

TRAINEE PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIFFERENCES IN  
INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS OF  
EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE CORPORATE TRAINERS

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By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **TRAINEE PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIFFERENCES IN INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS OF EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE CORPORATE TRAINERS**

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Extensive research has documented positive relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher clarity, and student perceptions of learning. However, most of this research has been limited to samples of students in university classrooms. The present study includes a research sample made up of 104 corporate employees from a U.S. pharmacy benefits company who were involved in a company training program.

Participants completed measures of nonverbal immediacy, verbally effective behaviors, teacher clarity, and affective learning. Results indicated effective trainers use more nonverbal immediacy and teacher clarity behaviors and create greater affective learning than do ineffective trainers. Results found no differences in trainers' use of verbally effective behaviors. Of the variables studied, trainer clarity was the primary predictor of student affective learning. Findings suggest previous instructional communication research can be applied to the training context and that trainers should use nonverbal immediacy and teacher clarity behaviors to achieve desired affective learning outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Employee training is a tremendous investment. In 2001, American companies budgeted \$56.8 billion for formal training. This figure does not include another \$8.6 billion budgeted for facilities, overhead or hardware needed to conduct that training (Nilson, 2002; p. 41). The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) reported in its 2004 State of the Industry report that participating benchmarking members spent an average of \$817 per employee for training in 2003 (Surgue & Kim, 2004). On average, employees in those organizations spent almost twenty-six hours in training for the year (Surgue & Kim).

Nilson (2002) reported that in 2001, 85% of training was conducted by a trainer either in the classroom or via remote technology. ASTD reported that instructor-led classroom training accounted for 72% of all training conducted during 2002 (Surgue, 2003). Both reports highlight the key role the trainer plays in the training process. The trainer is a critical element of the training experience, not just because most training today is delivered by a person standing in front of a room, but also because of the role that the trainer performs in the learning process. The trainer orchestrates the learning experience by creating interest, explaining concepts, conducting exercises, answering questions, and checking for understanding – all while addressing the unique needs of

each class they hold (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2004; Compeau, 2002; Delahaye & Smith, 1998; Mitchell, 1998; Pike, 1989; Thorne & Mackey, 1996; Truelove, 1997).

Training centers around planned and structured activities through which employees learn skills that will enhance their overall performance (Steiner, Dobbins, & Trahan, 1991). Effective training ensures employees are able to perform their jobs efficiently and provides new skills and knowledge required for companies to stay competitive in an ever-changing marketplace. Organizations need capable trainers who are able to knowledgeably explain new skills (Analoui, 1994), model what they are teaching (Jackson, 1999), and motivate trainees to transfer learning by changing old behaviors and adopting new skills when they return to their jobs (Analoui; Darling, 1993; Gilleard, 1998).

As with any other investment, business leaders want to ensure their training dollars are likely to achieve desired results. Since the trainer is such a key figure in the process it is critical to know what that person can do to obtain desired training results. There has only been recent attention given to empirical research in the area of corporate training and development. Both Wexley (1984) and Compeau (2002) noted the need for more research. There is even less empirical communication research in the training context to understand how trainer communicative behaviors can help or hinder training participants from accomplishing their learning goals.

Communication scholars have examined various elements of human communication in numerous settings, including interpersonal relationships, small groups, organizations, and public gatherings. In each case researchers attempt to observe and describe how people communicate. At times, their findings are able to inform

recommendations about ways people can improve their communication practices. Within the last 30 years communication researchers have also studied communication practices and outcomes in the classroom. Of unique contribution to the discipline, instructional communication researchers frequently examine how certain communication behaviors, when enacted by teachers, can contribute to learning outcomes like affective learning, cognitive learning, and behavioral learning. These three types of learning generally reflect a student's attitudes about the class or instructor, the student's learning of conceptual knowledge, and his or her ability to perform new skills. The field of Instructional Communication can provide insight and recommendations for trainers to improve their communication and teaching behaviors.

Most instructional communication research studies are conducted in an educational context (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1994; Frymier & Thompson, 1991; Houser, in press; Powell & Harville, 1990; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004). Much of the literature is derived from studies conducted with participants in university or secondary educational settings. The instructional communication literature is especially rich with insight into communication behaviors that elicit positive learning outcomes and student reactions. Researchers have examined the effects of teacher communication behaviors such as teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Johnson & Miller, 2002; Koval, 1999; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004), teacher clarity (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998; Powell & Harville, 1990), affinity-

seeking (Frymier, 1994; Frymier & Thompson, 1992), teacher humor (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillman, 1979; Frymier & Weser, 2001; Stuart & Rosenfeld, 1994; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), making content relevant (Dumas & Wile, 1992; Frymier & Houser, 1996; Frymier & Shulman, 1995) and use of power (Kearney, Plax, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1984, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985; Richmond, & McCroskey, 1984; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987).

Frequently, researchers have found these instructional communication behaviors are positively correlated with improved affective learning, cognitive learning, behavioral learning, and student state motivation. Select communication behaviors and their related outcomes will be described further in Chapter Two.

### *Problem Definition*

Though there has been a great deal of existing research conducted in an educational setting, little or no effort has been exerted to determine whether these instructional communication behaviors drive similar outcomes in the training context. While they may offer great possibilities for improved training, we cannot simply assume that these instructional communication behaviors will achieve the same results in a corporate training context that they have been found to have in educational contexts. Greater understanding is needed to more confidently advocate the use of particular instructional communication behaviors to improve desired training results.

There may be three factors that would prevent the application of previously discussed instructional communication findings to the workplace. Each difference will be discussed briefly in the pages that follow. Among these are differences in academic



and corporate environments, differences in learning preferences of college students and business employees, and differences in the types of tasks or subject matter being taught.

First, each workplace has a unique corporate culture resulting from a combination of numerous factors including its leaders' philosophies, marketplace challenges, business goals, and employee views (Deetz, Tracy & Simpson, 2000). Rather than activity purely directed to learning as in the academic context, employees deal with performance pressures and goals that have direct consequences for their immediate livelihood. Performance is directly associated with their livelihood – their ability to pay their bills and sustain their families, whereas academic performance is generally more associated with potential for future benefits than with immediate consequences. This difference alone may influence or alter the levels of motivation, attention, and commitment that training participants dedicate to a class they attend.

Second, in addition to workplace differences, there are differences in characteristics of the learners sitting in university classrooms or corporate training rooms. These differences are described in literature on adult learning. Malcolm Knowles wrote seminal works in adult learning theory. His works detailed “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1970, p. 38). The work of Knowles and others have identified several characteristics of adult learners that set them apart from younger, less mature learners.

Unlike younger learners, adults are driven by internal pressures or needs to learn rather than outside forces (Knowles, 1978). They typically engage or attend learning opportunities to improve their abilities, achieve goals, or simply to attain greater knowledge and understanding. Adults have many more experiences than their younger

learner counterparts. Knowles observed that past experiences provide adult learners with reference points to which they can relate new learning. They use their experience to formulate opinions of the value and validity of new things they learn suggesting that they may be less accepting of information than younger learners. They desire that the value of their experience is recognized and used to create greater understanding. Adult learners are typically motivated to learn by a need to solve a problem or to correct a perceived deficiency (Rogers, 2002). For instance, they may view themselves as lacking a necessary skill required for promotion or they may see that they could do more if they knew something else. In either case, they have already identified what specific tasks they need to learn and have come to a class to learn them. As such, adults require relevant training that can be quickly applied. Knowles says the adult learner “wants to apply tomorrow what he learns today” (1978, p. 58). They desire to learn information or skills that are applicable to what they are dealing with in the here and now. Each of these characteristics will be explored further in Chapter Two.

The third factor that could confound the application of instructional communication findings to the workplace is variance in the types of tasks or subject matter being taught. Most university classes teach subject matter like history, psychology, and English. These classes mostly focus on cognitive information along with some specific skills. Workplace training is more focused on teaching specific skills with just enough cognitive information to encourage appropriate application of those skills. Kearney, Plax and Wendt-Wasco (1985) found student perceptions of teacher behaviors differed between people-oriented and task-oriented content. It stands to reason students

may require different behaviors depending on the content being taught and that behaviors found to be effective in one context may not be absolutely transferable to another context.

Several scholars have drawn attention to the deficit in empirical research on trainer behavior and have called for additional research in this area (Compeau, 2002; Kontoghiorghes, 2001; Wexley, 1984). The need for additional research is even greater given the differences that have already been noted above – differences that could call into question the applicability of educational findings to the training context. Research is needed to either confirm that these instructional communication behaviors are also valuable in a training context or to indicate some of them might not be as valuable as the academic literature leads us to believe they are.

This study aims to answer the call for additional empirical research through identifying what instructional communication behaviors are characteristic of effective trainers. Research findings will validate or reject the possibility that accepted communication behaviors might be applicable to the training context. A study of this type has practical application for leaders of corporate training departments along with those responsible for delivering training that want to know which instructional communication behaviors will lead to effective training. Academically, a study of this sort is also needed to broaden the discipline's understanding of how teacher communication behaviors affect learning outcomes in different environments. Finally, research results can help to enhance training pedagogy by providing a more solid and applied research foundation upon which to base instruction and training of future corporate trainers.

### *Thesis Preview*

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter serves to identify and describe the issue of trusting current instructional communication findings in the training context without additional validation and research. It has outlined specific reasons why known instructional communication behaviors may not be applicable for the training context. Lastly, it has noted the benefits of conducting this study to academia, professional trainers, and to instruction of students who have career objectives in the training field.

Chapter Two will review specific domains of literature that will inform this study and will provide more detailed descriptions and reviews of studies related to behaviors prescribed by that literature. A specific outcome, affective learning, will also be reviewed. In that chapter, several hypotheses or expected results based on the review of the current literature will be advanced.

Chapter Three will describe the participants, instruments, and procedures used to perform this study. A sample 129 business employees were asked to complete one of two questionnaires. Both questionnaires contained the same survey items, but had different instructions. Half of the sample group (Group A) were asked to think of an effective trainer. Group B participants were asked to think of an ineffective trainer. Both groups then completed the same survey in order to report which instructional communication behaviors were performed by that effective or ineffective trainer.

Chapter Four will report the results of the data analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses and answer the research question.

Particular attention will be given to report results that supports or invalidates each hypothesis that will be proposed in the second chapter.

The fifth and final chapter will then present the conclusions of this completed study. Any limitations that may have influenced the results will be provided along with recommendations for future research. Finally, this thesis will close with a discussion of any implications resulting from research findings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

A tremendous amount of research has been conducted in the last twenty years on various instructional communication behaviors (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1994; Frymier & Thompson, 1991; Houser, in press; Powell & Harville, 1990; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998; Witt et al., 2004). This research has led to greater understanding of how teacher actions affect student results, particularly in terms of learning, liking and motivation. This greater understanding has allowed the opportunity for the teaching field to improve.

This chapter will begin by describing why communication research is needed in the corporate training context and will identify the instructional communication variables that have been selected for inclusion in this study. It will then provide a review of the existing literature in several domains that could provide insight into various instructional communication behaviors. The first domain, immediacy, examines how communication behaviors, enacted by an instructor, affect how close a student feels, or how close the student wants to feel to that instructor (Mehrabian, 1969; Richmond, 2002). Research studies in the second domain, teacher clarity, typically examine the relationship between how clearly teachers provide instruction and students' resulting levels of apprehension, learning, or affect. The third domain, affective learning, examines a student's liking for

a subject or an instructor. Research in this domain generally attempts to identify those communication behaviors, which teachers can employ to enhance a students' affective learning. Finally, this literature review will describe additional research findings, which may explain or predict how these instructional communication variables would behave in a corporate training context.

### *The Need for More Empirical Training Research*

Training research has been accused of being “atheoretical and non-empirical” (Kontoghiorghes 2001, p. 249). The author of this thesis previously conducted two unpublished research studies to understand what research or material is available for corporate trainers. The first study focused on identifying what empirical research is available (Faylor, 2004a). During 2004, the researcher conducted broad database and journal searches for empirical research articles published between 1990 and 2003 that examined relationships between trainer skills and their effects or relationships on trainee behavior and learning experiences. Surprisingly, only 14 empirical studies were located that treat the subject of adult training in contexts that could be transferable to organizational training. Of those 14 articles, only five examined skills that could be performed by a trainer (Carter & Parker, 1993; Compeau, 2002; D'Eon & Au Yeung, 2001; Petridou & Spathis, 2001; Tennant, Boonkrong, & Roberts, 2002). None of the five articles examined communication behaviors or skills.

A second study conducted by the author analyzed training books (Faylor, 2004b). An online library catalog search of a mid-sized southwestern university returned over two hundred fifty training book titles. A sample of recently published books was sought for the study that would be representative of the training competencies prescribed in the body

of “how to” training books. Of the 250 book titles and descriptions reviewed, only six were chosen that prescribed skills to be performed rather than those that gave only basic descriptions of the training process. (Beebe et al., 2004; Delahaye & Smith, 1998; Mitchell, 1998; Pike, 1989; Thorne & Mackey, 1996; Truelove, 1997).

Only two of those books, *The Trainer’s Handbook* (Mitchell, 1998) and *Training and Development* (Beebe et al., 2004) provided direct citations for ideas or material sources. Many of the “how-to” training books appeared to be chronicles of those skills that have worked for the book’s author but have not been empirically validated or thoroughly researched. Like the previously discussed study on research articles, most of the emphasis of the books fell on other areas than communicative trainer behaviors.

These two studies seem to support Kontoghiorghes’s (2001) claim that training in general is atheoretical as well as this study’s proposition that very little has been done to examine instructional communication behaviors in the corporate training context. Why is there so little empirical research examining trainer behaviors and skills? There are at least three possibilities. First, it is not a simple exercise to conduct empirical research that focuses on training behaviors and skills and their results. Training classes are often lengthy, lasting hours or sometimes days. Experimentation or observation of enough training sessions to be of decent sample size would be costly to conduct, and would require significant investments of time and energy. Furthermore, there is an extremely complex interplay of multiple variables within a training event that make it difficult to isolate the effects of particular behaviors. A training event is only part of a much grander system, the organization within which it is being conducted. Researchers have to deal with extraneous organizational influences that impact a trainee’s attitude towards and his



or her ability to use trained behaviors. Other aspects of training may be easier to study thus leaving a research void around the role of the trainer in the classroom.

Second, Carter & Parker (1993) observed that training as an area of academic focus in universities was a recent phenomenon. Training is generally an area of focus within established academic departments. These departments maintain a primary research focus that may comprise a much larger spectrum than that of training. Likewise training foci do not clearly land in one academic arena, leaving many disciplines to lay claim upon them. In short, training crosses multiple disciplines but is not the core focus of any of them. This leaves an academic gap to be filled by practitioners, trade publications and how-to books. As these academic areas continue to take root and grow, more research will certainly be produced.

A third reason why there may be so little empirical focus on trainer behavior and skills is inherent within the nature of training as discussed previously. Training tends to be learner-centric in its approach to providing experiences, feedback and opportunities for discussion to the trainees. Training literature may simply be echoing this focus by paying closer attention to training participants and the organizational factors affecting their ability to use what they have been trained to do than to the trainer who is conducting the session.

As noted previously, very little communication research on instructional behaviors has been conducted outside of academic institutions. If it could be applied to the corporate training context, the body of research in instructional communication could provide immediate support for many of the trainer skills that are recommended and taught. While there are differences between the academic environment and a corporate

context and varying learner characteristics, the act of teaching and training are yet similar enough and involve many of the same delivery and communication skills that these too, may yet have some similar applicability.

#### *Selecting Communication Variables for this Study*

Ideally, the effectiveness of training is judged by the ability of trainees to perform their job and the cumulative difference that would make to the company. Unfortunately, many companies do not invest the necessary time or money to evaluate training to that degree. Kirkpatrick (1994) outlined a taxonomy of evaluation which has four hierarchical levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. ASTD reported that as of 2004, 74% of companies surveyed indicated they measured and tracked the reactions that trainees had for the training programs and 31% tracked how much learning occurred in them (Surgue & Kim, 2004). Conversely, only 14% of companies surveyed evaluated trainee behavior to see if trained skills were being applied and only 8% of companies evaluated training to see if it was making any impact to overall business results (Surgue & Kim).

There may be a similar trend in empirical research on instructional communication behaviors and their effect on learning outcomes. Researchers have examined learning outcomes such as affective learning, cognitive learning, and behavioral learning (Chesebro, 2003; Christensen, & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Gorham, & Zakahi, 1990; Johnson & Miller, 2002; Plax et al., 1986; Rodriguez, Plax & Kearney, 1996; Witt & Wheelless, 2001). The latter two levels of learning have proven difficult to measure outside of experimental research, of which there is very little. Richmond et al., (1987) developed a learning loss methodology that asked students to

identify how much they learned and how much they could have learned if they had the ideal instructor. Even this approach has its critics (Hess, Smythe, & Communication 451, 2001). Because most research depends upon student self-report measures, some recent researchers have substituted cognitive and behavioral learning with measures of perceived learning (Witt et al., 2004). Additionally, some have proposed that affective learning is a central mediator between some instructional communication behaviors and cognitive learning outcomes (Rodriguez et al.).

Of the three learning outcomes, affective learning is most like the Kirkpatrick's (1994) reaction level of evaluation in that both have underpinnings of liking. Kirkpatrick's evaluation of reaction seeks to identify how well a participant liked the course, the instructor, the materials and other components of the class. Because measurements of cognitive learning and behavioral learning may be less reliable in survey research and because most companies today evaluate at an affective-like reaction level, affective learning will be the primary outcome variable of this research study.

Additionally, this research will focus primarily on three instructional communication constructs: nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and teacher clarity. These variables were chosen because they are frequently studied in conjunction with affective learning (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Kearney et al., 1985; Witt & Wheelless, 2001) and they represent communication behaviors that are easily transferable to the corporate training context. Furthermore, each of these variables has standard instruments which are generally accepted to be reliable.

Each of these variables (nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and teacher clarity) will be defined and discussed in greater detail in the following pages. Before doing so, it is appropriate to relate a brief discussion of adult learning principles. While the instructor communication variables listed above should be easily transferable to the training context, there are potential differences in learning characteristics between the university students who typically participate in communication research and corporate employees who would be potential participants in training research.

### *Adult Learning*

Malcolm Knowles wrote seminal works in adult learning theory. His works detailed “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1970, p. 38). The work of Knowles and others since have identified several basic characteristics which set the adult learner apart from younger, less mature learners. As noted previously, university students are the primary audience for research in instructional communication behaviors. While they are certainly considered adults by typical measures, Tight (1996) is careful to point out that adulthood is not simply a function of age. Though many countries may grant legal recognition of adult status to citizens when they reach eighteen years old, there is not an instant change at that precise moment. Tight writes:

The idea of “adult” is not, therefore, directly connected with age, but is related to generally what happens as we grow older. That is, we achieve physical maturity, become capable of providing for ourselves, move away from our parents, have children of our own, and exercise a much greater role in making our own choices. (1996, p. 14)

To that end, adulthood is achieved through maturity and diverse experiences. It could be argued that most traditional university students are still in the early stages of adulthood and bear few generalizable characteristics to more mature employees in organizations who have had more of the experiences that Tight denoted. While there have been several differences between adult learners and less mature learners identified over the years there are four key characteristics that have the potential to influence how corporate trainees perceive trainer communicative behaviors.

First, *adults are internally motivated to learn*. Unlike younger learners, adults are driven by internal pressures or needs to learn rather than outside forces (Knowles, 1978). They typically engage or attend learning opportunities to improve their abilities, achieve goals, or simply to attain greater knowledge and understanding. Knowles says, “as a person grows and matures, his self-concept moves from one of total dependency (as is the reality of the infant) to one of increasing self-directedness” (Knowles, 1978 p. 55). This desire to be more self-directed results in adult learners having a greater role in choosing what courses they attend and influences what they choose to pay attention to in those classes.

Second, *adults bring significant experience to learning*. In addition to the characteristics discussed thus far, adults bring a wealth of experience to learning (Knowles, 1978). They have many more experiences than their younger learner counterparts. Knowles observed that past experiences provide adult learners with reference points to which they can relate new learning. They use that to formulate opinions of the value and validity of new things that they learn. He also noted that the adult learner perceives his or her wealth of experiences as being a resource for learning.

They desire that the value of their experience is recognized and used to create greater understanding. If ignored, their experience can actually serve as a barrier to learning. If leveraged, their knowledge and experience can be utilized to further apply training content to their environment.

Third, *adult learners seek to solve known problems*. One of the primary motivations for adults to attend to learning is to solve a problem or perceived deficiency (Rogers, 2002). They may view themselves as lacking a necessary skill required for promotion or they may see that they could do more if they knew something else. Their goals are driven by their desire to accomplish more or to feel better about what they are doing. Hence they seek to learn those things that can help them accomplish the goal or rather to fix the problem that created the need for it in the first place. They also have some sense of what is needed to overcome their deficiencies. They have already identified what specific tasks they need to learn and have come to a class to learn them.

This problem orientation leads to a fourth characteristic. *Adults need relevant training that can be applied quickly*. They desire to learn information or skills that is applicable to what they are dealing with in the here and now. Knowles says, “He wants to apply tomorrow what he learns today” (1978, p. 58). Instruction needs to provide them not only with potential solutions, but with skills they can begin to enact immediately. Many adults view their time as limited and precious and want others to value their time and energy as well. To that end, adults require their time be used to focus on those things that are pertinent to their needs.

These four adult learning characteristics may possibly mediate typical effects that instructional communication behaviors have been found to have. It is possible these four

adult learning desires could place more relative importance on other aspects of instruction that have not been present in studies which employ university students as primary research participants. For this reason, and others discussed in Chapter One, this research study is needed to confirm whether previous instructional communication findings in immediacy, clarity and affective learning would be applicable to the corporate training context. Having now discussed adult learning characteristics in more detail, this review will now continue with discussions of these three instructional communication variables.

### *Instructor Immediacy*

Immediacy is among the most researched teacher communication behaviors (Witt et al., 2004). This section will begin by defining immediacy and describing seminal works in the study of immediacy. It will then describe previous research and findings that have identified relationships between immediacy and other variables. Lastly, this section will describe the potential for application of immediacy to the training context.

*Immediacy defined.* Mehrabian first defined immediacy as communication behaviors that “enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another” (1969, p. 203). He further explained “people are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer” (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 1). This phenomenon results in varying degrees of perceived psychological or physical closeness between people (Richmond, 2002). Mehrabian (1971) further explained that certain communication behaviors can reduce psychological distance by influencing people’s desire to draw closer or can increase distance by heightening their dislike for someone or something. For example, he suggested that behaviors like smiling, gesturing, and certain body

postures had the potential to draw people closer together. Because of their potential to cause an increase in peoples' perceptions of psychological closeness, Mehrabian referred to these as immediate behaviors.

Andersen (1979) published the first study linking teachers' uses of nonverbal immediacy behaviors with learning outcomes. In that study she found significant relationships between nonverbal immediacy and students' affective learning. She and later researchers, identified nonverbal behaviors, such as smiling, touching, moving close, making eye contact facing another, leaning toward someone, and physical appearance (Comstock, Rowell & Bowers, 1995; Richmond, 2002).

Building upon nonverbal immediacy research, Gorham (1988) hypothesized that verbal behaviors can also create closeness between teacher and student resulting in higher levels of affective learning. Through focus groups she constructed a list of twenty verbal immediacy behaviors that students identified as characteristic of their best teachers throughout their school years. These behaviors included telling personal stories, using people's names, being humorous, asking questions and giving verbal praise.

Robinson and Richmond (1995) have since questioned the validity of verbal immediacy and particularly the behaviors that Gorham's (1988) study identified. Robinson and Richmond contended that Gorham's methodology could not have identified verbally immediate behaviors because it had simply asked students to think of their most effective teachers. Even though the behaviors may not contribute to teacher immediacy, they may yet be representative of important teacher behaviors. In fact, Robinson and Richmond suggested they are better categorized as verbally effective behaviors. Regardless of any controversy surrounding the construct and measurement of



verbal immediacy, numerous studies have recently included it (Christensen and Menzel, 1998; Hess et al., 2001; Johnson & Miller, 2002). Given its continued use, the present study will include Gorham's verbal immediacy behaviors but will allow for Robinson and Richmond's argument that they may be nothing more than verbally effective behaviors. Regardless of their ability to influence a sense of immediacy, they were nonetheless originally associated with effective teachers and may yet prove informative to the study of trainer communicative behaviors.

*Effects and relationships of instructional immediacy.* Throughout more than two decades of research, scholars have conceptualized teacher immediacy in varying ways. Two seminal works established the importance of nonverbal immediacy (Andersen, 1979) and verbal immediacy behaviors (Gorham, 1988). Since then, most studies have combined both nonverbal and verbal communication behaviors into a single teacher immediacy construct (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Witt & Wheelless, 2001). The following paragraphs will first review four studies that have examined the effects of immediacy on student learning. Then previous research, which attempted to define the nature of these relationships, will be reviewed. Finally, this section will describe a few models and theories that have been used to explain why immediacy behaves as it does.

As noted previously, Andersen (1979) published the first study linking Mehrabian's concept of immediacy to the act of teaching and learning. In that study she found nonverbal immediacy accounted for 46% of the variance in student affect toward the instructor and 20% of the variance toward the subject matter (Koval, 1999). While

this initial study found support for immediacy's impact, it clearly demonstrated that immediacy has a much greater influence on affective learning than on cognitive learning.

Gorham (1988) reported verbal immediacy also creates closeness between teacher and student resulting in higher levels of affective learning. Gorham conducted a two-part study to first identify verbally immediate behaviors and then to test their effect, along with Andersen's nonverbal behaviors, on student learning. After conducting focus groups to initially identify the behaviors, Gorham surveyed 387 participants and found while nonverbal and verbal immediacy together account for an overall total of 34 % of the variance in affective learning and behavioral learning, they only accounted for 19% of the variance in cognitive learning. Gorham concluded both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors are significantly related to student learning. Following her research, most studies included measures of both verbal and nonverbal immediacy.

Some research has attempted to more clearly determine the effect immediacy has on cognitive learning. Kelley and Gorham (1988) conducted an experiment designed to limit the influence that affect might have on cognitive learning. Results indicated participants with more immediate instructors, particularly those that exhibited eye contact and physical immediacy, were able to recall more information than those with less immediate instructors. Thus it would appear the use of immediacy behaviors results in improved cognitive learning.

Witt and Wheelless (2001) also used experimental research to better clarify the causal relationships between recall, learning loss and both genres of immediacy. In their experiments they tested various combinations of high and low levels nonverbal and verbal immediacy. Their results supported previous research findings that nonverbal

immediacy behaviors enhance cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Results for verbal immediacy behaviors, however, were somewhat mixed. While higher verbal immediacy consistently resulted in higher affective learning, it did not have any significant effect on recall or learning loss in either the high nonverbal immediacy nor the low nonverbal immediacy conditions.

Witt and Wheelless' (2001) study is indicative of the relative abilities of verbal and nonverbal immediacy to influence student learning. It is also reminiscent of Robinson's and Richmond's (1995) scrutiny of verbal immediacy. While nonverbal immediacy influenced both affective and cognitive learning, verbal immediacy only influenced affective learning.

Three studies have extended immediacy findings to other cultures and countries. Sanders and Wiseman (1990) examined how immediacy affected learning within the multicultural classroom. McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, and Barraclough (1996) investigated the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and affective learning in four different geographical regions simultaneously: Australia, Finland, Puerto Rico, and the continental U.S. Similarly, Johnson and Miller (2002) examined the relationship between immediacy, credibility and cognitive learning in the U.S. and Kenya. Each of the three studies found positive relationships between immediacy and the learning outcomes they examined. Each of the studies also noted some minor differences in terms of correlation strength or mean scores that the researchers attributed to differing cultural expectations or uses. While there were minor differences, each study demonstrated that verbal and nonverbal immediacy is globally important.

Witt et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 81 studies, including those described previously, which had investigated the relationship between teacher immediacy and student learning. Out of those 81 studies, 68 included measures of affective learning. Only 11 of them had measures of cognitive learning, while 55 of them had measures of perceived learning (note: Witt et al., grouped all self-reported measurements of cognitive learning or learning loss into the perceived learning category). The results of their meta-analysis demonstrated evidence for meaningful correlations between nonverbal immediacy and affective learning ( $r = .49$ ) and student reports of perceived learning ( $r = .51$ ). Results indicated a far smaller correlation between nonverbal immediacy and cognitive learning measures ( $r = .17$ ). Similarly, results showed strong correlations between verbal immediacy and perceived learning ( $r = .49$ ) and affective learning ( $r = .49$ ) but only weak correlations with cognitive learning ( $r = .06$ ). This study confirms that which others have also indicated: that immediacy has stronger ties to affective learning than it does to cognitive learning.

With an understanding of the effects of immediacy, this review now turns to previous research, which attempted to define the nature of these relationships. Several studies have focused on explaining how and why immediacy influences learning outcomes. Two of them have gathered data to demonstrate a linearity or curvilinearity to the relationship (Comstock et al., 1995; Christensen & Menzel, 1998). Others have discussed models that seek to explain why immediacy works the way it does (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993, 1994; Rodriguez et al., 1996).

The nature of the relationship between teacher immediacy and student learning received frequent attention in the 1990s. Comstock et al. (1995) conducted an

experimental study to determine the relationship between immediacy and student learning. Their experiment used an instructor to deliver the same content at three varying levels of nonverbal immediacy. Their research found moderately high amounts of immediacy positively has a positive relationship with cognitive, affective and behavioral learning but that low and excessively high levels of immediacy are not as beneficial. The resulting curvilinearity of the relationship between immediacy and student learning suggests that too much or too little immediacy can have less than desired impact on student learning.

In contrast to Comstock et al.'s findings (1995), Christensen and Menzel (1998) found these variables to have positive linear relationships in natural settings. They asked 115 students to answer survey items related to verbal and nonverbal immediacy, student state motivation, cognitive learning, affective learning, and behavioral learning for the last class that they had attended. They also noted that some variable groups leveled off a little with high levels of immediacy, but stressed that in natural settings the positive linear model described the relationships the best.

These two studies provided insight to the nature of the relationship between immediacy and learning outcomes. Overall, they show increased levels of immediacy enhance student learning. Comstock et al. (1995) demonstrated immediacy could be overdone resulting in a decline in student learning. However, Christensen and Menzel (1998) argued these results were due to the experimental nature of the study and that in most real-life cases, increased immediacy only results in improved learning.

Other researchers have attempted to explain why immediacy influences student learning outcomes. Christophel (1990) performed two studies to examine the relationship between teacher immediacy and state motivation as well as the impact of those factors on

student learning. Her study confirmed previous findings that higher levels of teacher immediacy result in greater learning. Her analysis also demonstrated correlations between immediacy and motivation such that it appears that “portions of teacher immediacy behaviors must first modify students’ state motivation prior to immediacy becoming an effective predictor of learning” (Christophel, p. 335).

Building on Christophel’s conclusions, Frymier published two studies (1993; 1994) investigating further the role that student state motivation plays between teacher immediacy and student learning. Her first study (Frymier, 1993) sought to validate whether varying levels of teacher immediacy affected all students’ state motivation equally. By collecting data at several points during the course of a semester, she found higher levels of teacher immediacy resulted in improved state motivation in those students who began the semester with low levels of state motivation. Increased levels of teacher immediacy had little effect on those who already had had high levels of motivation.

Frymier (1994) sought to determine whether a learning model or a motivation model served to explain the causal relationship between immediacy and learning better. The learning model assumes that changes in student state motivation, teacher nonverbal immediacy or teacher verbal immediacy directly affect student learning. The motivation model, on the other hand, assumes changes in trait motivation, nonverbal immediacy or verbal immediacy indirectly affect student learning by first altering student state motivation. Frymier’s data and path analysis concluded the motivation model was more accurate than the learning model – immediacy directly affects state motivation, which in turn influences affective or cognitive learning.

Rodriguez et al. (1996) proposed an alternative to the motivational model that Fymier (1994) supported. They argued that rather than motivation, affective learning is the central causal mediator between teacher immediacy and student cognitive learning. Rodriguez et al. collected data from 224 students. They used that data as well as the data set from Frymier's previous study to test the motivational model and the affective learning model through path analysis. Data supported their proposition that changes in levels of teacher immediacy first cause changes in affective learning which then serves as a mediating variable to influence changes to levels of cognitive learning.

Interestingly, these studies point to the need for increased liking and motivation before cognitive or behavioral learning are acted upon. This makes intuitive sense. Students who do not like a subject or the teacher conducting the class would be more likely not to pay attention, not to dedicate time and energy to its study, or would probably rather focus on something they liked more. In this sense, affect becomes a critical first step to achieving cognitive or behavioral learning.

*Application of immediacy to the training context.* The acts of teaching and training share many commonalities. First, the desired outcomes are equivalent. Teachers and trainers are in business to facilitate learning. They generally seek to motivate, want to be viewed as competent and credible, and want those they teach to master the subject matter. Second, much of what trainers and teachers do is similar with a few exceptions. Though they address different audiences and should teach a bit differently to accommodate the needs of those audiences, both teachers and trainers provide instruction of new material to their students.

As discussed thus far in this chapter, verbal and nonverbal immediacy have been found to enhance student learning outcomes in educational contexts. Barring significant differences, one might expect these findings to be applicable to the training context as well. While a significant body of research in the training context does not exist, one recent study may give some hints about how the immediacy construct may affect learning in the workplace.

Through focus group research, Houser (2004a) found nontraditional students place different value on some instructor communication behaviors than their traditional student colleagues. For example, nontraditional students did not identify nonverbal immediacy or teacher clarity (two variables in this study) as being important expectations. She explained this may be due to the greater life experiences, higher expectations and focused learning goals of the nontraditional student. Houser theorized while nontraditional students didn't explicitly desire those behaviors, they may nonetheless expect them to be present. In a second study, Houser (in press) found that nontraditional students tend to have higher levels of state motivation and cognitive learning. Houser also noted that some teachers' communication behaviors, like immediacy, predicted far less of the variance in state motivation and cognitive learning than did other variables like affinity-seeking, trait motivation levels and clarity.

This research may provide some foresight to differences between college students and employee trainees. One would expect that employees share more common characteristics with the nontraditional student than with traditional students, which are typically included in academic research. If true, then trainer immediacy may not be as strongly related to training outcomes as teacher immediacy is related to learning



outcomes in the educational context. Given the questions these studies raise, the current study aims to examine whether students perceive differences in levels of trainer immediacy in corporate training.

### *Teacher Clarity*

Rosenshine and Furst reviewed 50 studies of teacher behaviors and identified teacher clarity as a primary contributor to teacher effectiveness (cited in Civikly, 1992 and Powell & Harville, 1990). Since then, researchers have examined the role of teacher clarity in the teaching and learning process (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Civikly, 1992; Powell & Harville, 1990). This section will begin by defining the teacher clarity construct. Next, it will describe the effects and relationships of teacher clarity with other variables. Lastly, this section will conclude with a discussion of possible applications of the teacher clarity construct in the corporate training context.

*Teacher clarity defined.* Instructor clarity has been defined as “the process by which an instructor is able to effectively stimulate the desired meaning of course content and processes in the minds of students through the use of appropriately structured verbal and nonverbal messages” (Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998, p. 448). In short, when a teacher is clear students comprehend his or her intended meaning. Chesebro and McCroskey (2001) later defended this definition by saying it is consistent with current research that treats clarity as both a relational variable as well as resulting from clear instructional processes.

Research on teacher clarity has focused both on the structure of presentations and verbal characteristics of instruction (Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998). Instructional structure is created by organization patterns within the presentation (Alexander,

Frankeiewicz, & Williams, 1979), internal transitions (Hartley, 1976), and facilitation of notetaking (Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1986). Research on verbal characteristics of clarity has dealt with the fluency of messages (Hiller, Fisher, & Kaess, 1969), vagueness (Land & Smith, 1979), and effectiveness of explanations (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

These pieces of research have demonstrated that clear teachers need to explicitly organize their presentations with verbal transitions, signposts and checkpoints to ensure their students are following. They also need to speak articulately and audibly, must stay on task without wandering into other topics, and should use commonly understood vocabulary.

*Effects and relationships of teacher clarity.* Researchers have examined teacher clarity and its relationship with immediacy, student learning, student apprehension, and affect. (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Powell & Harville, 1990). Studies repeatedly identify a link between clarity and these variables. The studies cited here reported when a teacher is clear, students exhibit lower levels of apprehension and greater levels of affect toward a teacher and the subject matter. Findings also indicate students report greater learning when they believe their teachers have explained concepts clearly.

Powell and Harville (1990) studied the effects of teacher immediacy and clarity on four instructional outcomes. They surveyed 311 students with various ethnic backgrounds at a California university. They found notwithstanding varying cultural differences, verbal and nonverbal immediacy were consistently related to clarity. Furthermore, nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy and teacher clarity were significantly correlated with instructional outcomes such as: student's attitude toward

class, student's likelihood of performing behaviors taught in class, student's willingness to enroll in a similar class, and student's attitude toward the instructor.

Chesebro and McCroskey (2001) examined the relationship between teacher clarity and immediacy with student apprehension, affect and cognitive learning. They surveyed 360 students at a mid-Atlantic university. They found that teacher clarity was positively related to student motivation and affect for the class and inversely related to student perceived learning loss and student state receiver apprehension. They also found teacher immediacy was similarly positively related with student state motivation, affect for the instructor and the course, and had a negative relationship with learning loss. They proposed immediacy and clarity served to reduce student apprehension thus paving the way for increased motivation, learning and affect.

Having previously found relationships between teacher clarity, immediacy, student apprehension, affect and cognitive learning (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), Chesebro (2003) next sought to identify if teacher clarity and nonverbal immediacy had causal effects on student learning, receiver apprehension and affect. Chesebro proposed that nonverbal immediacy is an enabler of clarity. Said he,

Nonverbal immediacy enables clarity in the sense that it functions to gain students' attention, thereby enabling clear teaching behaviors to be more salient. Based on this conceptualization, one would expect students of both clear and nonverbally immediate teachers to learn more than students of clear yet non-immediate teachers. (Chesebro, 2003, p. 135)

In order to test this proposition, Chesebro (2003) designed an experiment whereby student volunteers viewed one of four videotaped presentations. The video presentations allowed the researcher to manipulate various combinations of high or low immediacy with high or low levels of teacher clarity. After the video concluded, students completed instruments on receiver apprehension and affect. They were permitted a couple minutes to study any notes they took and then were asked to take a short quiz to test their recall of information.

Surprisingly, hypotheses reflecting Chesebro's (2003) basic premise were not supported. As expected, study results confirmed that teacher clarity is a factor in student learning, receiver apprehension, and affect. There was not, however, any significant effect on student learning or receiver apprehension. Hence, Chesebro concluded from his experiment that clear teaching improves student learning, lowers student apprehension and increases affect. Nonverbal immediacy, on the other hand, only influenced affective learning.

*Application of teacher clarity to the training context.* Just as in the academic context, trainers must be clear in their explanations and instructions. In fact, prescriptive training books typically contain chapters on organization of material as well as recommendations for presentations skills (Beebe et al., 2004; Delahaye & Smith, 1998; Mitchell, 1998; Thorne & Mackey, 1996; Truelove, 1997). These books and others likely teach clarity in lay terms.

Clarity has been found to enhance learning, reduce student apprehension, and increase affect toward the subject and the teacher. These are outcomes or goals every trainer should desire to accomplish in every class. As such, it is worthwhile to validate

whether the same teacher clarity behaviors might achieve similar results in the corporate training context.

### *Affective Learning*

As demonstrated through research cited in the previous sections of this thesis, affective learning has been an important outcome variable for some time. Research has shown increases in the use of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and teacher clarity in an educational context typically result in increases in student affective learning (Chesebro, 2003; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Witt & Wheelless, 2001; Witt et al., 2004). This section will begin by defining the affective learning construct. Next, it will describe the effects and relationships of affective learning with other communication variables. Lastly, this section will conclude with a discussion of the applicability of affective learning to the corporate training context.

*Affective learning defined.* Affective learning involves the development of positive or negative attitudes toward an instructor or the subject matter of a class. Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia describe affective learning as “the objectives which emphasize a feeling or tone, an emotion or degree of acceptance or rejection” (1964, p. 7). In order to further define affective learning, Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia developed a taxonomy which outlines five phases through which a learner progresses (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1  
*Krathwohl's Taxonomy of Affective Learning*

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Five Stages of Affective Learning
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1. Receiving
2. Responding
3. Valuing
4. Organization
5. Characterization by a value or value complex

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Kearney described the taxonomy as “an increasing internalization of positive attitudes toward the content or subject matter” (2004a, p. 81). It depicts how learners begin with a willingness to receive an experience. They then begin to respond to it and if it is still appealing to them they eventually value what is taught. If they progress through the remainder of the taxonomy, learners are able to organize the experience within their larger set of values and attitudes and ultimately internalize those values such that they no longer need an external stimulus to prompt the associated affective and emotional responses (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1964).

*Relationships of affective learning.* Affective learning has been consistently associated with teacher communication behaviors such as nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and clarity. In fact, while some studies have questioned their impact on cognitive and behavioral learning (Frymier, 1994; Hess et al., 2001; Witt et al., 2004), affective learning has been repeatedly and consistently shown to be positively related to those communication variables (Christensen, & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Gorham, 1988; Johnson & Miller, 2002; Witt & Wheelless, 2001).

Other studies have even suggested that cognitive learning and behavioral learning are only indirectly affected by immediacy through heightened affective learning (Rodriguez et al., 1996). This study suggests that affective learning is closely related to motivation. When students have positive affect they will pay attention and be engaged more within the classroom and they'll be more motivated to pursue or apply that which they learned following the completion of the class.

*Application of affective learning to the training context.* This thesis began by citing some of the reported expenditures that American businesses spend on training. One of the primary reasons businesses spend so much is because they believe training can make a difference to their operations. Achievement of desired learning outcomes is critical to the training process, but the application of newly acquired skills is required for the training to be worthwhile. Simply learning for learning's sake does not justify the expense of training. Affect is closely related to students' willingness to learn and to continue using skills outside of the classroom (Rodriguez et al., 1996). As such, affective learning would then be a critical component for training. If a trainee likes what he or she has learned in class, the likelihood is greater that the knowledge or skill will be used back on the job. It's that application of training that corporate executives desire.

This study will focus primarily on affective learning because it is the most reliable learning outcome associated with verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy and teacher clarity. Since there has not been much previous empirical communication research in the training environment, the author feels it best to first validate whether or not instructional communication behaviors have similar effect on a single variable before testing for all learning outcomes. Affective learning was also selected because training efforts depend

on application of learning and just not the acquisition of it. As mentioned previously, affect is typically indicative of willingness to use a skill outside a classroom (Kearney, 2004a). This transfer from the classroom to the workplace is of utmost importance to employers and training departments.

### *Hypotheses and Research Questions*

The primary aim of this study is to determine if employees perceive significant differences in the way effective and ineffective trainers use instructional communication behaviors in their training rooms. This chapter has laid out the prominent domains of literature that comprise the instructional communication body of research. This review has described teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy, teacher clarity and affective learning along with their relationships to other variables and possible application to the training context. Based on the relationships and effects found and supported through previous research, several hypotheses and a research question can be formulated. Each hypothesis along with a corresponding rationale is presented in the following paragraphs.

This chapter began with a review of nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors. This chapter also reviewed a contention that the verbal immediacy construct and measure don't appropriately represent verbal components of immediacy but instead can only be representative of verbally effective behaviors (Robinson & Richmond, 1995). In previous studies, increased levels of teacher immediacy behaviors have been found to enhance student learning in educational contexts (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Comstock et al., 1995). Barring significant differences, one might expect these findings to be applicable to the training context as well.



It stands to reason trainees who experience heightened levels of learning, would likely consider the trainer to be more effective than those trainees who do not. Based on this assumption and the research literature and findings related to teacher nonverbal immediacy and verbally effective behaviors, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Employees will perceive that effective trainers use significantly more nonverbal immediacy behaviors than ineffective trainers.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Employees will perceive that effective trainers use significantly more verbally effective behaviors than ineffective trainers.

The next variable discussed was teacher clarity. Rosenshine and Furst identified teacher clarity as a primary contributor to teacher effectiveness (cited in Civikly, 1992 and Powell & Harville, 1990). Previous research reviewed in this chapter indicates when a teacher is clear, students exhibit lower levels of apprehension and greater levels of affect toward a teacher and the subject matter (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Powell & Harville, 1990). More specifically, Chesebro and McCroskey found teacher clarity was positively related to student motivation and affect for the class. Based on the research literature related to teacher clarity, and the assumption that the clarity construct is applicable to the corporate training context, the following hypothesis is posited:

- H<sub>3</sub>: Employees will perceive that effective trainers use significantly more teacher clarity behaviors than ineffective trainers.

The final variable reviewed in this chapter was affective learning. Positive relationships have been found between immediacy and affective learning across multiple cultures (Johnson & Miller, 2002; McCroskey et al., 1996; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis of 81 studies found evidence for meaningful correlations between immediacy and affective learning (Witt et al., 2004). Likewise, teacher clarity has also been positively related to student motivation and affect for the class (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

The first three hypotheses proposed that effective trainers use more nonverbal immediacy, verbally effective behaviors, and clarity behaviors than their ineffective counterparts. If each hypothesis is correct, then effective trainers should also be associated with increases in affective learning since it is one of the primary outcomes of those variables. This possible link, leads to the proposal of the final hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: Employees will perceive that effective trainers generate significantly greater amounts of affective learning than ineffective trainers.

Little communication research has been done in the training context (Koval, 1999). This study should increase understanding about how instructional communication variables influence learning outcomes in an environment other than a university setting. Because so little research has been done in training courses, and because there are important differences in learning characteristics, it is not possible to predict how each of these variables will contribute to affective learning. Hence, the following research question is posed:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: To what extent does trainer use of nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy and teacher clarity predict affective learning for corporate trainees?

*Summary*

This chapter has reviewed the research in three areas relevant to this study: teacher nonverbal immediacy, teacher verbally effective behaviors, and teacher clarity. The research summarized indicates positive relationships between each of the variables and affective learning. This literature review has led to four key hypotheses and a research question. It is expected that study results will provide a better understanding of how these instructional communication variables behave in this uncharted context. The next chapter will describe the methods used to test each hypothesis and to calculate the amount of variance in affective learning that can be attributed to each communication behavior.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

Previous chapters in this thesis have outlined the problem and rationale for this study as well as numerous research efforts to understand and explain how and why the variables in question behave the way they do. This chapter will describe the methods used to test the hypotheses and answer the research question presented in Chapter Two. The chapter is subdivided into three sections: a portrayal of the study participants, a description of the procedures used to gather data, and an inventory of the instruments employed to measure the targeted variables.

#### *Research Participants*

The research study was conducted at a Fortune 100 pharmacy benefits company in the Southwest. The company provides prescription drug coverage to members of corporations, local and state government entities, and other large trade organizations. Prescription drug coverage is provided either through partnership with local retail pharmacies or directly through the company's mail order pharmacies. During the study, the company was conducting mandatory communication skills training. Questionnaires were administered to 129 employees during the training classes. One-hundred thirteen employees completed and submitted surveys. Nine surveys were not usable due to incomplete responses. The remaining 104 surveys were completed by 45 pharmacy technicians (43.3%), 37 pharmacists (35.6%), 9 customer service representatives (8.7%),

and 6 individuals (5.8%) in other assorted jobs. Thirty-four percent of the respondents were male ( $n = 35$ ) and 63.5% were female ( $n = 66$ ). Two percent ( $n = 2$ ) of the people did not indicate sex.

The mean age of survey respondents was 35.2 years (Range = 20-65). Thirty-two percent of the respondents noted they had completed a college degree ( $n = 33$ ), while an additional 42.3% had attended some college ( $n = 44$ ). The remaining 16.3% indicated that they had completed high school or earned a GED. On average, respondents noted that they had attended 13 training classes prior to the class during which surveys were administered. Responses ranged from 0 to 100 previous classes. While the range was extremely broad, most people indicated they had attended less than five previous training classes. Table 3.1 reports aggregate responses for number of previous classes as indicated by the research participants.

Table 3.1  
*Number of Previous Training Classes (N = 96)*

Previous classes	<i>n</i>	%
0-5 classes	49	51%
6-10 classes	25	26%
11+ classes	22	22.9%

### *Research Procedure*

Research participants were asked to complete one of two questionnaires. Both questionnaires contained the same survey items but had different instructions. Half of the sample group (Group A) was asked to think of an effective trainer they had received training from in the past. Participants in Group A then completed the survey while

considering the instructional communication behaviors performed by that effective trainer. Conversely, Group B participants were asked to think of an ineffective trainer and then completed the survey in order to identify those instructional communication behaviors that the ineffective trainer performed.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected by the trainers during a dedicated twenty-minute period of time at the beginning of the training course. Doing so at the beginning of class avoided any tendency that a respondent might confuse the survey with an end-of-class evaluation of the current trainer. This procedure also helped to increase the sample size of potential trainers that could be rated by the study participants. Respondents were also instructed that if they could not think of an effective or ineffective trainer as instructed, they should just return the survey instrument unanswered.

Trainers were provided with equal numbers of effective and ineffective versions of the questionnaires to hand out to the class. The two versions of the questionnaires were randomly sorted so that there was no predetermination of assignment to the effective or ineffective trainer survey group. Trainers were also given standard instructions for inviting trainees to participate in the study. Instructions included a description of the questionnaire and assured survey respondents that their responses would be anonymous (see Appendix A). A consent letter was also distributed (see Appendix B) to describe the purpose of the study, to assure participant anonymity, and to provide contact information in the event of questions or concerns. Once participants finished responding to the questionnaires, the trainers sent them to the research author for analysis.

### *Instruments*

The survey instrument for this study consisted of 96 items (see Appendix C). Participants responded to basic demographic information to indicate their age, sex, date, and the sex of the trainer they were rating. They were also asked three questions to help describe the training class they attended with the trainer they were rating. Respondents completed established instruments designed to measure trainer clarity, nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and affective learning. Each of the instruments used to measure these variables, along with their reliability and any modifications made to them for this study, will be described in the remainder of this chapter.

*Trainer clarity.* Trainers' use of teacher clarity behaviors was measured using Chesebro and McCroskey's (1998) Teacher Clarity Short Inventory instrument. Sidelinger and McCroskey (1997) originally used a 22-item semantic differential scale to measure teacher clarity. Chesebro and McCroskey later performed a factor analysis to isolate ten items in order to create a shorter instrument. The Teacher Clarity Short Inventory asks participants to indicate their level of agreement with each item as they refer to their feelings about a particular course. The instrument consists of ten items rated on a seven-point scale, with 1 representing Completely Disagree and 7 representing Completely Agree. Total participant scores for the measure can range between 10 and 70. Reliability has been found to be .92 in previous studies (Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

Items were re-written slightly to accommodate the training context. For instance, the word 'teacher' was changed to 'trainer' and present tense verbs were changed to their past tense equivalents. Italics in Table 3.2 denote how each item was modified for use in

this research project (italics were not included on the distributed survey). Alterations did not negatively affect scale reliability as it was calculated at .94 for this study.

Table 3.2  
*Teacher Clarity Short Inventory Items*

Chesebro & McCroskey (1998) items	Revised items
1. My teacher clearly defines major concepts.	1. <i>The trainer</i> clearly <i>defined</i> major concepts.
2. My teacher's answers to student questions are unclear.	2. <i>The trainer's</i> answers to student questions <i>were</i> unclear.
3. In general, I understand the teacher.	3. In general, I <i>understood</i> the <i>trainer</i> .
4. Projects assigned for the class have unclear guidelines.	4. Practice exercises <i>assigned</i> for the class <i>had</i> unclear guidelines.
5. My teacher's objectives for the course are clear.	5. <i>The trainer's</i> objectives for the course <i>were</i> clear.
6. My teacher is straightforward in his lecture.	6. <i>The trainer</i> was straightforward in his/her lecture.
7. My teacher is not clear when defining guidelines for out of class assignments.	7. <i>The trainer</i> was not clear when defining guidelines for assignments or exercises.
8. My teacher uses clear and relevant examples.	8. <i>The trainer</i> used clear and relevant examples.
9. In general, I would say that my teacher's classroom communication is unclear.	9. In general, I would say that <i>the trainer's</i> classroom communication <i>was</i> unclear.
10. My teacher is explicit in his instruction.	10. <i>The trainer</i> was explicit in his/her instruction.

*Trainer nonverbal immediacy.* Trainer nonverbal immediacy was measured using Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey's (1987) Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors (NIB) Instrument. The original scale consists of fourteen items. Participants were asked to respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale with the following values: 0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often, and 4 = very often.



The NIB instrument has been used by Christensen and Menzel (1998), Christophel (1990), Gorham (1998), Gorham and Zakahi (1990), and Rodriguez et al. (1996). Reliability for the NIB instrument has been found to range from .73 to .89 (Kearney, 2004b).

Richmond, McCroskey, and Johnson (2003) have created a more recent instrument for measuring nonverbal immediacy. The Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Observer Report was created to address low alpha reliability estimates of the Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors instrument. Initial testing of this new scale shows higher reliability and the authors propose that it has greater validity in measuring the construct of nonverbal immediacy than did the previous instrument. The newer instrument, however, poses some challenges for this research study. First, the newer instrument has 26 items whereas the NIB only has 14. Using the newer measure would greatly increase the overall length of the survey and could contribute to possible respondent fatigue. Secondly, the newer instrument contains more low-inference items than does the NIB. As noted earlier in this chapter, the methodology of this research study relies on research participants' ability to recall the behaviors of previous trainers. This author felt that the more general items in the NIB are better suited for this methodology. Given these considerations, this study used the fewer, higher-inference items of the NIB.

The NIB items were re-written slightly to accommodate the training context. For instance, the word "teacher" was changed to "trainer" and present tense verbs were changed to their past tense equivalents. Additionally, one item was removed that asked about touch. Since touch is generally discouraged in the workplace, this item had little, if any, applicability to the current examination. The final version had 13 items, which

could result in total scores ranging from 0 to 52. Changes did not affect the overall reliability of the instrument. Alpha reliability for this research study was consistent with previous findings at .78. The use of italics in the following table notes how each item was modified for use in this research project (italics were not used in the questions distributed to the participants).

Table 3.3  
*Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument Items*

Original Richmond et al. (1987) items	Revised items
1. Sits behind desk while teaching.	1. <i>Sat</i> behind desk while teaching.
2. Gestures while talking to class.	2. <i>Gestured</i> while talking to class.
3. Uses monotone/dull voice while talking to class.	3. <i>Used</i> monotone/dull voice while talking to class.
4. Looks at the class while talking.	4. <i>Looked</i> at the class while talking.
5. Smiles at the class as a whole, not just individual students.	5. <i>Smiled</i> at the class as a whole, not just individual students.
6. Has a very tense body position while talking to the class.	6. <i>Had</i> a very tense body position while talking to the class.
7. Touches students in the class.	7. <i>[Removed from survey instrument]</i>
8. Moves around the classroom while teaching.	8. <i>Moved</i> around the classroom while teaching.
9. Looks at board or notes while talking to the class.	9. <i>Looked</i> at board or notes while talking to the class.
10. Stands behind podium or desk while teaching.	10. <i>Stood</i> behind podium or desk while teaching.
11. Has a very relaxed body position while talking to the class.	11. <i>Had</i> a very relaxed body position while talking to the class.
12. Smiles at individual students in the class.	12. <i>Smiled</i> at individual students in the class.
13. Uses a variety of vocal expressions while talking to the class.	13. <i>Used</i> a variety of vocal expressions while talking to the class.

*Trainer verbal effectiveness.* As noted in Chapter Two, recent research by Mottet and Richmond (1998) and Robinson and Richmond (1995) has challenged the validity of the verbal immediacy construct and the ability of Gorham's instrument to measure it.

This author argued that the behaviors historically conceptualized as part of teacher immediacy could still be valuable to this study of trainer communicative behavior. Thus, verbal immediacy, and its associated instrument, will be included and reviewed in this section.

Trainer verbal immediacy is typically measured using Gorham's (1988) Verbal Immediacy Scale (Kearney, 2004c). The scale consists of 17 five-point items that ask the participant to rate the frequency of various verbally immediate trainer behaviors. Responses can range from zero (never) to four (very often). The scale was developed and first used by Gorham (1988). It has since been used in verbal immediacy research such as Christensen and Menzel (1998), Christophel (1990), Gorham and Zakahi (1990), Rodriguez et al. (1996) and Sanders and Wiseman (1990). Reliability has been found to be consistent for the measure. Alpha and split-half reliabilities for students' assessments range from .83 to .94 (Kearney, 2004c). The revised scale was found to have an alpha reliability of .84 for this study.

Items were re-written slightly to accommodate the training context. Similar to the NIB and clarity instruments discussed previously, the word "teacher" was changed to "trainer" and present tense verbs were changed to their past tense equivalents. *Italic phrases in Table 3.4 denote how each item was modified for use in this research project (italics were not included in surveys distributed to participants).*

Table 3.4  
*Verbal Immediacy Scale Items*

Original Gorham (1988) items	Revised items
1. Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class.	1. <i>The trainer used</i> personal examples or talked about experiences she/he has had outside of class.
2. Asks questions or encourages students to talk	2. <i>The trainer asked</i> questions or encouraged students to talk
3. Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem to be a part of his/her lecture plan.	3. <i>The trainer got</i> into discussions based on something a student <i>brought up</i> even when this <i>didn't</i> seem to be a part of his/her lecture plan.
4. Uses humor in class.	4. <i>The trainer used</i> humor in class.
5. Addresses students by name.	5. <i>The trainer addressed</i> students by name.
6. Addresses me by name.	6. <i>The trainer addressed</i> me by name.
7. Gets into conversations with individual students before, after or outside of class.	7. <i>The trainer got</i> into conversations with individual students before, after or outside of class.
8. Initiates conversations with individual students before or after class.	8. <i>The trainer initiated</i> conversations with individual students before or after class.
9. Refers to class as "our" class or what "we" are doing.	9. <i>The trainer referred</i> to class as "our" class or what "we" are doing.
10. Provides feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.	10. <i>The trainer provided</i> feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.
11. Calls on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they wanted to talk.	11. <i>The trainer called</i> on students to answer questions even if they <i>had</i> not indicated that they wanted to talk.
12. Asks how students feel about an assignment, due date, or discussion topic.	12. <i>The trainer asked</i> how students <i>felt</i> about <i>topics discussed in the training session</i> .
13. Invites students to telephone or meet with him/her outside of class if they have questions or want to discuss something.	13. <i>The trainer invited</i> students to meet with him/her outside of class if they <i>had</i> questions or <i>wanted</i> to discuss something.
14. Asks questions that solicited viewpoints or opinions.	14. <i>The trainer asked</i> questions that solicited viewpoints or opinions.
15. Praises students' work, actions or comments.	15. <i>The trainer praised</i> students' work, actions or comments.

Table 3.4 (Continued)  
*Verbal Immediacy Scale Items*

Original Gorham (1988) items	<i>Revised items</i>
16. Is willing to have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.	16. <i>The trainer had</i> discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.
17. Addresses by his /her first name by the students.	17. <i>The trainer was addressed</i> by his /her first name by the students.

*Affective learning.* Affective learning was measured using a scale based on McCroskey's (1994) update of Andersen's affective learning scale. The instrument consists of four sub-scales though McCroskey (n.d.) instructs users of the instrument to use only two of the sub-scales when assessing affective learning. He advises that the other two scales are measures of instructor evaluation and should not be used in an overall measurement of affective learning. Each of the two sub-scales used in this study asks respondents to rate their attitudes about the class using four 7-step bipolar scales. The first scale asks respondents to assign a rating reflecting their feeling toward the class content between good / bad, worthless / valuable, fair / unfair, and positive / negative. The second sub-scale asks the respondent to rate their likelihood of taking similar classes in the future using the adjectives likely / unlikely, impossible / possible, probable / improbable, and would / would not.

Prior studies using affective learning measures include Christophel (1990), Gorham (1988), McCroskey et al. (1985), and Rodriguez et al. (1996). Some studies have calculated reliabilities for each sub-scale while others have calculated a single reliability for the composite instrument. In either case, reliabilities have ranged between .86 to .98 (Kearney, 2004a). McCroskey reported that reliabilities for the two subscales noted above have been consistently estimated to be above .90 (McCroskey,

n.d.). Once again, items were re-written slightly to accommodate the training context. In this study, reliability for the revised 8-item measure was .89. Italic phrases in Table 3.5 denote how each item has been modified from the original scale for use in this research project (italics were not included in questions distributed to participants).

Table 3.5  
*Affective Learning Sub-Scales*

Original McCroskey items	Revised items
1. I feel the class content is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad / Good</li> <li>• Valuable / Worthless</li> <li>• Fair / Unfair.</li> <li>• Positive / Negative</li> </ul>	1. I feel the class content <i>was</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad / Good</li> <li>• Valuable / Worthless</li> <li>• Fair / Unfair.</li> <li>• Positive / Negative</li> </ul>
2. My likelihood of taking future courses in this content area is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely / Unlikely</li> <li>• Impossible / Possible</li> <li>• Probable / Improbable</li> <li>• Would / Would not</li> </ul>	2. My likelihood of taking future courses in <i>a similar</i> content area is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely / Unlikely</li> <li>• Impossible / Possible</li> <li>• Probable / Improbable</li> <li>• Would / Would not</li> </ul>
3. Were I to have the opportunity, my likelihood of taking future courses with this specific teacher would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely / Unlikely</li> <li>• Impossible / Possible</li> <li>• Probable / Improbable</li> <li>• Would / Would not</li> </ul>	3. <sup>a</sup> Were I to have the opportunity, my likelihood of taking future courses with this specific <i>trainer</i> would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely / Unlikely</li> <li>• Impossible / Possible</li> <li>• Probable / Improbable</li> <li>• Would / Would not</li> </ul>

a. Though included in the survey, the third item was later removed from data analysis in consideration of McCroskey's (n.d.) recommendation that only the first two items measure affective learning.

*Additional survey measures.* In addition to those measures required to answer the hypotheses and research questions, three additional measures were also included. Two high-inference measures for immediacy and clarity were included in the event that the

selected verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy instruments proved unreliable within the current research design. Because both instruments were found to be sufficiently reliable as noted in the previous sections, the other measures were not used. Additionally, several items designed to measure emotional response were included for future study and analysis on this topic.

### *Data Analysis*

Data resulting from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS. Each of the four hypotheses were tested using independent-samples *t*-tests. Trainer effectiveness (effective or ineffective) served as the independent variables for each test. Trainee ratings of trainer communication behaviors (nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and clarity) were selected as dependent variables for the first three hypotheses while affective learning was the dependent variable of the final hypothesis. To address the research question, multiple linear regression analysis was incorporated to determine how each set of trainer communication behaviors contributed to trainee affective learning. In this case, trainer communication behaviors were categorized as predictor variables while affective learning served as the criterion variable.

### *Summary*

This chapter has described the participants, procedures and instruments used to collect data for this study. In particular, the Teacher Clarity Short Inventory, Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument, Verbal Immediacy Scale, and Affective Learning Scale were discussed in terms of their previous use and historic reliability. Modifications to each instrument were also described along with the estimated reliability that was calculated from the data collected in this research study. The next chapter will report the

results of the data collection and analysis. The fifth chapter will conclude the thesis with a summary of conclusions, an evaluation of the study, and recommendations for future research.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study is to validate and generalize instructional communication research variables to the corporate training context. In particular, this study focuses on the instructional communication behaviors that trainers may enact in order to enhance the overall effectiveness of a training class. The second chapter focused on three widely studied domains of instructional communication literature that could inform the study of trainer effectiveness. In particular it reviewed literature on nonverbal and verbal immediacy, teacher clarity, and affective learning. Chapter Three described the participants, procedures, and instruments used to conduct this research study. This chapter will report the findings of the hypotheses and the research question.

Table 4.1 reports the reliability, means, ranges, and standard deviations for each of the instruments used in this study. As noted in Chapter Three, each measure was found to be sufficiently reliable for use in further tests of the hypotheses and research question. Additionally, all reliabilities were consistent with previous research studies with the exception of trainer clarity, which scored slightly higher than other reported studies.

Table 4.1  
*Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviations*

Measures*	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Alpha
1. Trainer clarity	104	51.88	14.14	11	70	.94
2. Verbally eff. behaviors	104	41.00	10.88	8	61	.84
3. Nonverbal imm.	104	32.46	6.94	9	43	.78
4. Affective learning	102	40.28	11.98	11	56	.89

\*Ranges of possible scores for the measures are as follows: Trainer clarity 10-70; Verbally effective behaviors 0-68; Nonverbal immediacy 0-48; Affective learning 8-56.

Table 4.2 presents the Pearson correlations of all the variables included in this study. All correlations were found to be significant ( $p < .01$ ) and positive. Nonverbal immediacy had the strongest correlations with verbally effective behaviors and trainer clarity. Trainer clarity was also highly correlated with affective learning.

Table 4.2  
*Correlations Between Instructional Communication Variables*

Variable	N	1	2	3	4
1. Trainer clarity	104	—			
2. Verbally effective behaviors	104	.46**	—		
3. Nonverbal immediacy	104	.63**	.64**	—	
4. Affective learning	102	.57**	.42**	.46**	—

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Hypothesis 1: Differences in Nonverbal Immediacy*

The first hypothesis predicted that employees would perceive effective trainers as using more nonverbal immediacy behaviors than ineffective trainers. The first hypothesis was supported. An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean scores of the effective and ineffective survey groups found a significant difference between the means of the two groups [ $t(102) = 3.28, p < .01$ ]. The mean of the effective trainer group for nonverbal immediacy was 34.60 ( $SD = 5.21$ ) while the mean of the ineffective trainer group was 30.33 ( $SD = 7.80$ ). Table 4.3 summarizes means and standard deviations for all the hypothesized communication variables.

Table 4.3

*Means and Standard Deviations for Effective and Ineffective Trainers*

Measures	N	<u>Effective</u>		<u>Ineffective</u>		<i>t</i>	Sig.
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
1. Trainer clarity	104	59.53	9.83	44.40	13.91	6.33	.05
2. Verbally eff. behaviors	104	43.00	10.62	39.00	10.87	1.90	--
3. Nonverbal imm.	104	34.60	5.21	30.33	7.80	3.28	.01
4. Affective learning	102	44.73	10.22	35.84	12.06	4.01	.001

*Hypothesis 2: Differences in Verbally Effective Behaviors*

The second hypothesis predicted that employees would perceive effective trainers as using more verbally effective behaviors than ineffective trainers. No support was found for this hypothesis. An independent-samples *t* test was used to compare the mean scores of the surveys of those respondents who assessed effective trainers with those that

assessed ineffective trainers [ $t(102) = 1.90, p > .05$ ]. The mean of the effective trainer group for verbally effective behaviors was 43.00 ( $SD = 10.62$ ) and the mean of the ineffective trainer group was 39.00 ( $SD = 10.87$ ).

### *Hypothesis 3: Differences in Trainer Clarity*

The third hypothesis predicted that research participants would perceive effective trainers as using more trainer clarity behaviors than ineffective trainers. This hypothesis was supported. An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing the mean scores of the effective and ineffective survey groups found a significant difference between the means of the two groups [ $t(102) = 6.33, p < .001$ ]. The mean of the effective trainer group for trainer clarity was 59.35 ( $SD = 9.83$ ) and the mean of the ineffective trainer group was 44.40 ( $SD = 13.91$ ).

### *Hypothesis 4: Differences in Affective Learning*

The fourth hypothesis predicted that employees would learn more from effective trainers than from ineffective trainers in terms of acquiring more positive attitudes and feelings about the training content and recommended behaviors. This hypothesis was supported using independent-samples  $t$  test comparing the mean scores of the effective and ineffective survey groups. Significant difference between the means of the two groups was demonstrated by survey results [ $t(100) = 4.01, p < .001$ ]. The affective learning mean of the effective trainer group was 44.73 ( $SD = 10.22$ ) and the affective learning mean of the ineffective trainer group was 35.84 ( $SD = 12.06$ ).

### *Research Question: Predictors of Affective Learning*

A research question was posed to see how a trainer's use of verbally effective behaviors, nonverbal immediacy, and trainer clarity would impact an employee's

affective learning in an organizational training context. A multiple linear regression was calculated to answer the question. Verbally effective behaviors, trainer nonverbal immediacy, and trainer clarity were included in the model as predictor variables for the analysis. Affective learning was assigned as the criterion variable. With the three variables included, the ANOVA results for the model reported a significant regression equation [ $F(3, 98) = 18.76, p < .001$ ] with an  $R^2$  of .35. Additional analysis of results, however, showed that only trainer use of clarity behaviors predicted trainee affective learning ( $p < .001$ ). Table 4.4 shows beta strengths and significance for each variable included in the regression model.

Table 4.4  
*Beta Strengths for Affective Learning Regression Coefficients*

Predictor Variable <sup>a</sup>	$\beta$	<i>Sig.</i>
Trainer clarity	.453	.000
Verbally effective behaviors	.171	.108
Nonverbal immediacy	.071	.557

a. Criterion variable: Affective learning

### Summary

This chapter has reported the results of the independent-samples  $t$  tests that were performed to assess the hypotheses and the results of the multiple regression that answered the research question. Three of the four hypotheses, noting differences in trainer nonverbal immediacy, trainer clarity and trainee affective learning, were supported. No support was found for the second hypothesis, which proposed that effective and ineffective trainers would use verbally effective behaviors differently.

This chapter also presented the results of the multiple linear regression analysis that was used to answer the research question. Together, the three variables were strong predictors of affective learning and all of them demonstrated positive correlations with affective learning. Within the model, however, only trainer clarity was found to be a significant predictor of trainee affective learning. The next and final chapter will discuss the meaning and implications of these findings along with limitations of this research study and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The primary objective of this study is to examine whether previous findings about instructional communication behaviors can be applied to the corporate training context. Additional empirical research is needed in the training industry to firm up a field that has been accused of being “atheoretical and non-empirical” (Kontoghiorghes, 2001, p. 249). Furthermore, there has been a great deal of instructional communication research conducted in educational settings, but little or no effort has been exerted to determine whether the behaviors studied help achieve similar learning results in the training context. This study is intended to help communication researchers understand how widely studied variables behave in other instructional environments and contexts.

This study examines three primary instructional communication variables: teacher immediacy, teacher clarity, and student affective learning. Each of these variables were described in Chapter Two. Immediacy and clarity have both been associated with student learning. Researchers have consistently found that increased levels of immediacy enhance student learning (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Comstock et al., 1995). They have also found when a teacher is clear, students exhibit lower levels of apprehension, greater levels of affect toward a teacher and the subject matter, and higher levels of learning (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Powell & Harville, 1990). This study gives particular focus to affective learning over behavioral or cognitive

learning. The existing literature suggests that increases in the use of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy and teacher clarity in an educational context typically result in increases in student affective learning (Chesebro, 2003; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Witt & Wheelless, 2001), which in turn can help produce increases in behavioral or cognitive learning (Fymier, 1994; Rodriguez et al., 1996).

As a first step toward application of instructional communication research to the training context, this study seeks to identify whether trainees perceive significant differences in the way effective and ineffective trainers use the instructional communication behaviors described previously. A survey was conducted of employees during training classes at a Fortune 100 company. The research participants were randomly organized into two groups and asked to complete the survey instruments while considering an effective trainer they had in the past (Group A) or an ineffective trainer they had in the past (Group B).

Results indicated that effective trainers do indeed use nonverbal immediacy behaviors and teacher clarity behaviors more than their ineffective counterparts. Similarly, it seemed effective trainers generated greater degrees of student affective learning. Data collected in this study also indicated a trainer's use of teacher clarity had a tendency to increase affective learning. The significance of these results will be discussed in this chapter followed by a review of study limitations and recommendations for future research in this area. This chapter will conclude with final comments about the implications of this research study and its findings.



### *Significance of Findings*

*Trainer nonverbal immediacy.* As reviewed in Chapter Two, much has been written since Andersen (1979) published her first study linking teachers' uses of nonverbal immediacy behaviors with learning outcomes (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Witt et al., 2004; Witt & Wheelless, 2001). Since then, researchers have consistently found increased levels of immediacy enhance student learning (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Comstock et al., 1995). Other studies have also identified links between teacher use of immediacy behaviors and increases in student state motivation (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993; Frymier, 1994).

While there are differences that set training and teaching apart (as discussed in Chapter Two), there are enough similarities that the current body of research suggested similar findings about immediacy and its effects may apply to the training context as well. This study, therefore, hypothesized effective trainers use more nonverbal immediacy behaviors than ineffective trainers. The study found evidence that trainees perceive effective trainers as being more nonverbally immediate than ineffective trainers. Assuming that nonverbal immediacy in the training context enhances trainee motivation and learning as in the educational context, this finding is consistent with previous research. It stands to reason trainees who learn more and are motivated to use their learning would likely identify that class and the trainer as more effective than those trainees who did not learn as much as they expected to or who were not motivated to use it. These initial findings suggest that previous research regarding nonverbal immediacy in the academic context are applicable in the corporate training context inasmuch as it is represented by this research sample.

*Trainer verbally effective behaviors.* Immediacy research has focused on two primary sub-constructs – nonverbal immediacy and verbal immediacy. Given the effects of nonverbal immediacy found in early studies, researchers believed that verbal behaviors could also result in perceptions of immediacy (Gorham, 1988). Past research has since questioned the validity of verbal immediacy and particularly the scale used to measure the construct (Robinson & Richmond, 1995). Robinson and Richmond took particular issue with the way the verbal immediacy scale was created and argued that rather than measuring immediacy, it could only measure verbal behaviors considered to be effective by those who participated in its creation. Though the ability of the scale to measure verbal immediacy was challenged, no one contended the items in the scale were not representative of important teacher behaviors. This study, therefore, included the scale to examine trainer use of verbally effective behaviors.

Like nonverbal immediacy, this study expected to find a difference in the way effective and ineffective trainers use verbally effective behaviors. However, study results did not support this hypothesis. Research participants rated effective and ineffective trainers' use of verbally effective behaviors nearly equally. The research sample was not able to differentiate between Group A trainers and Group B trainers and their use of the verbally effective behaviors in question. There could be three reasons for this finding. First, it is possible that verbally effective behaviors are equally used between good and poor trainers alike. Second, it is also possible that trainees do not perceive verbally effective behaviors to be a determinant of trainer effectiveness. As such, these results may be an extension of Robinson and Richmond's (1995) arguments that Gorham's (1988) scale does not accurately measure verbal immediacy or verbally effective

behaviors. Third, measurement error or flaws in this study's methodology may have contributed to this result. Limitations of this study will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

*Trainer clarity.* Previous research has shown when a teacher is clear, students exhibit lower levels of apprehension and greater levels of affect toward a teacher and the subject matter (Chesebro, 2003; Powell & Harville, 1990). Findings also indicate students report greater learning when they believe their teachers have explained concepts clearly (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Previous findings in the educational context led this study to hypothesize that effective trainers (Group A) would enact more clarity-related behaviors than their ineffective (Group B) counterparts. This hypothesis was supported by the data collected in this study.

As expected, research participants in Group A rated effective trainers higher in the clarity scale items than Group B participants rated their ineffective trainers. Consistent with previous teacher clarity research findings, the results of this study indicate corporate trainees can discriminate between the clarity behaviors used by effective and ineffective trainers. It is likely that trainers who are clear in their instruction help trainees achieve those learning and behavioral outcomes that are associated with good teaching.

*Affective learning.* The first three hypotheses predicted differences in how effective and ineffective trainers use instructional communication behaviors. The existing literature suggests that increases in the use of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and teacher clarity in an educational context typically result in increases in student affective learning (Chesebro, 2003; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Witt &

Wheeless, 2001). Therefore, the final hypothesis predicted employees perceive that effective trainers help them achieve significantly greater amounts of affective learning than do their ineffective counterparts. As reported in Chapter Four, the data collected in this study supported this hypothesis. Participants reported greater amounts of affective learning when they attended a class with an effective trainer than when they attended training provided by an ineffective trainer.

This result is consistent with previous findings on affective learning. Positive relationships have been found between affective learning and teacher communication behaviors such as nonverbal immediacy, and clarity. (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Johnson & Miller, 2002; Witt & Wheeless, 2001). Other hypotheses in this study have found support that associates effective trainers with the use of nonverbal immediacy and clarity behaviors. Thus it stands to reason if effective trainers use more nonverbal immediacy and clarity behaviors, then they should also be associated with higher levels of affective learning.

Affective learning is a reflection of positive attitudes toward the content or subject matter (Kearney, 2004a; Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia 1964). Chapter Two reviewed a taxonomy of affective learning that included five progressive stages. Initial phases dealt with receiving, responding to, and valuing new instructional experiences while later phases treated organizing and internalizing those experiences. Considering the findings of the current study that effective trainers help produce greater affective learning, it seems likely trainees of effective trainers or instructors progress further along the taxonomy.

Along with the hypotheses in this study, a research question was also posed. The research question sought to quantify the extent to which a trainer's use of nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and teacher clarity can predict affective learning for corporate trainees. This question is particularly meaningful to this study since it was conducted in an organizational training context rather than an educational context. Consistent with previous findings, results indicated participants had higher levels of self-reported affective learning when their trainers employed higher levels of nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and teacher clarity. This finding is empowering for trainers. It suggests that trainers have the ability to influence and enhance trainee affective learning by manipulating or altering their own use of these key instructional communication behaviors.

However, the data also showed trainer clarity was the only significant contributor to an increase in affective learning. While nonverbal immediacy and verbally effective behaviors both had positive correlations with affective learning (see Table 4.2), neither of them had requisite levels of significance to indicate they contributed to a predictive model of affective learning. This phenomenon of individual correlation but lack of prediction may be partially explained by recent research conducted on learning needs and preferences of nontraditional students. Through focus-group discussions, Houser (2004a) found nontraditional students place less value on some instructor communication behaviors than their traditional student colleagues. Traditional students in the study expressed expectations that their instructors exhibit behaviors widely associated with immediacy. Nontraditional students, on the other hand made little or no mention of desiring these behaviors. Rather, they expressed expectations that their instructors be

enthusiastic, flexible, open-minded, organized, and able to relate real-life examples to the content (Houser). Therefore, it is plausible that trainees in the corporate training context, who would be more similar to nontraditional students than to traditional students, would similarly put greater value on other behaviors also.

It is worthy to note that Houser's (2004a) research also found the same lack of expressed desire for teacher clarity behaviors. Houser concluded while nontraditional students might not explicitly state desires for immediate and clear instruction, they may nonetheless expect a teacher to have them. This conclusion would seem to ring true for this study as well. While older, more mature learners may not express desire for clarity, they nonetheless must expect a teacher to be clear. To that effect, they likely also place varying levels of importance on instructor behavior.

This finding may also be explained through consideration of the adult learning literature cited earlier. That literature indicates adults are internally motivated to learn, use previous experiences to formulate opinions of the class, engage in problem-oriented learning, and want to apply relevant learning quickly (Knowles, 1978; Rogers, 2002). These characteristics, paired with findings about nontraditional students, suggest adult trainees would place less value on relationally focused behaviors like immediacy and more importance on those behaviors which help them accomplish their learning goals. In the case of the present study, corporate trainees seem to have valued trainer clarity more than they did immediacy behaviors. Thus, the clarity behaviors enacted by the trainers were the primary predictor of trainee affective learning.

While this finding is inconsistent with previous findings in the educational context, it is consistent with at least one other study done in training. Koval (1999)

examined the effects of immediacy, job relevance, and active participation on affective learning and behavioral intent in a training context. Like the current study, her results demonstrated evidence for positive correlations between verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy with affective learning. Also like the current study, she found neither form of trainer immediacy significantly predicted trainee affective learning. The present study, along with Koval's findings, demonstrates the need to conduct more applied research in the training context. It is evident that while there are benefits to instructional communication behaviors in training, they do not behave precisely as they do in the educational context. Further applied research is required to understand more about how these behaviors and variables function in the training environment.

#### *Post Hoc Findings*

Post hoc analysis of data results also yielded some interesting findings. This study used a characterization of effective and ineffective trainers when asking participants to respond to the various communication instruments. Sixty percent of participants in Group A (effective trainers) wrote the initials of a specific trainer on their survey, whereas only 29% of Group B (ineffective) participants made note of trainer initials (see Table 5.1). It seems when asked to think of an effective or ineffective trainer, respondents more easily identified, or were willing to specify, effective trainers. Since the study was conducted by a training manager at the company, this may simply indicate respondents were fearful that identifying the initials of an ineffective trainer may somehow incriminate the trainer.

Table 5.1  
*Identification of Specific Trainers by Participant Group (N = 104)*

	<u>Specified Trainer</u>		<u>No Specified Trainer</u>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Group A (Eff. Trainers)	31	60%	21	40%
Group B (Ineff. Trainers)	15	29%	37	71%

Additionally, the standard deviations of responses to the instruments in Group B (ineffective trainers) were larger than the effective groups (see Table 4.2). It would seem people have more consistent conceptual definitions of effectiveness than they do ineffectiveness since their responses were grouped more tightly in the effective sample. This difference in standard deviations lends additional support for a notion that respondents in Group B had more difficulty determining what makes a trainer ineffective. In reflection, trainer effectiveness is probably not a simple stratification of effective versus ineffective as the survey prompt alluded. Rather, instructors typically exhibit varying degrees of effectiveness. As such, Group A respondents may have equated the value of effectiveness with those who were good trainers while Group B respondents might have equated ineffectiveness as anything less than good. In other words, while Group A was assessing one homogeneous group of trainers, Group B may have been rating trainers along a range of ineffectiveness.

### *Limitations*

Like any study, this research was limited by its methodology. Three primary issues emerged that could potentially limit the generalizability of results and



corresponding findings to a wider population. These issues pertained to the method employed to conduct the research and the sample used to collect data.

First, this study asked research participants to consider communication behaviors of effective or ineffective trainers they had in the past. Data calculations showed that 40.4% of respondents attended the training class, in which the selected trainer performed, more than a year before they completed the survey (see Table 5.2). This length of time would seemingly call in to question how well people would have remembered the communication behaviors exhibited by their trainers. While this remains possible, estimates of instrument reliability were within acceptable ranges and in line with previous research that used the same instruments.

Table 5.2  
*When Was the Training Attended? (N = 104)*

<i>Time</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Within the last 5 months	19	18.3%
6-12 months ago	43	41.3%
A year or more ago	42	40.4%

Secondly, the survey results may have been limited by the use of an instructional prompt, which asked respondents to consider an effective or ineffective trainer. This classification potentially introduced some ambiguity to the study as it allowed for personal definitions of those two levels of training competency. Results indicate respondents in Group A provided more consistent responses for effective trainers than Group B respondents did for ineffective trainers. As discussed previously, this suggests

the research participants may have had a more consistent conceptualization of effective trainers than they did of ineffective trainers.

Finally, the research sample for this study consisted of employees from a single company who were in the same training course. While this research called for many participants to be included in the study, this method of collecting surveys had the potential to limit the number of trainers that would be evaluated. In an attempt to increase and diversify the number of trainers that would be rated, the researcher designed the study to ask research participants to consider previous training experiences and previous trainers. The survey allowed for the training experience to be from any company or organization – not just the one where the survey was administered. This method is not unlike those employed in university studies where participants are asked to consider the teacher they had in the class immediately proceeding the one in which they complete survey measures (Plax, Kearney, McCoskey & Richmond, 1986).

This method, however, did not succeed in garnering a very diverse set of experiences. Most of the training (84.6%) that respondents evaluated was conducted at the same company where the respondents were employed. This greatly limits the number of trainers that could have been evaluated as it is likely that some or many of the participants could have evaluated the same trainer. Furthermore, 66.3% of the respondents indicated that the training they attended was technical in nature. This means the subject matter being taught may not have been very diverse either.

These two high percentages indicate the training and the trainers being evaluated were likely to be quite similar. First, there is the possibility several respondents rated the same trainers. Second, the classes were all of the same type of content, which increases

the likelihood that the trainers in question would have at least employed similar techniques and approaches to teaching the material. While the data collected and ensuing analysis is still valid, given the homogeneity of the research sample, it is likely these results are only narrowly generalizable to trainers and trainees engaged in similar training programs as those who participated in this study.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

There has been very little instructional communication research conducted in the training context. As such there are many opportunities to conduct future research in this area. In particular, this study lends itself to several recommendations to correct limitations of the present study and to extend its findings into additional areas of research.

The limitations of this study can be addressed and corrected with three changes to future research methodology. First, future research should employ a method whereby trainees can directly observe trainers and trainer communicative behaviors. This method should also provide for immediate assessment of trainer behavior and resulting learning outcomes. This change will address the limitation of the current study where participants were asked to consider past trainers. It will help to avoid any possible extraneous influence due to the passage of time and will provide greater certainty that respondents are evaluating a specific trainer.

Second, future research should use experimental manipulation of trainer behavior. This would help address this study's dependency on the respondents to select trainers who were effective or ineffective as the instructional prompt requested. Future researchers could instruct trainers to behave in particular fashion that would be typically considered to be effective or ineffective. The study could also employ manipulation

checks to ensure the trainers are being perceived as intended. Such an approach would ensure the data collected is more representative of known trainer behaviors and would provide the researcher with more control of the research study.

Third, future researchers should either repeat this study in other business sectors or they should conduct research that itself includes multiple business and employee types. This would address the limited generalizability of the current study. Such additional research would help to provide additional understanding of how trainer communication behaviors influence outcomes in multiple settings. Greater understanding would either confirm or revoke the applicability of these findings to the broader training context.

This study has confirmed that differences exist between effective and ineffective trainers. Future research would also do well to further define the specific effects of trainer communicative behaviors or the relationships those behaviors have on learning outcomes. There are two primary opportunities to extend this research: first in the application of training theories and models, and second, in the examination of additional learning outcomes.

Future research should examine or apply current instructional communication theory and models to the training context. Similar to research queries in educational contexts, research could look at how state and trait motivation affect learning outcomes. Research should also address how theories like emotional response explain or influence particular outcomes. While the present study has identified perceived differences between effective and ineffective trainers, it has not focused on why those differences exist. Nor has this study explained if the differences cause a trainee to evaluate a trainer as effective or ineffective or if the effectiveness of a trainer is determined by some other

behavior or criteria. Application of theory and models may help researchers elaborate on not just how communication variables behave in the training context, but also why they behave the way they do.

Future research should also examine additional learning outcomes beyond affective learning. While affective learning is a critical indicator of a student's liking or willingness to engage in the skills taught, it is not indicative of his or her knowledge of the material or of his or her ability to perform those skills. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, corporate managers want to see tangible results from the investment they make in training. It is far more likely management would be more concerned with a trainee's ability to achieve improved results following a training session than they would be with their liking or perceptions of the class itself. Furthermore, it is possible that trainees would share similar preferences or priorities. Chapter Two reviewed key characteristics of adult learners, among which were the needs to apply learning quickly and to solve known problems. Future research should therefore assess the influence or effects of trainer behaviors on cognitive and behavioral learning in order to determine the benefits of those behaviors.

### *Implications*

This thesis posed a question regarding whether or not existing instructional communication research findings could be applicable to the corporate training context. Several reasons were presented that could explain why the contexts were different enough as to limit the applicability or to at least cast enough doubt to necessitate further study in this area. Among those discussed were differences in academic and corporate

environments, differences in learning preferences of college students and business employees, and differences in the types of tasks or subject matter being taught.

The primary implication of results obtained in this study is that differences in educational and academic contexts are not significant enough to negate the influence of these communication variables. Like their university student counterparts, corporate trainees are able to distinguish differences between how trainers use communication behaviors like nonverbal immediacy and teacher clarity. They are also able to evaluate their use and associate them with a positive or negative valence.

This study has two practical implications for managers of corporate training departments and trainers. First, this study identifies the body of instructional communication research as a valuable and insightful source of information for improving understanding and administration of the training function. Training managers would do well to be more familiar with research published by communication scholars that could pertain to training skills and their known effects in other contexts. It would help them to focus on tested behaviors when providing performance feedback to trainers.

Second, and more specific to the findings of this research, training managers should instruct and encourage trainers in the use of nonverbal immediacy and clarity behaviors included in this study. Both communication behaviors were associated with perceptions of effectiveness in this study. Furthermore, trainer clarity was directly related to increases in trainee affective learning. Through additional instruction and encouragement trainers will be more aware of the influence these variables have and will be more empowered to make them a conscientious part of their training performance.

In addition to these practical applications for corporate trainers and their managers, this research also has implications for those who train trainers and for academicians who study communication in general. There is an entire industry and several professional associations dedicated to the improvement of training. Train-the-trainer programs and others teach trainers skills necessary to perform their jobs successfully. These programs are resources for corporate training managers and individual trainers who seek to improve themselves. Frequently these programs focus on skills such as conducting needs analyses, knowing your audience, developing materials, making training fun, and using activities to make training more interactive. With the current research in hand these associations and companies may also want to consider expanding their repertoire to include trainer communication behaviors that also influence trainee learning outcomes. At minimum, these classes and seminars may be able to look to this and other instructional communication research as a more solid research foundation for the skills they already teach.

Academically, this study is also useful to broaden the discipline's understanding of how teacher communication behaviors affect learning outcomes in different environments. Most communication research is conducted with university students. While the discipline learns much from these studies, it is also necessary to know how the variables we study behave outside the classroom. Knowledge and understanding gained through research studies like this one help provide a more comprehensive picture of the world we live in and the way communication affects all that live within it.

In addition to this general implication, findings from this research also have a specific implication for the verbal immediacy construct which is frequently studied in the

communication discipline. Results failed to support the notion that those behaviors, determined by Gorham (1988) to be verbally immediate, were either strongly associated with trainer effectiveness or were predictors of trainee affective learning. These results would seem to offer support to Robinson and Richmond's (1995) arguments that the Verbal Immediacy Behaviors scale was not created in such a way as to truly measure verbal immediacy. Robinson and Richmond offered that perhaps the scale was more suited to measure verbally effective behaviors. These results would question even that possibility as participants in this study really made no significant distinction between effective and ineffective trainers related to these verbally immediate or verbally effective behaviors. Further study is needed to validate this implication. As noted previously, the items included in the verbal immediacy scale are low inference. Thus the passage of time between the attendance in training and the completion of the survey items may have affected its validity and reliability. Future research, following the recommendations proposed earlier, will help to clarify and validate these implications.

### *Final thoughts*

This study has answered a call for more empirical research in the training context. While additional research is certainly needed to further examine particular effects of instructional communication variables on various learning outcomes in the training context, this research study has taken initial strides to validate the assumption that instructional communication variables can be applied to the corporate training context. This study has reviewed the existing literature and identified several communication variables, which could be useful to the understanding of training. It has found evidence and support for the applicability of nonverbal immediacy, teacher clarity and affective



learning constructs to the corporate training environment. It has found the construct of verbal immediacy did not have any significant relationship with effective or ineffective trainers. Finally, study results indicated trainer clarity had the greatest amount of influence on trainee affective learning.

As noted, this study must only be the beginning. There remains significant work to be done to empirically explore and apply instructional communication variables in the training context. Training approaches and methods need not remain a-theoretical as Kontoghiorghes (2001) suggested. The field of instructional communication is a natural fount of theory that is prime for application to the training context. To borrow a colloquialism from Corporate America, future research has the potential to be a “win-win” for both corporations and for the communication discipline. Businesses can learn what can be done to make their training programs, and more specifically their trainers, more successful and communication programs across the nation can benefit from seeing how communication research and theories perform in additional facets of life.

## APPENDIX A

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAINER ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Thank you for your assistance in conducting this survey research. Please allow twenty minutes of dedicated time during the training class to complete the survey. The most preferable times for the survey are at the beginning of class or immediately coming back from a break. If at all possible, please do not administer this survey at the end of class. This will help to improve response rate and will allow the trainee the necessary time to consider their responses.

Before handing out the surveys to your trainees please state the following instructions to the class. Stating the instructions as they are written below will help to ensure that all classes and all trainees receive consistent instructions. Consistency for all participants is necessary to avoid introducing any unnecessary influence, which could affect study results.

“We’d like to invite you to participate in a research study of trainer communication behaviors used in training. This research is being sponsored by the Training Department and Texas State University. We’d like you to fill out a survey that will help us to better understand the importance of trainer communication behaviors and will enable us to improve future training programs.

The survey consists of multiple sections. In all, it should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Please be sure to read the directions carefully, as they will provide specific instructions about how to complete the survey.

Participation in this study is voluntary and the survey is completely anonymous. There are no markings or other indicators to identify your individual survey. Once you are done with the survey, please place it in this envelope. We’ll take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete the survey.”

After communicating the instructions above, please hand out the surveys to the trainees. There are two versions of the survey, which have already been mixed together. Please just hand them out as they are. Place an envelope in a designated place in the room and allow trainees to place their completed survey in it anonymously. After the class has concluded, please send the envelope and completed surveys to Nathan Faylor in San Antonio. Thank you again for all your help with this survey!

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

You are invited to participate in a research study of instructor communication behaviors used in training. This research is being sponsored by Texas State University-San Marcos and the Caremark Operations Training Department. Your responses will help us to better understand the importance of trainer communication behaviors and will enable us to improve future training programs. The survey consists of multiple sections, which should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and the survey is completely anonymous. There are no markings or other indicators to identify your individual survey. Thank you for your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Nathan Faylor  
Training Manager  
6950 Alamo Downs Parkway  
San Antonio, TX 78238  
Phone: 210.706.2212  
Email: [nathan.faylor@caremark.com](mailto:nathan.faylor@caremark.com)

Or

Steven A. Beebe, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chair, Department of Communication Studies  
Texas State University | San Marcos  
601 University Drive  
San Marcos, TX 78666-4616  
Phone: 512-245-2165

## APPENDIX C

### INVENTORY OF TRAINER COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This survey has been prepared as part of a research study on Trainer communication behaviors. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. The survey consists of multiple sections, which should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. When you have completed the survey, please return it by placing it in the envelope provided by your trainer. Your responses will be completely anonymous.

To begin, think of your past experiences attending training classes. In particular, think of a trainer who you believe was **effective**. If you remember the name of the trainer, write that person's initials here for your future reference: \_\_\_\_\_. **Please respond to the following survey items with that trainer in mind. If you are unable to think of an effective trainer, please do not complete this survey. You may return it to the trainer blank.**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. When did you attend the training course you are thinking of? | <input type="checkbox"/> Within the last 5 months<br><input type="checkbox"/> 6-12 months ago<br><input type="checkbox"/> A year or more ago                                       |
| 2. Where was the training held?                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Caremark<br><input type="checkbox"/> Another for-profit company<br><input type="checkbox"/> A non-profit organization (church, service organization, etc) |
| 3. What was the subject-matter of the training?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Technical skills (i.e. computer skills, job skills, etc.)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Soft skills (communication, sales, etc.)                            |

**Part A Instructions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following items as they refer to your feelings towards the trainer you identified above. Please respond to the following sentences on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 representing Completely Disagree and 7 representing Completely Agree. *Circle the number that corresponds to your answer.*

- |  | Completely<br>Disagree | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7             | Completely<br>Agree |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 4. The trainer clearly defined major concepts. |                        | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 |                     |

	Completely Disagree	1-2-3-4-5-6-7	Completely Agree
5. The trainer's answers to student questions were unclear.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
6. In general, I understood the trainer.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
7. Practice exercises assigned for the class had unclear guidelines.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
8. The trainer's objectives for the course were clear.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
9. The trainer was straightforward in his/her lecture.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
10. The trainer was not clear when defining guidelines for assignments or exercises.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
11. The trainer used clear and relevant examples.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
12. In general, I would say that the trainer's classroom communication is unclear.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	
13. The trainer was explicit in his/her instruction.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	

**Part B Instructions:** The following statements describe the things trainers say or do while teaching. Please respond to the following sentences on a 1 to 4 scale, with 0 representing Never and 4 representing Very Often. *Circle the number that corresponds to your answer.*

<i>0 = Never; 1 = Rarely; 2 = Occasionally; 3 = Often; 4 = Very Often</i>	
14. The trainer used personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
15. The trainer asked questions or encouraged students to talk	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
16. The trainer got into discussions based on something a student brought up even when this didn't seem to be a part of his/her lecture plan.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
17. The trainer used humor in class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
18. The trainer addressed students by name.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
19. The trainer addressed me by name.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
20. The trainer got into conversations with individual students before, after or outside of class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
21. The trainer initiated conversations with individual students before or after class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
22. The trainer referred to class as "our" class or what	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4

*0 = Never; 1 = Rarely; 2 = Occasionally; 3 = Often; 4 = Very Often*

“we” are doing.	
23. The trainer provided feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
24. The trainer called on students to answer questions even if they had not indicated that they wanted to talk.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
25. The trainer asked how students felt about topics discussed in the training session.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
26. The trainer invited students to meet with him/her outside of class if they had questions or wanted to discuss something.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
27. The trainer asked questions that solicited viewpoints or opinions.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
28. The trainer praised students’ work, actions or comments.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
29. The trainer had discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
30. The trainer was addressed by his /her first name by the students.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
31. The trainer sat behind a desk while teaching.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
32. The trainer gestured while talking to class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
33. The trainer used monotone/dull voice while talking to class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
34. The trainer looked at the class while talking.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
35. The trainer smiled at the class as a whole, not just individual students.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
36. The trainer had a very tense body position while talking to the class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
37. The trainer moved around the classroom while teaching.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
38. The trainer looked at board or notes while talking to the class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
39. The trainer stood behind podium or desk while teaching.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
40. The trainer had a very relaxed body position while talking to the class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
41. The trainer smiled at individual students in the class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4
42. The trainer used a variety of vocal expressions while talking to the class.	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4

Immediate \_\_\_\_\_ Not immediate \_\_\_\_\_



Cold	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Warm
Unfriendly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Friendly
Close	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Distant

---

**Part E:**

Instructional clarity is an instructor's ability to present knowledge in a way that students understand. Using examples, speaking clearly, staying on topic, providing feedback, and repeating difficult ideas are examples of behaviors that clear teachers engage in.

48. Please place an "X" in each of the following scales to indicate your agreement with the following statement: **In your opinion, the teaching style of the trainer you are rating was very clear.**

Agree	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Disagree
False	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	True
Wrong	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Right
Yes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	No

49. Please place an "X" in each of the following scales to indicate the word that best describes the teaching style of the trainer you are rating.

Clear	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Unclear
Understandable	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Incomprehensible
Vague	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Specific
Unsure	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Certain

---

**Part F Instructions:** Below are a series of scales measuring your emotional response. Please respond to the scales in terms of the training class you have been thinking about while completing the other questions on this survey.

Place an "X" on the blank closest to the word that best represents how you were generally feeling during that training class; these are not feelings you had about the instructor or the training content, but just your general emotional response while you were in the training session. Please work quickly, there are no right and wrong answers.

50. During that class, I was feeling:

Happy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Unhappy
Hopeful	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Un-Hopeful
Joyful	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Miserable
Uncomfortable	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Comfortable
Pleased	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Annoyed
Unsatisfied	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Satisfied
Excited	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Calm
Jittery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Dull

Unaroused	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Aroused
Stimulated	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Relaxed
Frenzied	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Sluggish
Wide Awake	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Sleepy
Bold	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Meek
Assertive	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Not Assertive
Dominant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Submissive
Powerless	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Powerful
Domineering	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Helpless
Decisive	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	In-Decisive

**Part G Instructions:** Please provide a little bit of information about yourself, this course, and the trainer you are rating.

51. Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_
52. Your gender (circle one): Male / Female
53. The gender of the trainer you rated in this survey (circle one): Male / Female
54. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_
55. Please estimate the number of training classes that you have ever attended previous to this one: \_\_\_\_\_

56. Please indicate your current job function:

- ☐ Pharmacist      ☐ Technician      ☐ Customer Service Representative      ☐ Manager/Supervisor

57. Please indicate your highest level of education achieved:

- ☐ High School Diploma/GED      ☐ Some college      ☐ Bachelor's Degree      ☐ Some graduate school      ☐ Master's degree or higher
- 

Thank you again for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses will be kept completely anonymous. Please return your survey by placing it in the envelope identified by your trainer.

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## **VITA**

Nathan Robert Faylor was born in Provo, Utah, on June 29, 1975, the son of David Gale Faylor and Laurine Faylor. He is the proud father of three-year old quintuplets (three boys and two girls). After graduating from Apple Valley High School in Apple Valley, California in 1993, he entered Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. He was a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in northern Italy from 1994 to 1996. He began attending Texas State University-San Marcos in 1998 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies in December 1999. Nathan began graduate work at Texas State University-San Marcos in January 2000 but then interrupted his studies to focus on work and family. He resumed graduate studies at Texas State University-San Marcos in January 2003.

While working on his Bachelor's degree, Mr. Faylor also served as an Instructional Assistant at the university and worked as a Training & Development assistant for McCoy Corporation, a building supply company based in San Marcos, Texas. Following graduation, he worked as a Change Management Specialist for Motorola in Austin, Texas. Since April 2004, he has worked for Caremark, the nation's second largest prescription benefits management company, as a Training Manager. He oversees approximately 35 employees in seven offices across the country.

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