



## EFFECTS OF TEACHER IMMEDIACY BEHAVIOURS ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TOWARDS LANGUAGE LEARNING

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### Abstract

This study seeks to reveal the efficacy of teacher immediacy behaviours on students' motivation according to the gender and level of proficiency of the students as the behaviours of the teacher during the learning process has an important role. The sample of the study consists of the students studying at the Preparatory Department of the School of Foreign Languages at Cyprus International University. Data was collected through the implementation of two questionnaires: The Teacher Immediacy Behaviours Questionnaire and The Student Motivation Questionnaire prepared by Geçer (2002). Based on their score on the Teacher Immediacy Behaviours Questionnaire, the participants were divided into two groups: Group 1 consisting of students with lower scores and Group 2 consisting of those with higher scores. The results of the data analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between the motivation scores of the two groups. The results also demonstrated that there is a significant difference between female and male students' motivation scores in group 1 and group 2; both male and female students were influenced positively by teacher immediacy behaviours. However, in the light of the data analysis, there is no significant relation between students' perception of teacher immediacy and their levels of proficiency. As the results of the findings indicate the importance of teacher immediacy behaviours in learners' motivation, further studies are expected to be conducted.

**Keywords:** Teacher Immediacy Behaviours; Motivation

### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to find out whether there is teachers' immediacy behaviours affect students' motivation according to their gender and level.

The research was administered to 221 prep-school students (141 of which made up the data set) at Cyprus International University. The students were in beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. Two questionnaires were given to the students: the teacher Immediacy questionnaire and the motivation questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered at the end of the lesson without informing the learners and the instructors of the questionnaire, to obtain more authentic results.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

All teachers have a desire to teach their students effectively. Therefore, a teacher should know how to create motivation in the classroom and get the learners to take part in language learning activities willingly. In order to do that, communicative acts in the classroom take the form of both verbal and nonverbal behaviours. Mehrabian (1971) described nonverbal components of communication as "silent messages" (cited in Thompson, 1992). He says that paralinguistic features such as body language, paralinguistic features (body language:55%, stress, pitch, intonation: 38%) contribute as much as 93 percent of the meaning in the communication of feeling or attitudes toward others; on the other hand, verbal contributions amount to about 7 percent. Verbal and nonverbal behaviours are not only important in the daily lives, but also important in the classroom.

According to Businessballs.com (n.d.), the words were spoken with different tonalities and subjects were asked to guess the emotions behind the words as spoken. The experiment finding was that tone carried more meaning than the individual words themselves.



The subjects were then shown photos of female faces with the same three emotions and were asked to guess the emotions in the recorded voices, the photos and both in combination.

The photos got more accurate responses than the voice, by a ratio of 3:2.

According to this research,

- 7% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken.
- 38% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said).
- 55% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in facial expression.

This is also reflected in classroom interactions between the teacher and the students; as the teachers are communicators in a class, they use these three channels in the classroom, but generally the importance of words, paralinguistic and facial expression are not well-known.

However, according to Izgören (2000), this percentage cannot be the same in every conversation. The effects of words, paralinguistic and facial expression change with respect to the people's cultural level, topics that are talked about, atmosphere and whether the message is used to give the idea or to express the feeling (Kanmaz, 2008).

Mehrabian was the first to describe the idea of “immediacy” (1969), which provides insights into communication behaviours and which sheds light on the importance of communication in the classroom. Immediacy was conceptualized by Mehrabian as “communication behaviours that enhance physical and psychological closeness with another” (Frymier, 1993).

Mehrabian (1981) states that immediacy derives from nonverbal communication in theory and it includes feelings, attitudes, likes and dislikes. He indicates that the behaviours including nonverbal communication are the symbols which affect our emotional states, attitudes, interests and choices. Geçer (2002) mentioned that immediacy behaviours show positive evaluation and concern. However, avoidance remarks the dislike, lack of concern and anxiety (Geçer, 2002). Mehrabian (1981) defined immediacy as a communication behaviour. Immediacy behaviours are said to increase the nonverbal attraction towards others. On the other hand, it decreases the distance between the people.

The theory was further developed by Andersen (1979) as communication behaviours which reduce psychological and physical distance between interactants. Immediacy behaviours were first known as just nonverbal immediacy, then verbal immediacy behaviours were added and it was qualified as a positive communication between teacher and the student. Teacher immediacy reflects the verbal and nonverbal communication skills of the teacher, the relationship between the teacher and students becomes closer through immediacy behaviours (Andersen, 1979).

The teachers with high immediacy behaviours are perceived better than the teachers with low immediacy behaviours. Andersen (1985, cited in Geçer, 2002) emphasizes that the teacher immediacy behaviours show the clarity of the communication and the affability and it increases sincerity of the communication between people. Furthermore, immediacy decreases the psychical and psychological distance between students and teachers. For instance, Heiser (1972, cited in Geçer, 2002) showed in his study that the students felt distant from their teachers when the teachers sat on their chair and on the desk, or stood behind their desk. However, when the teacher walked around the desks and moved in the classroom, the students thought of their teachers as more friendly and effective. Accordingly, Mehrabain (1981) asserted that touching is an important behaviour as a sign for immediacy and concern. Researches carried out on touching showed that the human beings or the people that are liked are touched more than the ones that are not liked. In other words, if someone likes another, he/ she wants to touch him/ her. This can also be true of classroom interactions.

According to the research of Breed (1971) about university students indicated that negative feelings and attitudes had occurred due to the lack of eye-contact from the instructor in the classroom. The students



remarked that they concentrated more on their instructors and the lesson in instances of eye- contact.

Smiling is another vital immediacy behaviour (Mehrabain, 1981). Mehrabain (1981) says that smiling involves interactants. When someone smiles, the other interlocutor is likely to smile. That is why smiling is seen as a sign of warmth between people. Andersen (1979) expresses that smiling is the centre of immediacy.

Body movements of the instructor provide both visual and audial stimulation for the students. Andersen (1979) put forward the idea that all body movements have a positive relationship with the students' perception of teacher immediacy. Mehrabian (1981) stated that using a lot of body movements reveal cooperation with the students in instructional communication.

The tone of the voice is also included in important teacher immediacy behaviours and it stimulates interpersonal relationships (Andersen, 1979). In accordance with Andersen (1979), tune of the voice is important for the approach of the students to the lesson and the teacher.

Acts such as the use of humour, praising student's behaviours and studies, and being eager to meet with the students at or out of school are also counted as verbal teacher immediacy behaviours. Talbert and Beran (1999, cited in Geçer, 2002) explained that verbal immediacy behaviours are defined, understood and applied much better than nonverbal immediacy in the classroom.

Mehrabian noted the immediacy principle to describe the process whereby "people are drawn towards persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer, and they avoid from moving away things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer" (1971, cited in Georgakopoulos, 2003). Wiener and Mehrabian (1968) define immediacy as "the relationship between the speaker and the objects he (or she) communicates about, the addressee of his (or her) communication, or the communication, itself" (cited in Tinley, 2008). Bolls, Tan and Austin (1997) defined teacher immediacy as "the reduction of psychological or physical distance" between teacher and student (cited in Tinley, 2008).

On the other hand, student motivation was introduced simultaneously by Christophel and Richmond as a possible mediating variable between teacher immediacy and student learning (Christophel and Richmond, 1990, cited in Frymier). Richmond and Christophel found immediacy to be positively associated with motivation and motivation to be positively associated with affective and cognitive learning (Richmond, 1990, cited in Frymier, 1993).

With Christophel's research (1990), the correlation between teacher immediacy and student motivation and teacher immediacy and student's learning were investigated. Before Christophel's study, Anderson also studied teacher immediacy and solidarity as predictors of teaching effectiveness in 1978 and 1979. Andersen (1979) distinguished teacher immediacy and solidarity by defining teacher immediacy as "the nonverbal behaviour manifestation of high affect" and solidarity as "the internal affective state". Her results showed that teacher immediacy was highly correlated with student effect toward the instructor and averagely correlated with student effect toward course content and with student behavioural commitment. She found no significant results related to the relationship between teacher immediacy and cognitive learning. Richmond and Gorham (1987) stated in their research it can be assured that a teacher who increases immediacy with students is likely to generate more student learning. The behaviours most likely to accomplish this objective at the college level appear to be vocal expressiveness, smiling, and having a relaxed body position.

Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey (1987) mentioned that immediacy behaviours influence perceptions of physical psychological closeness and can be communicated through a variety of channels (i.e. eye contact, gestures, words). On the other hand, it is also stated in Gilstrap's study that "these behaviours are not immediate in and of themselves, but lead to perceptions of immediacy by others".



Gilstrap (2004) gave an example from Frymier's study (1994), which pointed out that smiling is not immediacy, but is a behaviour that leads to perceptions of immediacy, therefore although a sender may be sending immediate messages; it is the receiver's perception of such behaviours that influences the social interactions. Gilstrap (2004) claims although immediacy generally benefits interactions, exceptions occur when it is forced as a function of the environment. Mehrabian (1971) argues that everyone has their limits for immediacy, even with people they like, and when it is excessive or forced by the environment it has negative outcomes (Gilstrap, 2004). That is why Mehrabian (1971) suggests that the "ideal environment" is one which provides opportunities for both immediacy and privacy, with immediacy contacts and use of immediacy behaviours being a matter of choice.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Research Question 1:** Is there a significant difference between the motivation scores of the students with higher immediacy perception scores (Group 2) and that of the students with lower immediacy scores (Group 1)?

**Research Question 2:** Is there a significant difference between the motivation scores of the female and male students in Group 2 and that of the female and male students in Group 1?

**Research Question 3:** Do the student perceptions of teacher immediacy change according to their levels of English such as starter, elementary, pre- intermediate and intermediate?

## PARTICIPANTS AND THE SETTING OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages, Cyprus International University in Northern Cyprus, Lefkoşa during the 2010-2011 academic year with the permission of the university. All the participants in this research were prep-school students from three classes of starter level, seven classes of elementary level, three classes of pre- intermediate level and one of intermediate level. There were 221 students in total from Turkey and Northern Cyprus, 141 of them were used as 80 of the questionnaires were invalid. After getting the results of the questionnaires, 221 students were divided into two according to their perceptions of teacher immediacy behaviours as group 1 who scored lower in the test and group 2 who scored higher in the test. Group 1 consisted of 63 students and group 2 consisted of 78 students. The ages of the students ranged from 17 to 25 years old.

## MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

Two questionnaires were administered; the Teacher Immediacy Behaviours Questionnaire consisting of 48 questions and the Student Motivation Questionnaire consisting of 12 questions. The personal information part consisted of the name, gender and level of the students. They did not have to write their names but had answer write the other independent questions. The questions were asked in Turkish as the native language of the participants was Turkish. The questionnaires were Likert type scale. These were; "hiçbir zaman" (never), "bazı zaman" (sometimes), "ara sıra" (occasionally), "genellikle" (generally), and "her zaman" (always). They were developed by the researcher.

The questionnaires were administered at the end of a lesson without informing the learners or instructors of the questionnaire in order to obtain more authentic results. During the administration of the questionnaires, the instructors left the classroom, then; the students were informed about it. While giving the questionnaires, the researcher asked the students to answer the questions by considering their last lesson. The students were informed that none of the instructors would be given the questionnaires.



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this study, the questionnaires were administered to 221 students of prep school. Then the participants are divided into two groups as group 1 and group 2. Group 1 consisted of 63 students who scored 140, 00 point or lower in the questionnaire of student perceptions of teacher immediacy behaviours, group 2 consisted of 78 students who scored 160, 00 point or more in the questionnaire of student perceptions of teacher immediacy behaviours.

### Research Question 1:

*Is there a significant difference between the motivation scores of the students with the high immediacy perceptions (Group 2) and that of the students with the low immediacy perceptions (Group 1)?*

**Table 1: The Difference between Students’ Perception of Teacher Immediacy and Motivation**

|         | n  | m     | Sd   | t    | P   | Level of significance |
|---------|----|-------|------|------|-----|-----------------------|
| Group 1 | 63 | 34.96 | 6.65 | 3.29 | .01 | P < .05*              |
| Group 2 | 78 | 39.37 | 8.75 |      |     |                       |

**n: number      m: mean      sd: standard deviation      t: t value      p: level of significance p < 0.05**

**\*T test is significant at the 0,05 level (2- tailed)**

Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference (P < .05). To determine whether there was a significant difference between two groups, a test was applied.

The motivation scores of the students in group 2 differ from those with group 1 according to the students’ perception of teacher immediacy behaviours.

As can be seen in Table 1, the number of group 1 students is 63 whereas the number of group 2 students is 78. The mean of group 1 is 34. 96; while the mean of group 2 is 39.37. The standard deviation in group 1 is 6.65; and that of group 2 is 8.75.

The mean values of motivation scores of group 2 have a higher mean score than those of group 1, and the T- test result shows that there is a significant difference between two groups at the P < .05 significance level; this indicates that group 2 students are more motivated owing to teacher immediacy behaviours.

### Research Question 2:

*Is there a significant difference between the motivation scores of the female and male students in Group 2 and between those of the female and male students in Group 1?*

This table shows that there is a significant difference between the female and male students’ motivation scores in group 1 and group 2 according to the results obtained from a t-test.

**Table 2: the Difference between Male and Female Students according to their Motivation Scores**

|                 |         | n  | M     | sd   | t    | P   | Level of significance |
|-----------------|---------|----|-------|------|------|-----|-----------------------|
| Female Students | Group 1 | 32 | 33.75 | 7.24 | 2.11 | .03 | P< .05*               |
|                 | Group 2 | 29 | 38.13 | 8.93 |      |     |                       |



|               |         |    |       |      |      |     |         |
|---------------|---------|----|-------|------|------|-----|---------|
| Male Students | Group 1 | 31 | 36.22 | 5.83 | 2.19 | .03 | P< .05* |
|               | Group 2 | 49 | 40.10 | 8.65 |      |     |         |

**n: number      m: mean      sd: standard deviation      t: t value      p: level of significance p< 0.05**

**\*T test is significant at the 0,05 level (2- tailed)**

Table 2 shows that the number of female students in group 1 is 32, while the number of female students in group 2 is 29. The mean of the female students in group 1 is 33.75; whereas the mean of group 2 is 38.13. The standard deviation of the females of group 1 is 7.24; but the standard deviation of the females of group 2 is 8.93. This indicates that female students in group 2 are more motivated than females of group 1 with the help of teacher immediacy behaviours.

The number of male students in group 1 is 31; yet in group 2 it is 49. The mean of the male students in group 1 is 36.22; however, the mean of the male students in group 2 is 40.10. The standard deviation of the males of group 1 is 5.83; but the standard deviation of the males of group 2 is 8.65. This indicates that male students in group 2 are more motivated than males of group 1 due to the teacher immediacy behaviours.

The T- test result shows that there is a significant difference between two groups at the P < 0.05 significance level; this indicates that the motivation levels of both female and male students are affected positively by the teacher immediacy behaviours.

### Research Question 3:

*Do the student perceptions of teacher immediacy change according to their levels of English?*

**Table 3: Students' Perception of Teacher Immediacy according to their Levels of English**

|  | Levels of English | n  | M      | Sd    | F    | P    | Level of Significance |
|--|-------------------|----|--------|-------|------|------|-----------------------|
|  | Starter           | 44 | 151.90 | 23.12 | 0.24 | 0.86 | P > .05               |
|  | Elementary        | 71 | 149.35 | 22.89 |      |      |                       |
|  | Pre-Intermediate  | 24 | 147.54 | 22.93 |      |      |                       |
|  | Intermediate      | 2  | 143.00 | 89.09 |      |      |                       |

**n: number      m: mean      sd: standard deviation      F: t value      p: level of significance p< 0.05**

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference (P > .05). ANOVA was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference between two groups,

As can be seen in Table 3 the number of the starter level students is 41, the number of elementary students is 71, the number of pre-intermediate students is 24, and the number of intermediate students is 2.

The mean of the starter level is 151.90, the mean of the elementary level is 149.35, the mean of the pre-intermediate is 147.54 and the mean of the intermediate level is 143.00. According to the mean values, it can be said that starter students have a higher perception of teacher immediacy.

The standard deviation of starter level is 23.12, the standard deviation of elementary level is 22.89, the standard deviation of pre- intermediate level is 22.93 and the standard deviation of intermediate level is 89.09.



The F value is 0.243 and P value is 0.86. This means that there is no significant difference among the students' perception of teacher immediacy of starter, elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels students. In other words, there is no significant relation between students' perception of teacher immediacy and their levels of English.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the efficacy of teacher immediacy behaviours on students' motivation according to the gender and the level of the students has been investigated. The sample of the study consisted of students from Preparatory Department of the School of Foreign Languages, Cyprus International University.

In order to answer the research questions, two questionnaires were administered to the participants; Teacher Immediacy Behaviours Questionnaire and Student Motivation Questionnaire. According to the student perception of teacher immediacy scores, the participants were divided into two groups as group 1 who had lower scores and group 2 who had higher scores. Of 221 students, 61 were female and 80 were male. The participants were divided into two groups, 63 in group 1 and 78 in group 2. 61 students were female while 80 students were male. The questionnaires were administered at the end of the lesson without informing the learners and the instructors of the questionnaire in advance so as to obtain more authentic results. During the administration of the questionnaires, the instructors left the classroom, then; the students were informed about it.

SPSS 17.0 was used for statistical analysis. A test and ANOVA were used to get the results. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between the motivation scores of the students with the lower immediacy perception (group 1) and those of the students with the higher immediacy perception scores (group 2) and there is a significant difference between the female and the male students' motivation scores in group 1 and group 2, both male and female students were influenced positively from teacher immediacy behaviours. However, when the student perceptions of the teacher immediacy behaviours were compared according to the English level, no significant difference was found.

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