students may

review the articles, but not actually understand them; consequently they become confused, frustrated, and ultimately bored with scholarship in general. An alternative to students reading primary sources ad nauseam is to assign popular press material that refers to scholarly research. Again, this solution, alone, is not ideal. When only exposed to the mainstream presentation of research students may simply accept the information at face value, rather than critically examining it.

We offer an assignment created to introduce undergraduates to scholarly research and its relevance to their daily lives. The assignment is creative and effective in demonstrating the importance and significance of academic journal articles as well as the connection between communication research and communication practice.

Assignment:

This assignment is broken down into four steps and designed to take place over a one to two month period. The final product consists of a three to four page paper formatted as a popular press article (e.g., magazine, newspaper). See Figure 1 for the student handout.

Step 1: Finding a relevant research article

First, students must find a journal article of interest to them. In order to guide this process, students are introduced to a variety of ways to search for research articles and some of the relevant databases in which they might find an appropriate article. Additionally, they are provided with guidelines for which to judge and select their articles.

For example, students are encouraged to search strictly for empirical articles. They are informed that empirical articles will contain a study (or observations) rather than simply review literature or propose a theory. Students are also provided with a list of well-known relevant journals (e.g., *International Journal of Listening*) to help them focus their search. Finally, students are introduced to criteria for assessing published material (e.g., date of publication, authority, publication quality; see http://gemini.lib.purdue.edu/core for the modules used in the present application).

Step 2: Reading the article

After finding a research article, reading it, and ensuring it is empirical in nature students are asked to make sure they understand key findings, the methodology used to reach these findings, and the implications of these findings. During the time frame in which students are to be reading their article, they are also assigned to read "Reading Research Reports: An Introduction" (Schroeder, Johnson, & Jensen, 1985). This article provides advice regarding how to read a standard research article. Specifically, this article describes the

typical sections of a journal article (i.e., abstract, literature review, methods, results, discussion) and provides bullet points concerning the purpose of each section and how the different sections are related to one another.

Writing Assignment 3: Converting a journal article to a popular media article

The purpose of this assignment is for you to read and understand an empirical journal article discussing an issue of interpersonal communication and to be able to interestingly and accurately report the major findings and implications for a specific audience.

Step 1: Select an empirical journal article from one of the journals listed below. An empirical article will contain a study rather than reviewing literature or proposing a theory. Please see me if you find an article and are not sure if it is an empirical article. The article must come from one of the following ten journals:

Communication Monographs   *Human Communication Research*
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology   *Communication Research Reports*
International Journal of Listening   *Personal Relationships*
Journal of Social and Personal Relationships   *Communication Quarterly*
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology   *Western Journal of Communication*

Step 2: Read the article, make sure it relates to issues of interpersonal communication, make sure it is empirical in nature, and make sure you understand the key findings, the overall methodology (e.g., survey, interviews, experimental design), and the implications.

Step 3: Read "Writing to be Read" and "Mixing Numbers and Words." Also, choose media outlet you plan to write for and seek examples. You will be writing this as either a newspaper or a magazine article and need to keep that periodical's readers in mind (e.g., New York Times, Journal & Courier, Maxim Magazine)

Step 4: Write the article using APA Format. The article should be 3-4 pages, typed, double-spaced using 12pt font.

In this article you must:
- Include a title at the top which tells me which periodical you are writing in.
- Introduce the article and the author and explain why you think this audience needs to be aware of the journal article and its findings.

- Explain the major findings including the overall methodology used to arrive at these findings. (Make sure you are focusing on the key findings – you will need to read the results and the discussion to determine which findings the authors consider to be key findings).
- Note the implications discussed by the authors in the discussion section of the article.
- Note additional implications that you see for your specific target audience.
- Include a brief conclusion.

When submitting your article be sure you are using APA citation appropriately in the text of the article when citing quotations and the author and year. Be sure to include a reference page in APA format and copy of the journal article you are reviewing.

Figure 1: *Handout for the Converting a Journal Article to a Popular Media Article Writing Assignment*

This assignment is most appropriate for upper-level courses since those students likely have some exposure to research methods. Even for those students, they should be encourage to not become frustrated if they encounter complex information, especially in articles using quantitative methods. To ease potential frustration, the instructor should demonstrate how discussion sections correspond to results sections by stating in words what was previously stated with statistics. The instructor must be willing and able to explain the findings in an article for students requiring clarification.

Additionally, the instructor may choose to set aside an entire class period as a peer review day. This day would serve as an opportunity for students to read a second scholarly article and to check the integrity of their classmate's representation of the article. During a peer review day, students would pair up and read each other's journal article. They would go on discuss possible interpretation and translation of relevant findings. This peer review process would provide some preliminary feedback to the students before they submit a final version of the assignment.

Step 3: Preparing to write the popular press article

After reading their journal article, students are asked to read the chapter "The Writer's Art" in the book *News Reporting and Writing* (Mencher, 2008) and the brief section titled "Mixing Numbers and Words" in the text *News Reporting and Writing* (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 2007). These texts provide basic guidelines for good journalistic writing and will help students understand what their completed article should look like. During this step, students should also decide to whom they will be presenting the findings. They must choose either a newspaper or magazine source. Students are instructed to think about a range of

issues when they are making their choice (e.g., which individuals would be most impacted by the findings in your research study?).

Step 4: Writing the popular press article

Finally, students are ready to write their 3-4 page articles. Specific requirements of the assignment consist of an introduction of the journal article (author, title, and explanation of why this audience needs to be aware of this journal article and its findings), an explanation or clarification of the major findings as well as the general methods used to reach these findings, implications of the article findings and how these findings are likely to impact their specific target audience. Students are encouraged to not simply write a document that comprises these basic elements, but to do their best to actually follow a style and format representative of the media outlet they have chosen.

To assist student understanding of assignment expectations, students are provided with the article "Forecasting Friends Forever: A Longitudinal Investigation of Sustained Closeness Between Best Friends" (Ledbetter, Griffen, & Sparks, 2007). This article was chosen because students find this study interesting and relevant, as well as a relatively easy to read. During class time, students are separated into small groups and instructed to discuss how they would translate this journal article into something that a lay person would be able to understand and want to read.[1] At the end of class, students are then presented with a published article describing the Ledbetter et al. piece (Patterson-Neubert, 2007). The class period concludes with a discussion of how effective the translation was and what improvements they might make had they written the press release themselves.[2]

Assessment:

The first and second authors completed this assignment during the 2007-08 fall and spring semesters. Upon completing the assignment, students (N = 71) completed several items on 5-point Likert scales, The three items of interest for this article assessed student learning (I learned more about how to read and understand journal articles by completing this assignment), application (I thought about how the findings in the article would apply to the lives of a target audience), and interest (I will scrutinize the presentation of findings in

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[1] One additional exemplar used to facilitate understanding of the assignment expectations is, "The Myth of Gender Cultures: Similarities Outweigh Differences in Men's and Women's Provision of and Reponses to Supportive Communication" (MacGeorge, Graves, Feng, Gillihan, & Burleson, 2004) and the related popular press version (Patterson-Neubert, 2005). Of course, instructors can choose any exemplars that fit their specific course objectives.

[2] Communication Currents is another excellent resource instructors can use to find exemplars of how to translate and present scholarly research in a way that is accessible to broad audiences (http://www.communicationcurrents.com).

newspaper and magazine articles more carefully than I did before). Results suggest that students did, in fact, believe this assignment was helpful on a variety of levels.

To assess whether students believed the assignment encouraged deeper thinking, learning, and understanding, separate single-sample t-tests were used. Each item mean score was compared against a value of three. This test value was used as it is the scale midpoint. As expected, students reported:

(a) the assignment encouraged deeper thinking about the connection between journal findings and communication practice (M = 3.90, SD = .70), t (70) = 10.85, p < .001, η^2, = .63,

(b) they learned more about how to read and understand journal articles (M = 3.46, SD = .83), t (70) = 4.75, p < .001, η^2, = .24, and

(c) they understood "how findings in scholarly articles can be presented to a wider audience better than I did before I completed this assignment" (M = 3.41, SD = .80), t (70) = 4.29, p < .001, η^2, = .21.

Thus, this assignment is effective in not simply helping student become more familiar with scholarly writing, but our preliminary results also suggest the utility of the assignment in helping students make the connection between scholarly writing and popular press renditions of research findings. Because this assignment is unique in that it does not simply ask students to read academic journal articles, but also forces them to think about how this scholarly material relates to "everyday life", students develop an understanding of the relationship between research and practice.

Appraisal: There were two challenges associated with this task. For the students, the biggest difficulty involved being able to actually read and understand scholarly material. This challenge was addressed by the introduction of the "how to" article and the relevant "how to" class period. The main challenge for the instructors was the amount of time necessary to evaluate each student's assessment. It was quite time consuming to read the journal articles chosen by all of the students. Providing a list of articles from which students can choose is one solution to this problem.

Overall, this assignment is both effective and enjoyable and is limited only by the creativity of the instructor and the students. Possible elaborations of the assignment include; suggesting students write for other media outlets including web-based options, encouraging students to work in groups or as a class to create a newsletter, and requiring students to present their work in a public forum such as a poster session. While selecting different

variations of this assignment, the instructor should keep his or her specific goals in mind and make sure the elaborations are appropriate. This assignment is an effective tool to help students develop a better understanding of scholarly material and appreciate the connection between research and practice.

References and Suggested Readings:

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