Research on the communicative competency of faculty indicates that students can be motivated to learn by competent communicators. In general, communication experts have better competency skills, (i.e., they use more effective verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors) than do faculty as a whole. An area much in need of development for most faculty members is skill in asking questions. Teachers skilled in questioning techniques can move students back and forth through Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives. Too many faculty read from their notes, heads down, eyes focused on papers, with general disregard for the audience. Communication and power are integrally related and directly affect the classroom climate and subsequently the cognitive learning experience. (A table representing a taxonomy of behavior alteration techniques and behavior alteration messages is included.) (RS)
"Communication Competency through Faculty Development"
Martha Womack Haun
Speech Communication Association
Chicago, Nov. 1-3, 1990
Introduction
The topic for the 1990 SCA Town Hall debate at this convention which addresses whether or not we should gather in annual session and force ourselves to listen to the potentially dry and boring papers delivered by our colleagues does, in fact, speak to the issue which we are addressing today in this session. Namely, are faculty members competent to communicate? More specifically, can we identify and address deficiencies in such a way that improvement is the end result? What is competency? What are the criteria by which one evaluates or measures the competency of another person? The answers to such questions are not simple ones and consequently will be only partially addressed in the time (ten minutes!) available to this author today.

Recognizing that students can be motivated to learn by competent communicators (Christophel, 1990), this paper addresses the perceived level of communication competency among faculty that presently exists, some specifics of the nature of competency, followed by a discussion of how communication competency can best be developed. More specifically, the focus will address how verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors of faculty members can be improved.

Competency and Motivation
Diane M. Christophel, author of "The Relationships Among Teacher Immediacy Behaviors, Student Motivation, and Learning," in Communication Education, October 1990, p. 337, in an article revised from a Top Three program in Instructional Development for this SCA convention concluded that state rather than trait motivation was a crucial factor in impacting learning. In her words, "the unique variance regarding students' motivation and learning was
unequivocally attributable to state motivation. This finding strongly supports the theory that student state motivation levels are modifiable within the classroom environment. More importantly for our purposes, her study established that "a portion of student state motivation was directly modified by teacher immediacy behaviors."

Immediacy Behaviors

Such verbal immediacy behaviors included praising students' work, using first names, using humor and personal examples, initiating conversations with students before or after class, using third person pronoun references and asking questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors included gesturing while speaking to the class, looking at the class and smiling while talking, moving around the room, touching students, variety in vocal expressions and being relaxed. Excluded verbal behaviors were first person pronouns "my" or "I", asking questions that have specific, "correct" answers, criticizing or point out faults in students' work, actions or comments, and calling on students who have not indicated a desire to respond. Included verbal behaviors that were presumed to be non-immediate included sitting behind the desk while teaching, using a monotone/dull voice, having a tense body position, sitting on a desk or in a chair while teaching, looking at board or notes while talking to the class, and standing behind podium or desk while teaching.

Authors Michael J. Beatty and Christopher J. Zahn concluded in their October 1990 article in Communication Education (p. 281) that "student ratings of teacher credibility are not influenced by perceptions of course performance" and that such ratings are not based merely on teachers' sociability. However, they found that "communication teachers who are perceived as nice, pleasant, kind, friendly, good-natured, cheerful, sociable, cooperative and honest, produce higher student expectations for performance." Their concluding observations are that "experts in communication should
be expected to be better teachers than those who are not experts" and that their "research supports the validity of that expectation." In the remarks that follow, we may then qualify observations to suggest that in general communication experts have better competency skills than the faculty as a whole.

Jerry L. Allen and Darla H. Shaw in the same issue of Communication Education focus their research on the instruction of elementary and secondary teachers and conclude that "affective learning was viewed as the domain where effective teaching was perceived to make the most difference," and that teachers with a high degree of WTC [willingness to communicate] were determinants of such effectiveness. (p. 320).

Competency Defined

W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen, Communication Action and Meaning (New York: Prager, 1980), p. 187 define competence as "the person's ability to move within and among the various systems s/he is co-creating or co-managing." Stephen W. Littlejohn, in Theories of Human Communication (2nd ed.), 1983, aptly sums up the idea by stating that "an optimally competent person can enter or exit a system at will," (p. 70) and in the 3rd edition of his book (1989) Littlejohn in summarizing the work of Juergen Habermas writes that communication is "essential to emancipation" and that language "becomes the means by which the emancipatory interest is fulfilled." Thus, "communicative competence . . . is necessary for effective participation in decision making" and "involves knowing how to use speech appropriately to accomplish . . . purposes." (p. 146)

Pamphlets from SCA headquarters as well as other sources provide guidelines for communicator competencies for individuals in different stages of development. For faculty members, competencies would naturally include classroom management abilities as well as skill in teaching subject matter using immediacy behaviors.
Skills Development

Recognizing that verbal immediacy behaviors included praising students' work and using first names suggests that attention needs to be directed to teacher response style. Several response style taxonomies are available. For example, David Johnson in his text *Reaching Out* identifies five: evaluative, interpretive, supportive, probing and understanding (p. 125).

J. Gibb, "Defensive Communication," *Journal of Communication*, 11 (1961): 142-148, distinguishes between defensive climates (characterized by evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority and certainty) and supportive climates (characterized by description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality and provisionalism). Cooper (1988) lists thirteen characteristics of response styles which create a supportive, responsive climate which encourages student participation. These include accepting and developing students' ideas and feelings, praise, encouragement, listening, insuring success, being authentic and using a variety of responses. Using humor and personal examples or initiating conversations with students before or after class and even using third person pronoun references, require good relational skills between faculty and student.

Using Questions

It is this author's opinion that an area much in need of development for most faculty members is skill in asking questions. Asking questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions are better received than questions at a lower cognitive level, the "knowledge/recall" level in particular. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives, the teacher skilled in questioning techniques can move students back and forth through levels which include knowledge (list, label, define, tell), comprehension (compare, contrast, translate, paraphrase), application (solve, compute, produce, classify), analysis (distinguish, differentiate), synthesis (write, combine, create, design), and evaluation (assess,
evaluate, criticize, justify).

What happens to your own mental processes when a question is posed? What if I ask you, for example:

1. Is there a difference between a group leader and leadership?
2. By what process does a group actually solve a problem?
3. Can one evaluate policies without first addressing value clarification?
4. Where do butterflies go when it rains?
5. Why do we feel remorse killing a butterfly but not a cockroach?
6. How can we make a miniature flame-thrower from a match, a piece of paper and a packet of coffee creamer?

Could you feel your mental processes activated? Was this more refreshing than waiting to be automatically fed information about topics? A command of lower cognitive level skills is required before higher order thought can be accomplished. We must be able to identify and relate to objects before we can analyze, synthesize or evaluate them. How can we imagine touching a rainbow if we do not know what a rainbow is? How can we imagine a butterfly on the underside of a leaf if we have no cognitive awareness of a butterfly. How can we distinguish "wet" from "dry" snow if our knowledge and use of language is so limited that the concept "snow" is meaningless? Inherent in our effective and competent communication is an appreciation of our language, the ability to name objects and to increase our cognitive complexity as we relate to the world about us.

Using Communicative Reading

Cooper observes (p. 313): "No teacher should pass up the opportunity to read . . ., to introduce a unit, to help explain a concept, to motivate students, and to simply provide enjoyment. . . ." This author maintains that this is true in the college classroom as well as K-12. An excerpt from a great speech, a famous quotation, an excerpt of literature can convey the thought in a richer, fuller way.
than characterizes the style of most teachers. Too many faculty read from their notes, heads down, eyes focussed on papers with general disregard for the audience. Training in communicative reading could improve overall delivery skills - with improved and appropriate variety in volume, rate, intensity and vocal quality. Learning to draw upon additional resources from literary sources can provide enrichment experiences for both students and faculty.

**Understanding nonverbal immediacy**

For too long the assumption was too strong that the essence of a teacher's communication lay in verbal messages delivered clearly to a captive audience. While creating appropriate meanings in the mind of receivers through effective symbolic interaction is crucial in the learning process, what we now know about the impact of nonverbal immediacy behaviors clearly indicates that faculty members at all levels need a clear understanding of kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, paralanguage, artifacts, touch, color, and other environmental factors with specific applications to the classroom.

**Communication and Power**

Communication and power are integrally related and directly affect the classroom climate and subsequently the cognitive learning experience. In their 1987 article in *Communication Education*, Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney and Plax identify Behavior Alteration Techniques (BATs) and Behavior Alteration Messages (BAMs) and link behavior alteration techniques to cognitive learning. Table 1 is a reproduction of the author's taxonomy of techniques with example messages. The following BATs were perceived as being "used by more good teachers than poor teachers: Immediate Reward from Behavior; Deferred Reward from Behavior; Reward from Teacher; Reward from Others; Self-Esteem; Personal (Student) Responsibility; Responsibility to Class; Debt; Altruism; Expert Teacher; and Teacher Feedback. The following BATs were perceived as being used by more poor teachers than good teachers: Punishment from Behavior; Punishment from Teacher; Legitimate-
### TABLE 1

**Behavior Alteration Techniques and Messages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BATs</th>
<th>BAMs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Immediate Reward from Behavior</strong></td>
<td>You will enjoy it. It will make you happy. Because it's fun. You'll find it rewarding/interesting. It's a good experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Deferred Reward from Behavior</strong></td>
<td>It will help you later on in life. It will prepare you for getting a job (or going to graduate school). It will prepare you for your achievement test (or the final exam). It will help you with upcoming assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Reward from Teacher</strong></td>
<td>I will give you a reward if you do. I will make it beneficial to you. I will give you a good grade (or extra credit) if you do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Reward from Others</strong></td>
<td>Others will respect you if you do. Others will be proud of you. Your friends will like you if you do. Your parents will be pleased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Self-Esteem</strong></td>
<td>You will feel good about yourself if you do. You are the best person to do it. You always do such a good job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Punishment from Behavior</strong></td>
<td>You will lose if you don't. You will be unhappy if you don't. You will be hurt if you don't. It's your loss. You'll feel bad if you don't.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Punishment from Teacher</strong></td>
<td>I will punish you if you don't. I will make it miserable for you. I'll give you an &quot;F&quot; if you don't. If you don't do it now, it will be homework tonight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Punishment from Others</strong></td>
<td>No one will respect you. Your friends will make fun of you. Your parents will punish you if you don't. Your classmates will respect you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Guilt</strong></td>
<td>If you don't, others will be hurt. You'll make others unhappy if you don't. Your parents will feel bad if you don't. Others will be punished if you don't.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Teacher-Student Relationship Positive</strong></td>
<td>I will like you better if you do. I will respect you. I will think more highly of you. I will appreciate you more if you do. I will be proud of you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Teacher-Student Relationship Negative</strong></td>
<td>I will dislike you if you don't. I will lose respect for you. I will think less of you if you don't. I won't be proud of you. I'll be disappointed in you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Legitimate Higher Authority</strong></td>
<td>Do it, I'm just telling you what I told you. It is a rule. I have to do it and so you. It's school policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Legitimate-Teacher Authority</strong></td>
<td>Because I told you to. You don't have a choice. You're here to work. I'm the teacher, you're the student. I'm in charge of you. Don't ask, just do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. Personal Student Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>It is your obligation. It is your job. Everyone has to do his/her share. It's your job. Everyone has to pull his/her own weight. Your group needs it done. The class depends on you. All your friends are counting on you. Don't let your group down. You'll run it for the rest of the class team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. Responsibility to Class</strong></td>
<td>We need the majors rules. All of your friends are doing it. Everyone else has to do it. The rest of the class is doing it. It's part of growing up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16. Duty</strong></td>
<td>You owe me one. Pay your debt. You promised to do it. If you don't do it, you will lose points. If you do it, you will gain points. If you do this, it will help others. Others will be more likely to do it. We try to make others happy. If you do it, you're not treating yourself fairly. Do it for the good of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17. Peer Modeling</strong></td>
<td>Your friends don't. Classmates you respect don't. Your friends you admire do it. Other students who like you do it. Your friends are doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18. Teacher Modeling</strong></td>
<td>This is the way I always do it. When I was you, I did it. People who are like me don't. I had better have someone who is. Teachers you respect do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19. Expert Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Based on my experience, it is the wise thing to do. I have learned it is the thing that you should do. This has always worked for me. Trust me, I know what I'm doing. That's why I'm in the class as a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20. Teacher Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Because I need to know how well you understand this. I need how well you respond. It will help me know your problem areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Authority; and Teacher Modeling (n. 7). "Used equally by both good and poor teachers were these BATs: "Punishment from Others; Guilt; Teacher/Student Relationship: Positive; Teacher/Student Relationship: Negative; Legitimate-Higher Authority; Normative Rules; and Peer Modeling.

Looking Ahead
Faculty have diverse techniques available to motivate student learning. A strong commitment is what is required to break traditional instructional patterns in exchange for a more meaningful educational experience. The solution is relatively easy. Through convention programs such as this one, or institutionally sponsored weekend training sessions, or even single or half-day sessions, skills development may be taught by professionals. Administrators should be encouraged to develop reward systems that address improved communication skills. Training opportunities exist or could be easily created. The commitment to improvement is the challenge. What will be the reply?

References


Littlejohn, S. W. *Theories of Human Communication* (2nd ed.), 1983.

