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## **Verbal and nonverbal immediacy: sex differences and international teaching assistants**

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VERBAL AND NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY:  
SEX DIFFERENCES AND INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by

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As an international teaching assistant, my interest is always focused on learning and understanding those issues that relate to international teaching assistants. Past research found problems that form the basis of students' learning in the classroom. Indeed, I have discovered that students' perceptions toward international teaching assistants are imperative to the interaction between both student and international teaching assistant in the classroom. I am particularly thankful to all undergraduates who reported their attitudes toward international teaching assistants and U.S. teaching assistants. The undergraduates provided time and perceptions that allowed me to discover their experiences toward both types of teaching assistants. This study could not have been completed without them.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explains theory and research concerning international teaching assistants, intercultural communication, nonverbal and verbal immediacy, cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning, and sex differences. One research question and five hypotheses were tested via MANOVA and correlation tests. Six hundred and seven undergraduate students completed instruments measuring verbal and nonverbal immediacy, and cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. Results supported the research question and three of the five hypotheses. Specifically, U.S. Teaching Assistants used more nonverbal immediacy than International Teaching Assistants. Students' attitudes toward International Teaching Assistants correlated with students' learning. Students' perceptions of ITAs and USTAs on verbal and nonverbal immediacy positively correlated to students' learning.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Effective communication provides a fundamental tool for teaching and learning. When teachers and students communicate with one another, they attach meaning to their constructed and transmitted messages and in turn, interpret the messages received from one another. Ellner and Barnes (1993) found that the perception of a teacher as being competent and successful in class instruction is usually derived from noting the teacher's clarity, organization, and enthusiasm on the subject, building of rapport, and a display of good personality or character. This is especially the case when a teacher is an international teaching assistant (ITA) who generally uses English as a second language and has minimal knowledge of U.S. culture.

Large universities frequently offer teaching assistant jobs to international graduate students who use English as a second language and who also have an undergraduate degree outside the United States. The universities find that instruction by ITAs presents an important issue to higher education. Constantinides (1987) stated that there are two concerns on which institutions should focus in regard to ITAs. One concern is the ITA English language ability, especially in regard to accent, stress, and intonation. The second concern involves a lack of understanding in ITAs regarding the purpose of education in the United States, which differs from that of ITAs' home countries.

Numerous ITAs arrive in the U.S. collegiate arena with backgrounds in educational systems that traditionally place emphasis on memorization, on passing known truths and facts from one generation to another (Constantinides, 1987, p. 4). Familiar with such formal educational systems, ITAs sometimes face negative behavior from U.S. students, who seem rude and disruptive when asking questions. Such a classroom approach emanating from U.S. students lies in stark



contrast with the ITAs' traditional classroom approach, familiar in countries outside the U.S. as a more formal approach in which students passively absorb information. Given these unfamiliar circumstances, ITAs might respond negatively in both verbal and nonverbal communication to disruptive behavior.

International graduate students who are granted admission to a university usually score high on the TOEFL and GRE tests in order to be admitted, yet they often have difficulty when communicating in English with American students. As a result, U.S. students usually perceive ITAs as either incompetent communicators or as displaying poor speaking skills (Constantinides, 1987; Orth, 1983; Roach, 1999; Yule & Hoffman, 1990). Bailey (1983) and Crookes and Davis (1993) stated that the poorly spoken English of ITAs represents a significant barrier to native students studying a subject, especially among science, mathematics, and engineering majors. Plakans (1997) found that the reason there are so many ITAs in these particular majors is that there are so few American graduate students in these subjects. However, although ITAs are qualified in their fields of study, they are not necessarily qualified in oral skills.

Fox (1992) developed a measurement scale entitled AQuestionnaire about International Teaching Assistants (QUITA).@ The purpose of the scale is to collect demographic information from students who report their experiences with ITAs. The scale also assesses both students' attitudes toward ITAs and students' cross-cultural awareness. The researcher found that 96% of participants in the study experienced ITA instruction at least once, and 43% of the participants had classes with ITA instructors at least four or more times. Plakans (1997) also found that participants who exhibit positive attitudes toward ITAs possessed more interest and openness toward other cultures, countries, or intercultural experiences. In addition, students who experience teaching by ITAs indicate that ITAs can be effective instructors. Further, these students are able to recognize and

to accept a portion of personal responsibility for facilitating communication between themselves and ITAs (Plakans, 1997).

Much of the research in communication studies (Andersen, 1979; McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985) discovered that verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy produces not only an effect on students' perceptions of the teacher, but also affects cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning as well. Both Mehrabian (1967) and Gorham (1988) concluded that although nonverbal immediacy behaviors are characteristic of effective communicators, verbal immediacy increases affective and cognitive learning. However, Gorham (1988) concluded that the bigger the classroom, the less significant verbal immediacy becomes: As class size increases, teachers become more differentiated in terms of their efforts to decrease psychological distance (p. 51). Applying humor in classrooms seems to significantly affect learning, as do comments or praise of a student's work (Gorham & Christophel, 1990). In addition, Bailey (1982, 1983) found that nonverbal communication is related to clarity and rapport building.

Communication between ITAs and native students is important to the teaching-learning process. This relationship is especially significant in regard to the degree of use in verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, which may relate not only to the teaching evaluations of ITAs, but also to effective teaching-learning relationships. Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) found that significant results on nonverbal immediacy behaviors are related to cognitive learning. In addition, Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond (1986) stated that nonverbal immediacy behavior correlates with affective learning. Thus, utilization of both verbal and nonverbal immediacy in the classroom positively impacts student learning.

The purposes of this study at Louisiana State University (LSU) will serve to (a) recognize the amount of experience U.S. students have with U.S. teaching assistants and international teaching

assistants, (b) examine the students' perceptions of verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors by male and female U.S. teaching assistants and international teaching assistants, and (c) discover the effects of immediacy on cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

United States universities traditionally offer a substantial number of teaching assistantships to new graduate students—both U.S. and international graduate students. A number of international teaching assistants (ITAs) are given responsibility for teaching introductory courses, which leads to a current concern in education. Studies have suggested many factors that may contribute to problems for ITAs. These factors include attitudes and prejudices, as well as a lack of language skills (sometimes relating to lack of understanding U.S. students), a lack of understanding of U.S. culture, a lack of preparation in the instructional system, and/or a lack of skill-centered teaching in the classroom (Abraham, & Plakans, 1988).

#### ITAs' Common Problems

The most common problem facing a university hiring ITAs tends to be the lack of English language skills among ITAs. Generally, ITAs are required to take oral proficiency tests upon arrival at campus. Those who do not pass the test must begin a training course aimed at improving their pronunciation and fluency, as well as their teaching skills; the course includes a focus on cultural awareness in the U.S. classroom.

To become competent in communication in the classroom, ITAs first study spoken English as a second language, and then undergo exams that measure their abilities in English. In American culture, a high value is placed on verbal communication. As a result, although ITAs possess spoken language skills adequate to the task of presenting instructional material to U.S. students, language necessarily remains at the root of the problem. Those ITAs who lack communication skills are perceived as incompetent. Many student complaints about the teaching competence of ITAs spring from a lack of language skills on the part of the ITA. A special report conducted by Minnesota on

international issues noted that:

It is not fair for students to take a class [such] as math, economics, or statistics, and listen to someone whom they cannot understand lecture, but whose material they are responsible for. It is ridiculous to go in to obtain individualized instruction when students can't understand the teacher to begin with. (Mestenhauser et al., 1980, p. 7)

In many states, universities require oral English language competency standards for new ITAs (Monoson & Thomas, 1993). This is the case at Louisiana State University. In addition, Orth (1983) found that grade dissatisfaction among students correlates with evaluations of ITAs. This demonstrates the complexity of dealing with student perceptions of ITAs. Complaints come not only from students, but also from their parents. Bailey (1984) quoted a letter from a parent:

First, let me state that I believe that the TA [ITA] is being utilized to the point where he is replacing the professor in many instances. Second, an ability to communicate clearly in the English language should be a mandatory requisite for receiving a TA [ITA] assignment. Third, Y I have a young son who is a freshman at UCLA and who is having one "hell-of-a-time" as a result of an inability of (sic) [to] obtain understandable help from his assigned ITA in calculus and chemistry. He has even changed classes in an attempt to improve the situation, only to find himself faced with another ITA who is unintelligible. This is a totally unacceptable learning situation. (Bailey, 1984, p. 5)

If instructors or ITAs speak English as a second language, the issue arises as to how universities might ensure that ITAs not only speak English, but also have the ability to understand standard or actual meanings well enough to convey the course material. Bailey (1983) argued that before an ITA acquires a teaching position at a university, she/he should be trained in programs of English as a second language (ESL) and also should be required to reach a certain proficiency level; in particular, the ITA should pass an oral English exam, or possess a letter of recommendation from the English department. This procedure would ensure that ITAs are trained before acquiring teaching assistantships. Yule and Hoffman (1990) described a program at Louisiana State University as the following:

the three-credit-hour course lasts 15 weeks and incorporates many of the features that have become typical of ITA preparation courses, such as exercises on segmental and supra-

segmental aspects of English; discussion of preparation skills and aspects of cross-cultural communication; a range of one-way (information-transfer) and two-way (interactive) tasks; and a number of audiotape and videotaped performances under different conditions, with both group and individual feedback sessions.... At the end of the course, a recommendation (positive or negative) is made regarding each student's ability in spoken English, with particular reference to the oral presentation of instructional material. A positive recommendation permits the students to be assigned teaching duties. Those receiving a negative recommendation cannot be assigned any teaching duties. (p. 229)

Most ITAs recognize the importance of communication competence, realizing that not only must American-spoken English be practiced, but also that U.S. culture must be emphasized, especially in the classroom setting. However, another concern is a frequent lack of understanding by both ITAs and students within the U.S. cultural or educational system of ITA roles, especially in ITA interactions with students. ITAs come from cultures and educational systems with dissimilar expectations for teaching methods and practices. Clearly, ITAs and U.S. students do not share similar educational experiences. According to Barnhardt (1987), many ITAs assume

god-like attitudes toward their own teaching and are appalled at being asked questions, for in some cultures students do not ask questions or even address the teacher ... foreign-born teaching assistants enter the classroom expecting U.S. students to behave in particular ways; i.e., to attend to the teacher in a quiet respectful manner, to never challenge the teacher's decisions on grading or the truth value of the teacher's statements. In other words, they do not expect students to negotiate with them. (p. 68)

In addition, both ITAs and U.S. students engage in stereotyping, which may become a sensitive topic, and therefore a pitfall that ITAs should avoid. Also, a misinterpretation of student behavior may lead to misunderstandings between ITAs and students. For example, "[An] ITA's misinterpretation of eating in class and tardiness as a sign of disrespect could be disturbing for American students" (Hoekje & Williams, 1992, pp. 252-253).

### ITA and USTA Common Problems

Although the use of an International Teaching Assistant raises issues for instructional communication, the accommodation of any graduate student as an undergraduate instructor also

becomes problematic in collegiate education. Generally, teaching assistants receive little training prior to their teaching assignments. According to Young (1989), most teaching assistants, both ITAs and USTAs, have no teaching experience prior to their first assignments. A Teaching Assistant usually aids a faculty professor who primarily writes the syllabus, selects the textbook, and composes exams. Also, a TA may serve as a laboratory assistant, an assignment grader, or even a test proctor. In some cases, however, a graduate student who is also a doctoral student will be given responsibility for teaching an introductory course.

### Training Programs

Colleges now attempt to address the problem with new approaches in the training of TAs and ITAs for classroom instruction. In 1984, the Iowa State University established a screening program; in the program, ITAs are awarded assistantships. A curriculum then is offered by the departments of English and speech communication to prepare new ITAs for teaching in the classroom and laboratory. Also, when the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor found that some teaching assistants in several departments had no training, the university provided training programs to both new teaching assistants and international teaching assistants on a yearly basis, rather than as a singular training on orientation day (<http://www.umich.edu>).

The program at Rutgers University also trains TAs and ITAs to make eye contact with students and to move around the room as they teach. The program's focus on English communication ability represents a basic tool for teaching and learning, especially in classroom discourse which involves the interaction of students and teachers. Graduate students who teach at Rutgers University trade and share stories about their experiences in teaching undergraduate students; as instructors, the graduate students must involve students in the class discussion. The challenges of undergraduate teaching, posed by the question, "What do you do if the [students] just

sit there and refuse to speak? (permits both U.S. teaching assistants and international teaching assistants to respond. The reply from one U.S. teaching assistant was "I learn their names and call on them; then they have to say something" ( (Bartlett, 2003, p. A10).

At Louisiana State University, the Spoken English Program trains and evaluates all international teaching assistants. The program assesses ITAs for Spoken English competency, especially in their respective disciplines. ITAs who do not pass the test must enroll in a semester-long course required by the English Department. A second assessment tests the ITAs( delivery during an English language lecture. If ITAs pass the test, they then attend a three-hour workshop which trains attendees on U.S. classroom culture. After the training course, ITAs are evaluated by undergraduate students who are invited to the classroom in order to assess the ITAs' performance. The focus is on the Spoken English lecture (Louisiana State University, English Department).

### Intercultural Communication

The term culture may be defined as a label for the recognized and collective life experiences of racial groups, as well as social groups with discernible life patterns such as gender or sexual orientation (Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998). Hall introduced the term intercultural communication in his 1959 book, *Silent Language*. According to Hall (1990), "culture is a technical term used by anthropologists to refer to a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information developed by human beings, which differentiates them from other life forms" (p. 183). Gudykunst and Kim (1984) defined culture as a theory "for interpreting the world and knowing how to behave" (p. 13). Keesing (1974) defined culture "as a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles, and varying between individuals in its specificities" (p. 89). From all these definitions, culture may be viewed as part of an intercultural communication process. Intercultural communication reflects communication between two individuals from two



different cultures through an exchange of interacting, sharing, and interpreting information. The best outcome for intercultural communication may be when people encounter cultural differences between one another and interact favorably despite these differences.

Chen and Starosta (1998) defined intercultural communication as "the communication between people from two different cultures" (p. 28). One consistent factor that distinguishes intercultural communication from other forms or types of communication is the relatively high degree of difference in the cultural and experiential backgrounds of individuals. Kim (2001) explained that intercultural communication employs

the concept of (stranger( to integrate various types of intercultural situations into a continuum of interculturalness, with differing degrees of cultural difference, unfamiliarity, and psychological distance involved in specific communication encounters. (p. 140)

Condon and Yousef (1975) asserted that we "cannot separate culture from communication, for as soon as we start to talk about one we are almost inevitably talking about the other too" (p. 34). Thus, intercultural communication includes cultural communication, which focuses on understanding communication within a particular culture. Hall (1976) identified two dimensions of culture that influence intercultural communication: individualism-collectivism and high and low context. These were factors that varied across cultures.

#### Individualism-Collectivism

In individualistic cultures, individuals focus on personal self and goals. Persons in the individualistic cultures emphasize a need for privacy, voice personal opinions, and are accustomed to freedom in speech through verbal self-expression. In collectivistic cultures, however, the focus rests on group goals and group harmony. Persons in these cultures emphasize community, shared interests, and maintaining face. Additionally, in collectivistic cultures, "people belong to in-groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty" (p. 419), especially

those groups which are important to all members and those groups for which individuals will make sacrifices (Triandis, 1988). Inversely, Hofstede and Bond (1984) stated that in individualistic cultures, "People are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only" (p. 419).

Andersen (1985) asserted that individualism and collectivism determine how individuals live together—for example, whether they live alone, with family, or in tribes. People in individualistic cultures emphasize their own space or regulated access to privacy. Gudykunst and colleagues (1996) asserted that individualism and collectivism affect multiple aspects of nonverbal communication. As mentioned earlier, individualistic people prefer more space than those in collectivistic cultures, whereas people in collectivistic cultures tend to have close proximity due to an interdependent life style. In addition, Andersen (1988) indicated that people in individualistic cultures are responsible for their own happiness while collectivists focus on group happiness rather than personal happiness. This may lead to persons from an individualistic culture tending to smile more than persons in a collectivist culture (Tomkins, 1984).

#### Low-High Context Cultures

Hall (1976) explained the terms low and high context cultures by noting that "low-context culture occurs when the mass of information is vested in the explicit code" (p. 70). High-context culture occurs when "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, and very little in the coded, explicit, and transmitted part of the message" (Hall, 1976, p. 79). Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) indicated that people in individualistic cultures are likely to represent low-context culture, due to the use of direct communication with a focus on verbal communication. People in collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, are more likely to display a high-context culture by virtue of their use of indirect communication and emphasis on nonverbal communication. Neuliep (1997) further explained high-context cultures:

High-context cultures generally have a restricted code system. A restricted code system relies more on the contextual elements of the communication setting for information than on the actual language code. Within a high-context transaction, the interactant will look to the physical, social, and psychological environment for information. Because interactants in a high-context culture know and understand each other and their appropriate role, words are not necessary to convey meaning. (Neuliep, 1997, p. 435)

As mentioned above, a high-context culture relies more on physical context and has little explicit encoding, whereas a low-context culture focuses more on the meaning of behaviors in the messages and should be explicitly coded (Hall, 1976; Lustig & Koester, 1999). This is because verbal messages in a low-context culture must be clear descriptions with specific meanings. In contrast, a high-context culture tends to emphasize nonverbal meanings. As a result, people from a low-context culture may perceive those from a high-context culture as unattractive, due to the differing emphasis of high-context culture on verbal communication. Generally, people from a low-context culture are perceived as being more talkative than people from a high-context culture, who are less verbally communicative.

Stella Ting-Toomey indicated that in a low-context culture, value is placed on what is said and words are given great meaning. In other words, the interests of individuals are directed toward what is personally best for them, rather than what is best for the entire community or group. Those who value a high-context culture display more concern in saving the faces and images of others. Individuals in this culture show less concern about self image and are far more concerned with enhancement of the group image. Individuals in this culture also place a greater value on interpretation. It is not what is said, but rather the context or the tone and manner in which it was said that is important. From this point of view, the differences between collectivist and individualist cultures and high- and low-context societies are necessary to allow individuals to understand why cultural differences strongly affect communication in the classroom.

## Nonverbal Immediacy

Mehrabian (1969) first introduced the term immediacy cues, which includes eye contact, interpersonal distance, body lean, and body orientation, and defines immediacy as “communicative behaviors which enhance closeness to another” (Mehrabian, 1969, p. 203). According to Mehrabian (1971), nonverbal immediate behaviors are actually abbreviated forms of approach and avoidance. For example, the lifting of a hand to greet someone at a distance is an abbreviated reach to touch, while pushing back in a chair when one wants to end a conversation may be considered an abbreviated movement of departure. Variations of these behaviors create the closeness associated with immediacy and contribute to the verbal messages of the sender. Mehrabian also stated that individuals’ behaviors could contribute to feelings of like or dislike and could make the interactional partner feel either good or bad about self.

Rifkind and Harper (1993) found that nonverbal immediacy behaviors include (a) eye contact, (b) relaxed body posture and positioning, (c) gestures, (d) smiling, (e) facial and vocal expressiveness, (f) appropriate touching, and (g) physical proximity. During a communicative encounter, nonverbal affect was both encoded and decoded within the interaction. Along with the verbal message, receivers based their opinion of the message sender on the basis of these nonverbal cues. Regardless of the verbal message presented, individuals relied heavily on the information sent through nonverbal channels to ensure that the perceived actions matched the words of the message sender, indicating that verbal messages were less important than nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

Mehrabian (1971) stated that individuals could generally establish an impression in terms of the immediacy principle: “People are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer” (p. 1). Behaviors contribute to this feeling of like or dislike; through a series of immediate

behaviors, one is able to make a conversational partner feel either good or bad. Using nonverbal behavior in an immediate manner may ensure the positive effect of a message and establish a positive relationship among communicators.

Mehrabian (1971) indicated that to create a sense of attraction and liking within others, individuals may use nonverbal immediacy. Studies on immediacy found that nonverbal messages may be used strategically for the benefit of both partners during an interaction. As a result, employing nonverbal communication in an immediate manner tends to ensure the positive effect of a message and establish a positive relationship among encounters (Mehrabian, 1971).

Rifkind and Harper (1993) indicated that during a conversation the face, especially around the eyes, communicates the most immediacy. Eye contact and gaze are considered to be affiliative messages that increase liking. Even the positioning of the body when conversing affected immediacy. Also, reducing distance between individuals to achieve opportunities for more direct eye contact increases immediacy. An example that supports this point of view is when an individual stands with arms crossed in front of the chest and leans backwards, which may be interpreted as a lack of care and unresponsiveness; this action depends, however, on the context of the conversation and its interpretation by the individual. Another example is that when an individual increases speaking rate, pitch variation, and vocal expressiveness, the vocal actions convey a higher level of immediacy. Further, when an individual uses a slower rate of speech, speaks in a monotone voice, and pauses numerous times, there is a decrease in the immediacy experience. Rifkind and Harper (1993) indicated that touching behaviors on the hand, forearm, shoulder, and back also increases perceptions of immediacy.

As has been previously noted, using nonverbal immediacy behaviors may have a positive outcome in communication. Many researchers confirm the notion that immediacy behaviors

increase liking in teacher-student relationships in the classroom. According to Imada and Hakel (1997), greater immediacy is attributed to greater liking. In a situation where liking is essential for communication effectiveness or persuasion, the use of nonverbal immediacy may be advantageous for the participant. Researchers noted that those who exhibit immediate behaviors are better liked and seen as more motivated and more competent (Buhr, Clifton, & Pryor, 1994; Mehrabian, 1971). Positive characteristics associated with immediate behavior encourage those around the individual to follow directions. Through a series of immediate behavior actions, one may make a conversational partner experience either positive or negative feelings about self.

Using nonverbal immediacy ensures the positive effect of a message, and thereby establishes a positive relationship between communicators. Although there are certain situations in which nonverbal immediacy may not prove appropriate, the research indicates that high levels of compliance may be achieved through immediacy. This compliance is most beneficial in communicative situations as well. In addition, studies on immediacy found that this nonverbal behavior may be used strategically for the benefit of both partners in a conversation, as well as for others who encountered immediacy.

### Verbal Immediacy

In addition to nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy is also important. Gorham (1988) indicated that using humor or personal examples, getting feedback, or even calling students by name demonstrates verbal immediacy behaviors. Mehrabian (1967) characterized verbal immediacy as stylistic differences in expression from which like-dislike is inferred. Bradac, Bowers, and Courtright (1979) stated that verbal immediacy strongly correlates with positive perceptions that interpret verbal immediacy as a sign of high affect. Furthermore, using reward, expert, or referent power might help to increase immediacy, whereas using coercive or legitimate power may decrease

immediacy. In turn, such applied power influences affective and cognitive learning (Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Payne, 1987).

Christophel (1990) stated that both verbal and nonverbal immediacy relate to student motivation and learning. In the classroom, nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors include eye contact, moving around the classroom, smiling, and body positioning (Andersen, 1979). On the other hand, verbal immediacy behaviors involve the use of humor, calling of student names, the use of personal examples, or even the encouragement of future contact with students (Gorham, 1988). Many studies found that when instructors apply verbal immediacy, students are more likely to continue interaction with the instructors (Gorham, 1988; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Rodriguez, Plax, and Kearney (1996) indicated that teachers who use immediacy tend to encourage students toward appreciation of the learning task, thus enhancing cognitive learning.

In contrast, instructors who use less verbal immediacy are perceived as authoritative and also as less positive in affect. Consequently, the instructors are judged to be less competent communicators (Bradac, Bowers, & Courtright, 1979; Conville, 1975). Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum (1981) concluded that instructors who use verbal immediacy are perceived positively, especially in regard to affective learning and behavioral learning.

Gorham's study in 1988 found several particularly significant verbal immediacy cues, such as (a) using humor, (b) praising student work, (c) actions or comments, and (d) initiating and/or being willing to engage in conversations before, after, or outside of class. Teachers who relate personal experiences to enhance learning state that they ask questions or encourage students to participate, as well as use class references such as our class or what we are doing, thereby aiding students' cognitive and affective learning. Gorham (1988) therefore concluded that the use of verbal

and nonverbal immediacy influences student learning.

### Immediacy and Affective Learning

For many years, teacher immediacy was the focus of a great deal of instructional communication research. In order for teachers to communicate effectively, teachers needed to be aware of nonverbal behaviors. In a classroom, an instructor sometimes encounters more difficulty using nonverbal communication with students, such as tone of voice or eye contact, than with verbal messages. Without student awareness, instructors are oblivious to the effects of personal nonverbal messages-how as instructors, they smile, gesture, or move-which impact nonverbal communication with students.

In addition, the use of immediate behaviors is also examined within the classroom environment. With the ultimate goal of refining and advancing the educational system, communication scholars and educational psychologists come together to more clearly understand the different aspects of the learning process. Students who view their teachers as immediate or close indicate that they enjoy the courses more, feel more comfortable with the material, and intend to pursue the subjects further.

The results of a study conducted by Moore and colleagues (1996) suggested that students rate an instructor more positively as the frequency of the instructor's immediacy behavior increases; the study also determined that instructors of smaller classes are considered more immediate because of the opportunity that the closer proxemics gives instructors to provide more individual attention. With this data, instructors can realistically self-prescribe appropriate behaviors to increase effectiveness, thereby contributing to students' willingness to learn, leading to the desire for continued education.

Affective learning is defined as “the positive value students attach to instructor



communication in the classroom and consists of affect toward the course instructor, affect toward the course content, and affect toward the recommended course behavior” (Myers & Knox, 1999, p. 34).

Chory and McCroskey (1999) found that affective learning motivates students to learn and to employ the knowledge at a later time, even after departing the classroom.

Many researchers indicated that both nonverbal and verbal immediacy and teacher power use are related to affective learning (Andersen, Norton, & Nussbaum, 1981; Christophel, 1990; Gorham, 1988; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Sanders and Wiseman (1990) found that teacher immediacy behavior is more likely related to affective learning for Hispanic students than for African American, Asian, or even Caucasian students. Using humor, asking students about assignments, soliciting viewpoints from students, praising student work, maintaining eye contact, and smiling at students are also related to affective learning (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Chory and McCroskey (1999) concentrated on the concepts of teacher management communication style and affective learning, finding that teachers (as superiors) who use student-centered leadership and decision-making styles produce more students (as subordinates) who are likely to experience affective learning.

#### Immediacy and Cognitive Learning

Webster's dictionary defines cognition as “the act or faculty of apprehending, knowing, or perceiving” (2002, p. 138), and learning as “the act of acquiring knowledge or skill” (2002, p. 409). Therefore, cognitive learning is the act of acquiring knowledge on the act of apprehending, knowing, or perceiving. Witt, Wheelless, and Allen (2004) define cognitive learning as “the recall, comprehension, application, and synthesis of newly acquired information” (p. 189). The cognitive approach recognizes the close relationship between that which is known and that which is to be learned. With that recognition, the cognitive approach proceeds to build on the knowledge base by

helping students to associate new material with that which is familiar. Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) found that immediacy behaviors are associated with cognitive learning across classrooms of different levels. Kelley and Gorham (1988) found that highly immediate teachers are associated with increases in both student motivation to study and cognitive learning. In other words, when immediacy stimulates levels of liking, motivation is the result. Thus, instructors may realistically self-prescribe appropriate behaviors to increase effectiveness, thereby contributing to students' willingness to learn and thus strengthening the desire for continued education.

Kelley and Gorham (1988) also found that immediacy is related to the memory process, especially in regard to information recall. Their study further shows that eye contact and physical immediacy are related to short term recall; the equivalence and interaction of these two immediacy behaviors produces significant results. Moore et al. (1996) indicated that immediacy is positively associated with student information recall. In addition, Sanders and Wiseman (1990) found in a study on immediacy in multicultural classrooms that there is a positive relationship between immediacy and learning for all ethnic groups—Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, and African-American. Sanders and Wiseman applied the Richmond et al. cognitive learning measurement scale, and found the measurement scale is subjective yet appropriate for the study. The researchers' approach assumed that college students are adults and therefore able to accurately estimate the amount of their learning in the class, similar to subjective grades given by their instructors in many classes.

As mentioned above, Sanders and Wiseman (1990) stated that teacher immediacy is related to perceptions of cognitive learning, especially in the following behaviors: encouraging students to talk, using humor, having discussions with students outside the class, praising student work, smiling at students, and not using a dull voice. Researchers noted that Hispanic students tend to show a greater relationship between immediacy behavior and visual-oriented or cognitive learning than do

African-American, Caucasian, and Asian students. However, teacher immediacy is less associated with cognitive learning than with affective learning. In conclusion, the use of immediacy behaviors helps the teacher-student relationship in the classroom, increases motivation to study, and improves cognitive learning.

### Immediacy and Behavioral Learning

Use of verbal and nonverbal immediacy affects not only cognitive and affective learning, but also behavioral learning. Andersen (1979) found that in the classroom, teacher immediacy is associated with perceptions toward instructor, course, and behavioral learning. Moore, Masterson, Christophel, and Shea (1996) also found a relationship between teacher immediacy and behavioral learning. These findings indicate that application of teacher immediacy is important not only because teacher immediacy creates a feeling of closeness to students, but also because teacher immediacy introduces a positive effect to students' learning experiences. For example, if students incorporate positive attitudes, beliefs, and values about the knowledge presented to them, they are more likely to learn, do, or use that knowledge. Sanders and Wiseman (1990) identified behaviors that model behavioral learning: “attempting to use the behaviors/practices, theories recommended in the course and the likelihood of enrolling in a course of related content, schedule permitting” (p. 346). Behavioral learning indicates how students will apply learning in the future when they are no longer in class, such as choosing to enroll in another course in that subject with the same teacher.

In conclusion, the application of immediacy behaviors increases liking in teacher and student relationships in the classroom; increases productivity, and encourages physical, temporal, and psychological closeness between individuals. In addition, immediacy behaviors cause the instructor to be seen as more motivated and more competent, and it creates a pleasant atmosphere. To improve teacher-student relationships in the classroom, teachers may approach students or allow the students

to approach the teacher, in order to encourage improved class discussion, as well as increased communication in the classroom.

### Culture and Immediacy Behavior

Numerous studies focused on teacher immediacy in cross-cultural contexts (McCroskey et al, 1995; Neuliep, 1997; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). As described earlier, culture strongly impacts communication between teacher and students in the classroom. Sanders and Wiseman (1990) found teacher immediacy behaviors allow students to increase their learning (affective, cognitive, and behavioral). Sanders and Wiseman found that using student names and maintaining eye contact with students relates to behavioral learning for Caucasian, African-American, Asian, and Hispanic students.

McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, and Barraclough (1995) compared American, Puerto Rican, Australian, and Finnish teachers in a study. These researchers found that American and Puerto Rican teachers do not differ in the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Finnish teachers are the least likely to use immediate behaviors among the groups studied. Interestingly, Finnish students demonstrate more negative attitudes toward their teachers than do American or Puerto Rican students. McCroskey et al. (1996), exploring immediacy and culture, found that teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors relate positively to cognitive and affective learning in all cultures of the countries in the study-Australia, Finland, Puerto Rico, and U.S.A. Therefore, teacher immediacy behaviors and cognitive learning reflect a positive relationship.

Neuliep (1997), in a comparison of American and Japanese students, concluded that students perceive the immediacy behavior of American teachers to be greater than that of Japanese teachers. Neuliep also found a positive relationship in both American and Japanese students on verbal immediacy and behavioral learning (enrollment in another class with the same teacher, with

an intention to engage in the behavior taught in the class), although this relationship is more significant for the Americans than for the Japanese.

### Sex Differences

Sex differences in nonverbal behaviors have been of interest to scholars for a number of years. Many studies indicated that women are better able to express themselves in emotional and nonverbal communication (Anderson, 1998; Burgoon, Buller, Grandpre, & Kalbfleisch, 1998; Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Hall, 1998). Eagly (1995) asserted that there is a significant sex difference in nonverbal communication and found that women smile more than men, a finding confirmed by both Hall (1998) and Anderson (1998). In a similar study, Regan (1982) corroborated that women smile more than men.

Coates (1996) indicated that women use touch as a sign of caring more than men do; however, impersonal touching may be viewed as a violation of personal space. In addition, women, in comparison with men, tend to avert their initial gaze, strive for more mutual eye contact, and spend more time gazing at men (Bente, Donaghy, & Suwelack, 1998).

Women also talk more than men in relationships (Denton, Burleson, & Sprenkle, 1994; O'Donohue & Crouch, 1996) and use talk to create relationships (Bate 1992). Men, on the other hand, speak the most while attempting to gain status. In general, men like to tell jokes to gain status, because jokes challenge the listeners to top what the speaker is saying. Women, in contrast, tend to focus their stories on other people, which allowed the women to maintain a connection to those with whom the women want to communicate (Denton, Burleson, & Sprenkle, 1994; O'Donohue & Crouch, 1996; Tannen, 1990). Also, men rarely asked questions because they feel as if they might appear to lack self-sufficiency, whereas women ask questions simply to establish connection to others. Finally, men usually initiate conflict, whereas women tended to avoid conflict at all costs,

viewing conflict as a threat to connection.

How much a student chooses to participate in class relates to the sex of both student and teacher, and specifically to a teacher's immediacy (Christensen, Curley, Marquez, & Menzel, 1995). Gorham (1988) found that female teachers use more feedback than male teachers, and they also liked to ask students how they felt about homework or the time line, or solicit their opinions. Female teachers also used touching and smiling more often than male teachers.

Brophy (1985) stated that male and female elementary teachers apply classroom interaction with both male and female students. At the junior high school level, however, male teachers spend more time interacting with male students than with female students, whereas female teachers interact equally with both male and female students (Bellamy, 1994). Omvig (1989) found that high school female teachers use more praise, acceptance, and criticism with male students than with female students. However, Smith (1992) found that both male and female teachers interact more with male students than with female students.

Students' learning outcomes may be influenced by the student's sex and immediacy. Menzel and Carrell (1999) found that with a moderate immediacy level, male students learn more from male instructors, and female students learn more from female instructors. The researchers also found that male students' perceptions of learning tend to increase between low nonverbal immediacy and moderate nonverbal immediacy, but not with high nonverbal immediacy. On the other hand, female students' perceptions of learning continue to increase as perceptions ascend from low to moderate and then to high nonverbal immediacy.

In conclusion, there are sex differences in nonverbal behavior. In particular, women smile and touch more than men do, spend more time gazing at partners, talk more than men do in relationships, and use communication to build and maintain relationships. Also, female teachers use

more feedback than male teachers, and like to ask students how they feel about assignments. The sex of the teacher relates to students' learning because teachers are perceived differently by students through sex preference. In particular, male students perceive that they learn more with male teachers, and female students perceived that they learn more with female teachers.

### Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature relevant to problems of international teaching assistants; intercultural communication; nonverbal and verbal immediacy; immediacy with cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning; and cross-cultural differences in immediacy behaviors. Chapter 3 will present the rationale, research question and hypotheses for the study and Chapter 4 will explain the methodology used to conduct this study. Chapter 5 will report the results, and Chapter 6 will interpret the results, discuss the limitations, and explain the value of this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RATIONALE, RESEARCH QUESTION, AND HYPOTHESES

This chapter explains the rationale for each segment of the research question and hypotheses in this study. The research question and hypotheses focus on the following variables: immediacy (both verbal and nonverbal); cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning; gender differences; and type of teaching assistant. This study sought to determine how immediacy related to students' perceptions of international teaching assistants (ITAs) and United States Teaching Assistants (USTAs), and how students' perceptions of verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors of male and female ITAs and USTAs affected students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning.

The previous chapter addressed the literature underlying intercultural communication and verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, particularly when comparing international teaching assistants with U.S. teaching assistants in the areas of affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning. As described in Chapter 2, U.S. universities offered a large number of teaching assistantships to graduate students, especially international graduate students, which in turn became problematic in higher education with regard to ITA qualification. Studies have identified factors that might pose problems for ITAs as instructors. These factors included

(a) English language skills, (b) a scant understanding of the U.S. culture and students, (c) minimal preparation in the instructional system, and (d) a lack of experience with skill-centered teaching in the classroom (Wilson, 1991).

According to numerous research studies (Andersen, 1988; Bailey, 1982; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Condon & Yousef, 1975; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1990; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Keesing, 1974; Kim, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1999; Neuliep,



1997; Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998; Triandis, 1988), U.S. Teaching Assistants from individualistic cultures tend to use verbally direct communication, because their communicative values encompass openness, self-disclosure, and straightforwardness; thus individualistic cultures tend to induce verbal immediacy in the classroom. In contrast, International Teaching Assistants from collectivistic cultures chose indirect communication (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Thus, collectivists vary from individualists in using verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, due to cultural experience. As a result, a collectivistic culture would apply nonverbal immediacy in the classroom.

In regard to cultural differences, people from a low context culture tend to focus more on direct communication, whereas individuals from a high context culture focus more on indirect communication. Hall (1976) indicated that high context culture occurred "in the physical context or [may be] internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (p. 79). According to Neuliep (1997), research indicated that Japan, a country that represents high-context culture or collectivistic culture, considered words to be unnecessary to convey meaning, whereas other research suggested that a low-context culture or individualistic culture, such as the United States, is more likely to use words to convey ideas, and thus choose to use direct communication (Gudykunst & Nashida, 1994; Hall, 1976).

Additionally, a lack of understanding of the ITA role comes from educational systems and cultures with different expectations for teaching in the classroom settings. In other words, ITAs and students come from different backgrounds in educational experiences. Many ITAs often come from rigid educational systems that expect passive learning on the part of students. For example, ITAs might expect students to attend the class in a quiet respectful manner, never challenge their decisions on grading or their knowledge (Barnhardt, 1987). From these points of view, it would

suggest that ITAs would use less immediacy because he/she probably would stand behind the podium and lecture in front of the class without interruption from students. Therefore, the following research question asks:

Research Question 1: Do International Teaching Assistants use less Nonverbal Immediacy than U.S. Teaching Assistants?

Sex differences should affect communication as well. Many studies have shown that women were more apt to apply nonverbal communication (Anderson, 1998; Burgoon, Buller, Grandpre, & Kalbfleisch, 1998; Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Hall, 1998). Women smiled more frequently than men (Anderson, 1998; Hall, 1998). In addition, women tended to initiate more physical contact through hugging and touching than men (Coats, 1996). Further, Gorham (1988) found that female teachers tended to use verbal feedback more often than male teachers by asking students to share their feelings about class assignments. Gorham (1988) also noted that female teachers tended to touch and smile at students more often than male teachers.

As mentioned above, numerous studies have found that men and women differ in nonverbal and verbal communication. Women tend to use nonverbal communication in more diverse ways than men, and in a myriad of situations. Cooper (1995) stated that immediacy might be indicated in multiple ways, such as "varying voice pitch, loudness, and tempo; smiling; leaning toward a person; face-to-face body position; decreasing physical barrier; [and with] ... gestures" (Cooper, 1995, p. 58). Therefore, the first hypothesis predicts

Hypothesis 1: Female Teaching Assistants will use Nonverbal Immediacy more than Male Teaching Assistants.

In sex differences, women communicate more frequently to build relationships than men, whereas men communicate to gain status. Gorham (1988) indicated that female instructors tend to provide feedback and ask questions of students more than male instructors. Studies by Omvig

(1989) noted that female teachers apply more praise, acceptance, and criticism in communicating with students than male teachers. The following hypothesis is expected:

Hypothesis 2: Female Teaching Assistants will use Verbal Immediacy more than Male Teaching Assistants.

Denton, Burlison, and Sprenkle (1994) indicated that men communicate more by telling jokes or humor to gain status with others, whereas women relate stories to maintain an interactive connection with people. In addition, Gorham and Christophel (1990) found men use more humor than women. Therefore, the next hypothesis expected that:

Hypothesis 3: Male Teaching Assistants will use Humor more than Female Teaching Assistants.

With the ultimate goal of refining and advancing the educational system, both communication scholars and educational psychologists have come together to understand more clearly the different aspects of the learning process. Teachers who had highly immediate behaviors encouraged an increase in students' cognitive learning (Kelly & Gorham, 1988), affective learning, and behavior learning (Andersen, 1979; Richmond et al., 1987). Students of teachers who apply verbal immediacy indicate that as students, they enjoy the course more, feel more comfortable with the material, and intend to pursue the subject further.

Furthermore, application of verbal immediacy in classroom instruction motivated students to learn and ensured that students would be able to use the information later in life (Kelly & Gorham, 1988). Sanders and Wiseman (1990) indicated that using instructional verbal immediacy relates to affective learning, especially with Hispanic students when compared to African American, Asian, and Caucasian students. These researchers also found that if teachers (a) implemented humor, (b) praised students, (c) maintained eye contact, and (d) smiled at students, such communication helped students in affective learning as well.

Richmond, McCroskey, and Payne (1987) indicated that when teachers employ more

nonverbal immediacy in the classroom, students also tend to learn more material, thereby increasing interaction between teachers and students. Plax and colleagues (1986) stated that students' perceptions of nonverbal immediacy positively related to affective learning. Both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors affect students' behavioral learning. Sanders and Wiseman (1990) stated that students who enjoy a particular class were more likely to enroll in courses with similar content and behavior/practice patterns if their schedules permitted. Therefore, based on the above studies, the following hypothesis proposes that:

Hypothesis 4: Students' Perceptions of ITA and USTA Immediacy Behaviors positively relate to Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Student Learning.

Furthermore, Plakans (1997) found that students who held positive attitudes toward ITAs display interest and openness toward other cultures, countries, and intercultural experiences. They reported that ITAs could be effective instructors, and also that students recognize and accept some personal responsibility toward facilitating communication between themselves and ITAs. In contrast, students who form negative attitudes toward International Teaching Assistants frequently represent traditional students who majored in business or agriculture. These traditional students tend to expect a grade of "C" in their courses, have no knowledge of travel outside the United States, and usually learn classroom materials on their own or with classmates. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 predicted

Hypothesis 5: Positive Attitudes about ITAs for Students will correlate with Increased Learning.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

Chapter 3 presented one research question and five hypotheses concerning relationships among U.S. and international teaching assistants and the perception of their students. The purpose of this section is to describe the methods and procedures used to collect the data. Discussion will focus on participants, instruments, and the application of procedures to test the research question and each of the hypotheses in this study.

#### Participants

Chen and Popovich (2002) indicated the sample size should include at least 100 participants in order to make a generalization. In other words, the larger the sample size, the less error is manifest in a study. After pre-testing the measurement of this particular study, 176 students participated in the pilot study; only 67 percent had classroom experience with ITAs and USTAs.

The level of statistical power is defined as "the probability of accepting the alternative hypothesis when the alternative hypothesis is true" (Chen & Popovich, 2002, p. 43). Generally, effect size is imperative in assessing the statistical significance of findings between two variables. Cohen (1988) defined effect size as "the degree to which the phenomenon is present in the population" or "the degree to which the null hypothesis is false" (p. 9-10). In this study, the researcher used a directional (one-tailed) test to determine whether there is a sex difference in the way male and female use verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, as well as use humor. Additionally, the relationship between effect size and power is important; the larger an effect size, the greater power needs to be as well as an effect size and sample size. For a larger an effect size, a smaller sample size is needed to detect it. Therefore, in this study, the effect size is .10 (small) and

power is .55 at .05 level, so the sample that is needed in order to get significant level was 438 participants.

The participants were selected from lower level courses in communication studies. Participants were kept strictly anonymous. Participants were requested to sign the consent form and to answer a survey, referencing either a U.S. or international teaching assistant. Measures in the survey assessed student cognitive, affective, and behavior learning, instructor's verbal and nonverbal immediacy, and students' experiences with the ITA.

A total of 607 respondents participated in this study; the study included 306 male (50.4%) and 300 female students (49.4%), and one participant who did not report sexual gender. There were 462 participants (76.1%) who had experience with ITAs and USTAs, but 145 participants were excluded from the study due to lack of experience with ITAs and USTAs. Similar results from the pilot study found that sophomore students provided the most participation in the study; there were 80 freshmen (17.3%), 186 sophomores (40.2%), 104 juniors (22.5%), and 92 seniors (19.9%). There were 36 engineering participants (7.7%), 222 business participants (48%), 140 art and sciences participants (30.3%), 14 education participants (3%), other majors 49 (10.6%), and 1 participant did not report the academic college. There were 73.3% European Americans, 9.2% African Americans, 3.5% Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, 3.0 Hispanics or with Spanish surnames, and 10.9% others of ethnic background. Not surprisingly, 97.4% of the sample was U.S. citizens. In addition, 32% had at least one experience with ITAs and USTAs, 21.1% had two experiences with ITAs and USTAs, 10.4% had three experiences with ITAs and USTAs, and another group of 10.4% had experienced teaching by ITAs and USTAs more than four times.

## Procedures

Students from several fundamental courses in the communication studies department, such as Small Group Communication, Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, and Business and Professional Communication, were asked to respond to a survey about their ITA or USTA instructors. Additionally, participants were asked to focus on an ITA or USTA instructor with whom they had experience. The survey version (Version I, ITA; Version II, USTA) was randomly assigned when administered. The survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

## Instruments

There were two versions of the questionnaire, with one representing students' perception of ITAs and the other testing for students' perception of USTAs. Students were randomly assigned the questionnaire. Both ITA and USTA questionnaires requested students' background information in order to ascertain data such as (a) the sex of student, (b) year in school, (c) academic college, (d) student's citizenship, and (e) racial background. The second part of the survey asked questions regarding students' experience with their teaching assistants; version I covered experience with ITAs and version II, experience with USTAs. There were two portions of the section: the first indicated general experience with students' teaching assistants and consisted of five items, while the other pertained to a particular teaching assistant with whom the student experienced the class. If the student had no particular teaching assistant to consider, the student could imagine a scenario related to taking a class with a teaching assistant (The limitation of study will explain the rationale).

There were four items in this specific portion. Both ITA and USTA questionnaires applied the same nonverbal and verbal measurement scales and learning measurement scales (affective, behavioral, and cognitive). However, students were requested to focus on a particular experience shared with their teaching assistants.

The last instrument asked students' about their attitudes toward their ITAs. In item #6, the question was asked: "Have you ever had a course or section (discussion, recitation, lab) of a course in which the instructor was an international teaching assistant (ITA) whose first language was not English?" Thus, if students answered NO to this question, the answers would not be applicable in measurement because there was no prior experience with international teaching assistants whose first language was other than English. On the other hand, if the student's answer to item #6 was YES in the questionnaire, this survey of the measurement would prove to be useful because by that acknowledgment, the answers were based on students' experiences with U.S. Teaching Assistants.

### Experiences

Data were gathered using several instruments. A questionnaire regarding international teaching assistants was used in this study (Fox, 1992), as well as a questionnaire about U.S. teaching assistants; these have been developed from an original measurement for test purposes in this study. The original questionnaire, entitled "Questionnaire of Undergraduates Concerning International Teaching Assistants (QUITA)," was developed for research purposes by Fox (1992). First, the survey asked for students' background information. Second, the measurement identified the experiences of undergraduate students in regard to their teaching assistants by asking the students to rate general experiences with their teaching assistants (See Appendices A and B).

### Perceived Nonverbal Immediacy

In general, this research predicted that teaching assistants who engage in nonverbal immediate behaviors with students would be seen in a more positive way than teaching assistants who do not engage in immediacy behaviors. Student perceptions of ITA or USTA nonverbal immediacy were measured with the revised nonverbal immediacy scale (McCroskey, Richmond,



Sallinen, Fayer, & Barraclough, 1995; Richmond, McCroskey, & Johnson, 2003). In addition, the scales have been widely used in recent years; therefore, alpha reliability estimates around .90 should be expected. Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which the ITA or USTA performed each behavior, using a five-point scale ranging from Never = 0 [A] to Very Often = 4 [E]. For Nonverbal Immediacy Scale, the overall mean was 45.95, and the theoretical range for this variable was 9 to 54. In this study, the researcher combined and selected items from both McCroskey and colleagues (1995) and Richmond and colleagues (2003) to measure nonverbal immediacy (See Appendices A or B). The results found the alpha reliability is .87 on Nonverbal Immediacy Measurement Scale.

#### Perceived Verbal Immediacy

As described in Chapter 2, verbal immediacy includes the use of humor, frequent use of student name, encouragement of discussion, sharing of personal examples and a follow-up on student-initiated comments, while encouraging future contact with students. Immediate teachers often encouraged students to appreciate or value the learning task, which in turn, was found to enhance cognitive learning (Rodriquez, Plax & Kearney 1996). Student perceptions of ITA or USTA verbal immediacy were measured by a 20-item verbal immediacy scale (Gorham, 1988). Gorham (1988) found the reliability at .94 for 17 items; the original range of the scale is 20 items with such examples as "refers to class as my class or what I am doing," "ask questions that have specific, correct answers," and "criticizes or points out faults in students' work, actions or comments."

In order to measure reliability of the humor variable in Hypothesis 3, two more items regarding humor were added to the verbal immediacy scale: "use physical or vocal comedy," and "share personal funny anecdote or story" (Gorham & Christophel, 1990, p. 52). These two items

were originally drawn from Gorham and Christophel's research, except that the researcher added the word funny to clarify the item. Thus, 22 items were included in this verbal immediacy measurement. Students were asked to reference their ITA or USTA instructor and to respond to verbal immediacy items using a five-point scale (0 = never [A] to 4=very often [E]). For Verbal Immediacy Scale, the overall mean was 46.80, and the theoretical range for this variable was 12 to 64. The results found the alpha reliability at .90 on Verbal Immediacy Measurement. For Humor Scale, the overall mean was 7.46, and the theoretical range for this variable was 3 to 12, and the alpha reliability is .87 for Humor Measurement Scale.

### Perceived Student Learning

Student perceptions of affective and behavior learning were measured with the affective and behavioral learning scale (McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, & Kearney, 1985), which was drawn from Andersen in 1979. In the affective and behavioral learning scale, McCroskey and his colleagues (1985) found alpha reliability at .95 and .94 respectively for students.

Twenty-four items measure affective and behavioral learning. The semantic differential was used in the scale which assessed participants' responses to "a questionnaire [that] choose[s] between two opposite positions using qualifiers to bridge the distance between the two opposites" (Babbie, 2001, p. 168), such as good/bad, worthless/valuable, fair/unfair, and positive/negative about the attitudes toward the course content, behaviors recommended, and course instructor (Gorham, 1988). Also, the measurement scale measures the likelihood of a student to enroll in another course of related content depending on whether their schedule permits by assessing likely/unlikely, impossible/possible, probably/improbably, and would/would not (Gorham, 1988). For the Affective Learning Scale, the overall mean was 27.31, and the theoretical range for this variable was 12 to 40. For the Behavioral Learning Scale, the overall mean was 32.78, and the theoretical range for this

variable was 12 to 42. The results in this study found the alpha reliabilities for affective and behavioral learning are .96 and .95, respectively.

Because cognitive learning is difficult to operationalize, researchers often use cognitive measures (standardized tests) to measure cognitive learning (Cohen, 1981). Andersen (1979) found that use of a single test grade to measure a cognitive learning variable may be performed too early in the semester, or to establish a relationship between immediacy and performance.

McCroskey and his colleagues (1996) indicated several measurement problems for cognitive learning. The first problem in testing cognitive learning is that researchers found establishing valid measurements to be difficult, even though many studies achieved measurement by using the final grade to indicate learning. Often, the grades have little relationship with information that students learned in a specific class from a specific teacher. McCroskey and his colleagues (1996) stated the following:

Students may know the material when they enroll, they may know so little they cannot catch up with the other students, grades may be based on such irrelevant (to amount learned, that is) matters as class participation, work turned in late, attendance, or attitude. Worse yet, the exams in most classes are prepared and administered by the individual teachers of the classes; people who, for the most part, have little or no training or knowledge about the development of reliable and valid tests. Such tests have no established norms, usually are not based on publicly stated objectives, and are only marginally related to what is taught in the class. (McCroskey et al., 1996, p. 201)

The second problem in testing validity for cognitive learning is the use of standardized tests, because a standardized exam provides no assurance that teachers would teach the materials that are included on the exam. In addition, data collecting was time-consuming, especially for students who participated in the research project (McCroskey et al., 1996). Subsequently, McCroskey and his colleagues (1996) used a self-report measurement to measure students' cognitive learning.

In this study, students' perception of cognitive learning was measured with a 4-item cognitive learning scale. Richmond et al. (1990) found that on items such as, "How much are you learning in the class?" to "How much knowledge/understanding are you gaining in this class?" etc., correlated with at .94. McCroskey et al. (1996) found that reliability of cognitive learning and learning loss scores were about .85 and .88 respectively in a five day period. The scale ranged from [A] 0 = you learned nothing to [E] 4 = you learned more than any other class you have had. The Cognitive Learning Scale, the overall mean was -.58, and the theoretical range for this variable was 2 to 10.

#### Attitude toward ITAs

A scale assessing or measuring attitudes toward ITAs (ATITA) was presented in this study to measure positive or negative attitudes. The original scale development by Fox (1992) displayed twenty-one items. However, the items are not tested the same variable, thus thirteen items were deleted only for the purpose of this study. The delete items, for example, "having an international students as a roommate would be a very difficult situation," "if I had trouble understanding an ITA," "I would talk with him or her about it during office hours," "having a class with an ITA is an opportunity for developing cross-cultural communication skills," "students' attitudes affect their ability to understand ITAs in class," or "I can learn just as well from an ITA as I can from an American TA" (Plakans, 1997, p. 118-119). The research scale contained only eight items with one additional item added in order to test reliability in this measurement and for the purpose of this study; the item added is "International graduate students should not be allowed to teach classes," thus, the total of the scale was nine items (See Appendices A or B). The scale was a 5-point scale ranging from [A] 5 = strongly agree to [E] 1 = strongly disagree (Fox, 1992). This scale was included in all questionnaires, but was analyzed only for participants rating ITAs who actually had

experience with international teaching assistants. In regard to the Attitudes toward ITAs Scale, the overall mean was 27.58 and the theoretical range for this variable was 9 to 45. The result of this study found the alpha reliability to be .83 on the Attitude toward ITAs Measurement.

### Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using MANOVA. Research Question 1, which compared ITAs to USTAs in the use of nonverbal immediacy. Additionally, the MANOVA test used Hypotheses 1 through 3 to measure the differences of males and females in nonverbal immediacy, verbal immediacy, and humor. Humor and nonverbal and verbal immediacy served as dependent variables. The sexual genders of ITAs and USTAs served as independent variables. Alpha for all analyses was set at .05. Hypothesis 4 assessed the effect of immediacy behaviors on student learning, tested by the use of correlation. Finally, Hypothesis 5, which assessed the relationship between students' attitude toward ITAs and student learning, was tested by correlation.

### Pilot Study

The above sections explain the procedures and instruments that were used in conducting this study. Before collecting data, a pilot study was conducted by using college students to test and understand further the possibility of using the methods and instruments. In general, a pilot study helps us to sample the effectiveness of a particular research instrument. In this case, the pilot study helped to develop and test the adequacy of research instruments, assess whether the instruments have useable results, estimate variability in outcomes to help determine sample size, and to further assess whether the technique of this study is effective.

Two hundred and two students from Communication Studies classes at Louisiana State University participated in the study. Participants responded to 95 items of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire for the pilot study comprised of students' demographic information and the Students' Perceptions of ITAs and USTAs Scale. The scale consists of Nonverbal Immediacy Scale; Verbal Immediacy Scale; Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive Learning Scales; and the Students' Attitudes toward ITAs Scale. Reliabilities for all scales varied for each instrument, which was tested in order to adjust and develop the new scales for data collection. The results found that there were 176 participants, inclusive of 78 male and 98 female students who completed the surveys. There were 20 freshmen, 56 sophomores, 54 juniors, and 46 seniors. The ethnic backgrounds of participants were the following for pilot studies: 73.4% European American, 10.4% African American, 1.7% Asian American or Pacific Islander, 1.2% Hispanic, and 13.3% other.

Nonverbal Immediacy was measured with the Nonverbal Immediacy Scale which consisted of ten items (McCroskey et al, 1995). Respondents were asked to report the frequency with which their ITA or USTA instructors performed each immediacy behavior, using a 5-Likert scale from Never to Very often. The nonverbal immediacy scale had an  $M = 31.16$  and  $SD = 5.42$  with an alpha reliability of .69.

Verbal Immediacy was measured with a Verbal Immediacy Scale which consisted of 20 items (Gorham, 1988). Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency in which their ITA or USTA instructors performed each immediacy behavior, using a 5-Likert scale from Never to Very often. The verbal immediacy scale had an item  $M = 56.87$  and  $SD = 12.77$  with an alpha reliability of .88.

The humor variable was measured with a Verbal Immediacy Scale which consisted of four items. Respondents were asked to report the frequency with which their ITA or USTA instructor performed each humor behavior, using a 5-Likert scale from Never to Very often. The humor scale had an  $M = 11.05$  and  $SD = 2.85$  with an alpha reliability of .57. However, after deleting humor

item 4, the alpha reliability increased to .82, which would be used in actual data collection in the study.

Affective and behavioral learning were measured with the Affective and Behavioral Learning Scales. It seemed possible that participants may have been confused by the reverse coding on semantic differentiate scale (Affective and Behavioral Learning Scales). Further, some participants in the pilot study were confused about to whom the questionnaire was referring. Both ITA and USTA questionnaires inquired about students' attitudes toward ITAs, even when students were presented with the USTAs questionnaire.

Respondents were asked to report their level of learning using two different scales (McCroskey et al., 1985). In this study, the researcher used a scale ranging from 0, learned nothing, to 4, learned more than in any other class I've had. The alpha reliability for the pre-test was .84 with a  $M = 62.16$  and  $SD = 13.92$ .

Cognitive learning was measured with the Self-report Cognitive Learning Scale (Richmond et al., 1987) along with a self-report final grade in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to report their learning in response to two questions: "On a scale of 0-4, with 0 meaning you learned nothing and 4 meaning you learned more than in any other class you've had?" and "How much do you think you could have learned in this class?" McCroskey and his colleagues (1996) stated the following as a way to measure students' cognitive learning:

By subtracting the score on the first scale from the score on the second, a variable labeled learning loss was created. This was intended to remove some of the possible bias with regard to estimated learning that could stem from being forced to take a class in disliked subject Y. The first was the raw learning score and the second was the learning loss score. It was presumed that immediacy should be correlated positively with the former and negatively with the latter if immediacy were positively related to cognitive learning. (p. 206)

The scores on learning loss from ITA version were -53, and USTA version -24. Further, because Cognitive Learning Scale was a single-item scale, the reliability could not be tested.

Moreover, the researcher sought to assess students' learning by using course grades and consequently wanted to provide estimates of learning. The results from the course grading found that from the 171 students who reported their course grades, 71 students reported receiving an A; 71 students reported receiving a B; 24 students reported receiving a C; and 5 students reported receiving a D from both ITAs and USTAs classes. From this finding, the researcher could not provide validity in assessment of cognitive learning because the student scores on learning loss from ITAs and USTAs contrasted with the course grades which students received from classes.

The original Attitude toward ITAs measurement did not provide the alpha reliability (Fox, 1992; Plakans, 1997). Due to the lack of reliability in portions of the questionnaires, the researcher revised the measurement in order to measure for reliability and validity. In testing reliability for data collection, the result will come from assessment of students' negative attitudes. The scale consisted of nine items with a scale ranging from Strongly Agree = 1 to Strongly Disagree = 5.

### Conclusion

This chapter explained the rationales and detailed the methods and procedures that were used to test the research question and hypotheses. Chapter 5 will report the results of one research question and five hypotheses, with testing obtained via the aforementioned methods and procedures. The results from the statistical tests will be interpreted in the upcoming chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

The previous chapter identified the methods and procedures used to test the research question and hypotheses in this study. Analyses will involve the sex of ITAs and USTAs and students' experiences with either ITAs or USTAs. In both ITA and USTA questionnaires, students who reported no experiences with ITAs or USTAs were removed from data analysis. The results of the investigation will be reported in this chapter and discussed in the order of the research question and then each hypothesis, inclusive of MANOVAs, the F-test, and correlation tests. Although the pre-test and re-test groups were similar groups in this study, the questionnaire was slightly adjusted in order to measure accurate variables and reliabilities.

#### Research Question 1

Research Question One asked whether ITAs use less Nonverbal Immediacy than USTAs. The entire model was tested with a MANOVA for Research Question One. The results from this analysis revealed that USTAs ( $M = 47.88$ ,  $SD = 9.45$ ) used more Nonverbal Immediacy than ITAs ( $M = 43.96$ ,  $SD = 8.75$ ). The difference was significant with an alpha level of .05, the effect of nonverbal immediacy was statistically significant,  $F(1, 461) = 22.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ .

#### Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed that female teaching assistants would use more nonverbal immediacy than male teaching assistants. The model was tested with MANOVA, the result from this analysis was not significant. The findings found that female teaching assistants ( $M = 46.24$ ,  $SD = 9.39$ ) were no different from male teaching assistants ( $M = 45.64$ ,  $SD = 9.24$ ) in using nonverbal immediacy behaviors, thus the data do not support this claim,  $F(1,461) = .021$ ,  $p > .05$ .

## Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 proposed that female teaching assistants use more verbal immediacy than male teaching assistants. The model was tested with MANOVA, the finding from this analysis was not significant. Female teaching assistants ( $M = 40.23$ ,  $SD = 10.96$ ) were not different from male teaching assistants ( $M = 39.89$ ,  $SD = 11.07$ ) in using verbal immediacy behaviors, thus the data do not support this claim,  $F(1,461) = .24$ ,  $p > .05$ .

## Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 proposed that male teaching assistants use more humor than female teaching assistants. The model was tested with MANOVA. Male teaching assistants ( $M = 7.65$ ,  $SD = 3.14$ ) were different from female teaching assistants ( $M = 7.29$ ,  $SD = 3.14$ ) in using humor. The effect of humor was statistically significant, with an alpha level of .05  $F(1,461) = 4.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Thus, the data was supported this claim.

## Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 claimed that students' perceptions of ITAs and USTAs on immediacy behaviors positively correlate to students' affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning. In testing this hypothesis, a correlation test was used to test students' perceptions on immediacy behaviors in regard to students' learning. The data supports this claim: Across student perceptions and student learning of both ITAs and USTAs, both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors ratings correlated as variables as follows: Nonverbal immediacy behaviors to affective learning correlated,  $r(442) = .47$ ,  $p < .01$ ; verbal immediacy behaviors to affective learning correlated,  $r(442) = .51$ ,  $p < .01$ ; nonverbal immediacy behaviors to behavioral learning correlated,  $r(445) = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ; verbal immediacy behaviors to behavioral learning correlated,  $r(445) = .53$ ,  $p < .01$ ; nonverbal immediacy behaviors to cognitive learning correlated,  $r(445) = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and verbal immediacy

behaviors to cognitive learning correlated,  $r(456) = .15, p < .01$ . However, the results found that students' perception on USTAs' on verbal and nonverbal immediacy were not correlated with cognitive learning; nonverbal immediacy behaviors to cognitive learning were not correlated,  $r(222) = -.001, p > .05$ , and verbal immediacy behaviors to cognitive learning were not correlated,  $r(220) = -.003, p > .05$ .

### Hypothesis 5

The final hypothesis claimed that positive attitudes about international teaching assistants for students would correlate with increased learning. The results were significant with (a) students' attitude toward ITAs correlated to affective learning,  $r(223) = .48, p < .01$ ; (b) students' attitude toward ITAs correlated to behavioral learning,  $r(227) = .43, p < .01$ ; and (c) students' attitude toward ITAs correlated to cognitive learning,  $r(234) = .31, p < .01$ .

### Exploratory Findings

There are several interesting results from this study. In a comparison of means of ITA and USTA groups on nonverbal immediacy, female USTAs ( $M = 48.50, SD = 9.67$ ) used more nonverbal immediacy than female ITAs ( $M = 43.39, SD = 8.24$ ). Also, male USTAs ( $M = 47.35, SD = 9.26$ ) used more nonverbal immediacy than male ITAs ( $M = 44.28, SD = 9.03$ ). Additional results are that in a comparison of ITAs and USTAs groups with verbal immediacy, both male and female USTAs ( $M = 43.45, SD = 10.71$ ;  $M = 43.67, SD = 11.10$  respectively) used more verbal immediacy than both male and female ITAs ( $M = 37.04, SD = 10.55$ ;  $M = 35.83, SD = 9.12$  respectively).

Additionally, the researcher found that in the region of origin, the majority was Asian, with 117 ITAs from Asia, inclusive of China, India, Thailand, Korea, and Japan; the second most represented region of origin was European, with 64 ITAs from the countries of Ukraine, Russia, and

Romania. Students rated the level of the accent of ITAs as being of moderate accent (69 ITAs) and strong accent (93 ITAs). Whereas with USTAs, unsurprisingly, the majority of region of origin came from the Southern US, and the second highest number came from the Northern US; it was also not surprising when students reported 118 USTAs had no accent, with the majority rating the level of the accent of their USTAs and with the second level showing 58 USTAs with a slight accent, 20 USTAs with a moderate accent, 20 USTAs with a strong accent, and 2 USTAs with a very strong accent.

Furthermore, when comparing ITAs and USTAs, the USTA group ( $M = 8.43$ ,  $SD = 3.13$ ) used more humor than the ITA group ( $M = 6.61$ ,  $SD = 2.89$ ). When observed for the three measurements of Nonverbal Immediacy, Verbal Immediacy, and Humor by using a multivariate test, the findings showed that the models were significant for both ITA and USTA groups ( $F[1,461] = 18.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and sex of teaching assistants ( $F[1, 461] = 2.62$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### Summary

The results of the investigation are reported in regard to the research question and each hypothesis is obtained by means of MANOVA, the F-test, and correlation tests. Although the pre-test and re-test groups are similar groups in this study, the questionnaire was slightly adjusted in order to measure accurate variables and reliabilities. In response to the research question as to whether ITAs use less Nonverbal Immediacy than USTAs, the survey showed that USTAs use more Nonverbal Immediacy than ITAs. Hypothesis 1 asserts that female teaching assistants use more nonverbal immediacy than male teaching assistants. The data provide no support for this claim. Hypothesis 2 claims that female teaching assistants use more verbal immediacy than male teaching assistants. Neither does the data support this claim. However, Hypothesis 3 claims male teaching assistants use more humor than female teaching assistants. The data are significant in agreement

with this hypothesis. Hypothesis 4 claims that students' perceptions of ITAs and USTAs on immediacy behaviors positively correlate to students' affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning. The data agree with this hypothesis, with the exception that students' perceptions of USTAs's nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors to cognitive learning are not correlated. Hypothesis 5 claims that positive attitudes about international teaching assistants for students correlate with increased learning. The results significantly agree with this assertion. Therefore, there is no support for female teaching assistants using more verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors than male teaching assistants. However, data provides evidence to show that male teaching assistants use more humor than female teaching assistants, and that perceptions of both ITAs and USTAs on immediacy behaviors positively correlate to students' affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning, yet not for students' perceptions that USTAs' use of verbal and nonverbal immediacy for cognitive learning. In addition, increased learning by students positively affects students' perceptions of international teaching assistants. In summary, increased learning by students will affect their perceptions of ITAs in a more positive manner, but the only support for sex differences in the classroom is that male teaching assistants use more humor than female teaching assistants.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 presented the results of testing the research question and related hypotheses. In this chapter, the results will be discussed regarding the research question and all five hypotheses presented in Chapter 3. Additionally, there will be a discussion of the limitations of this investigation. Finally, this chapter will suggest opportunities for future research.

#### Research Question

A single research question was posed in this dissertation. The tested research question focused on which group of teaching assistants (ITA or USTA) most frequently use nonverbal immediacy. Not only did numerous researchers find that collectivistic cultures emphasize nonverbal communication, but further research suggests that people who come from collectivistic cultures, especially in classroom settings, tend to have rigid perspectives on how students should behave in the classroom during an instructor's lecture. The results were significant, finding that USTAs use more nonverbal immediacy than ITAs. It seems possible that the concept of nonverbal immediacy is more linked to USTAs than ITAs. In regard to cultural differences, people from a low context or individualistic culture tend to emphasize more on verbal communication, whereas individuals from a high context or collectivistic culture focus more on nonverbal communication. According to Neuliep (1997), a high-context culture or collectivistic culture found it unnecessary to focus on words to convey meaning, whereas other research suggested that a low-context culture or individualistic culture, such as the United States, tends to use words to convey ideas (Gudykunst & Nashida, 1994). If an oral participation is sought as an outcome, then verbal immediacy seems to be a viable way to predict that outcome. It may be that personal discomfort causes ITAs to use less nonverbal immediacy in oral presentation. Personal discomfort with the method of communication would impact the manner in which ITAs apply nonverbal immediacy.

Communication unique within each culture, especially the different educational systems between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, may be explained theoretically by the use of two dimensions of cultural variability. Generally in an individualistic culture, for example, there are systematic variations in communication between instructor and student during the class discussion. Thus as students tend to value the freedom to ask and argue with their instructor in order to clarify student understanding of subject knowledge, and to assure that the understanding is correct. Each student may believe that she/he has a right by virtue of self-interest to take precedence over other groups or classmates within the class. Individuals in this culture try to stand out from others because they value freedom, whereas in a collectivistic culture, each student in the class may believe that concern should be focused on classmates or groups within the class. Particularly within the collectivistic culture, individuals avoid taking precedence over their friends. For example, individuals in the collectivistic culture tend to show respect in order to avoid hurting the feelings of others. Additionally, teachers in the collectivistic culture expect the behavior of students in the classroom to be respectful, i.e., students should sit, listen quietly, and not interrupt or challenge the teacher's knowledge during the lecture. Although there are general patterns in individualistic and collectivistic cultures, each country or region manifests in unique ways. Collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize different cultural constructs in multiple ways. Consequently, understanding in communication for any culture may require detailed and specific information of other cultural constructs, even when such constructs are closely associated with their own culture. Therefore, communication dimensions between and within each culture construct may be dissimilar in cultural and pedagogical expectations.

## Hypotheses

A total of five hypotheses were tested in this dissertation. Three of the five hypotheses were supported. In the following paragraphs, each of the five hypotheses will be indicated and results from the statistical analysis will be explained.

### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicted that female TAs use more nonverbal immediacy than male TAs. The result did not support this claim. From the finding, TAs' behavior tended to be a more important determinant of student perceptions than the sex of either ITAs or USTAs. According to collected data, most participants come from individualistic cultures which value the interaction between teacher and students in the classroom. Students prefer competent communication in the behavior of TAs, rather than preferences related to the biological sex of TAs. Further, students may consider ITAs who do not speak English as a first language or USTAs who lack teaching experience as instructors who are less competent in communication.

Numerous studies indicated that women are better able to express themselves in emotional and nonverbal communication (Anderson, 1998; Burgoon, Buller, Grandpre, & Kalbfleisch, 1998; Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Hall, 1998). Yet, the most imperative barriers in many intercultural transactions are language and teaching skills and the most influential opportunities are achieved through differences in nonverbal behaviors. Eagly (1995) asserted that women smile more than men. In addition, Coates (1996) stated that women use touch as a sign of caring more than men do. However, Andersen (2000) stated that misunderstanding or misinterpretation of nonverbal behaviors of individuals who come from different cultures may be the cause of much confusion. Additionally, numerous studies found that if students have a positive attitude or relationship with their instructors, they tend to reciprocate immediate behaviors. These perspectives may be linked to the data analysis



that there was no difference between male and female teaching assistants in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures in using nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

### Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis two predicted that female TAs use more verbal immediacy than male TAs. However, the data failed to confirm that female TAs use more verbal immediacy than male TAs. This interesting result was in opposition to previous research indicating that females are more likely to communicate immediacy verbally than males (Coats, 1996).

Generally, we know that males and females are different in many ways, especially in communication styles. In communication, males and females interpret the meanings of messages differently, depending on the individual culture or background of each individual's native culture. In each culture, there is a different system of meaning in the language used and the words chosen. The multiple systems may be especially confusing for those who come from different cultures, making it more difficult to understand one another. Hall (1976) suggested that the way each person uses a message differs from language to language, which in turn differs from culture to culture when we use verbal communication. According to Gorham (1988), we know that instructors who use more verbal immediacy will be perceived as more immediate than those who use less verbalization, especially on negative messages. In this study, no difference was found between the gender of teacher and the nature of class. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

### Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three proposed that male TAs use more humor than female TAs. In fact, the data did support hypothesis three, proving to be consistent with the research findings of Gorham and Christophel (1990), who found that men were more likely than women to use humor in the classroom.

Generally, humor can be used to reduce tension between people (Winnick, 1976), and to gain liking (Bell & Daly, 1984; Gorham, 1988; & Wanzer, 1995). Gorham (1988) found that using humor in the class appears to be similar to the importance of praising students and engaging in conversation with students before, after, or even outside the class, etc. Gorham and Christophel (1990) found a positive relationship between teachers' use of humor and student learning. Neuliep (1991) found that using humor in the classroom creates an enjoyable learning environment for students. Also, using humor in the classroom helps students to participate in the class more, especially the study by Gorham and Christophel that men tend to use humor more often than women. Therefore, this hypothesis was supported.

#### Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis four claimed that students' perceptions of ITAs and USTAs immediacy behaviors positively correlate to students' learning. From this finding, the result confirmed past research suggesting that immediacy behaviors correlated with students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning (Gorham, 1988). The data confirmed that students' perceptions of both ITAs and USTAs on immediacy behaviors and students' learning were significant at the .01 level, with the single exception of correlation between nonverbal immediacy behaviors and cognitive learning, which was significant at the .05 level. The results indicated that while levels of correlation vary, the relation between ITA and USTA immediacy behaviors and affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning scales are significant and positive for both ITA and USTA groups. Whereas significant and positive correlations are found between immediacy behaviors and students' learning—one significant result should be mentioned. The researcher was curious as to which group had more significant learning. After ITA and USTA groups separately were tested and measured, the result found that in the USTA group, both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behavior is not correlated to cognitive learning. Therefore, hypothesis four is partially supported by the data.

### Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis five predicted that student's positive attitudes about ITAs correlates with increased learning. The findings, significant at the .01 level, show that students' attitudes toward ITAs become more positive in correlation with increased learning of the students. According to Plakans (1997), undergraduate students with generally positive attitudes toward ITAs hold interests and openness toward other countries, cultures, and intercultural experiences. Those students reflecting international openness also believe that ITAs can be effective instructors. Additionally, the students tend to recognize and accept personal responsibility for facilitating communication with the ITAs. Therefore, when students have more positive attitudes about ITAs, students' learning is increased. Hypothesis five is supported by the data.

### Limitations

This dissertation has three main limitations, generalizability, methodology, and power analysis. In regard to generalizability, the finding at Louisiana State University may not correspond to findings in other institutions or regions of the United States. Students' original geographic regions tend to impact students' attitudes, due to the possibility that some regions may be more internationally-minded than other regions. For example, the western region of the United States may be less biased than the southern region due to diversity of population groups. This point of view can lead to different results. For example, if the measurement scales were tested in western regions, students' perceptions toward ITAs may be exceptionally good or over-represented, and vice versa.

Secondly, this study is based on students' perceptions, rather than on observations of actual behaviors. As a result, methodology may have particular limitations in regard to individual perspectives from students or ITAs and students' perceptions toward ITAs may be exceptionally good, or bad ITAs may be over- or under-represented. For example, if students had poor experiences with an ITA as an instructor, then the attitudes of those students may over-represent the

data; whereas, if students had pleasing experiences with ITAs, then the students' attitudes may reflect under-represented data.

Final limitation for this study relates to the testing of sex differences. After interpreting the data, there was no significant sex differences in nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors at power .55. Therefore, it should be increased to power of .70 or .80 which leads to increase the sample size to 800 to 900 participants in order to find significant sex differences between males and females in this particular study.

#### Direction for Future Research

The findings for students' perceptions on immediacy behaviors of International Teaching Assistants at Louisiana State University may be affected by the cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning of the students to some extent. Nevertheless, the findings remain important and sufficient to continue future research of students' learning.

The researcher ascertains that Louisiana State University's English Program actively pursues international teaching assistant requirements, yet not all of students' needs are being met. These in-place programs provide ITAs with spoken English competency by means of a workshop which trains ITAs on U.S. classroom culture. The international teaching assistants must enroll for completion of a semester training course. In addition to this training, the ITAs are provided with an opportunity to explore the demands, needs, and classroom cultures of undergraduate students in regard to student expectations. Additionally, the English Department should consider adding immediacy training programs for ITAs who must know how to use communication strategies to interact with students in the classroom to help student learning.

In the researcher's opinion, the spoken English program may be positively implemented by a standardization of U.S. students' satisfaction with ITAs as their instructors. This may be accomplished through future research concentrating on methodology. Results may be obtained not

only by employing the Likert scale, but by applying open-ended questions to discover additional information on students' needs in regard to ITA instruction, culminating in general satisfaction with the courses and the ITAs as instructors. Since the knowledge of ITA instructors importantly satisfies the requirements for teaching the course, the means of communicating that knowledge effectively becomes necessarily important to the students, the ITAs, and the university.

This study has not tested for the opinions or explanations of international teaching assistants, nor has a detailed explanation of students' perceptions toward ITAs been tested. Further inquiry might investigate both quantitative and qualitative research in order to find more in-depth opinions of ITAs, as well as students. Avenues of exploration might include more descriptive data concerning specific students' experiences with ITAs and USTAs. In the researcher's opinion, future research would benefit by considering both quantitative and qualitative research. More detailed findings, especially in description of student and ITA attitudes, would benefit the research process.

Additionally, future research should focus on individualism and collectivism by an emphasis on comparing the country origin of ITAs. For example, ITAs who come from countries such as Russia, Australia, Europe, and New Zealand tend to become extremely emphatic on issues of personal space and accessibility, as well as aspects of immediacy and the use of space. Conversely, ITAs who come from countries such as Thailand, Hong Kong, India, and China tend to be interdependent in a culture which is reflected by time spent together: by working, playing, living, and sleeping in close proximity to one another. The two cultures that diverge in the classroom between students and the ITA will positively determine individuals' values, life styles, and communication styles. Therefore, it may be that a comparison of ITA origins of country may represent important research showing strong results for future direction.

Additionally, future research should investigate the need for immediacy in learning training because of important aspect in the classroom, especially in instructional communication. Prior to the

university's awarding assistantships to teaching assistants, ITAs and USTAs alike should be trained for use of immediacy behaviors in the classroom as well as communication principles and strategies. Future investigation of effective immediacy behaviors should reap positive benefits for higher education. In particular, research might apply close examination to cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal immediacy. Training program must be considering relevant instructional communication and constructing effective training program for both ITAs and USTAs.

Further, the question remains as to why there appears to be no difference between men and women in the particular on application of verbal and nonverbal immediacy. An explanation as to why various verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors are incorporated in the classroom would be instrumental in future research regarding behavior effects from diverse cultures. Therefore, future research should separate each culture in a focus on female ITAs who use more immediacy behaviors than male ITAs, comparison with female USTAs who use more immediacy behaviors than male USTAs. The researcher suggests that the study should also seek a comparison between individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures to provide guidance toward positive development in higher education.

The final recommendation for future direction is to consider cultural differences on immediacy behaviors, with a special focus on how immediacy behaviors influence ITAs' and USTAs' communication predisposition in the classroom. This could be accomplished by the use of a self-report on the part of ITAs and USTAs in order to measure perceptions of their own teaching immediacy behaviors in a classroom. For instance, USTAs might feel more comfortable in using immediacy behaviors than ITAs. As mentioned in Chapter 2, collectivistic cultures tend to assume an authoritarian approach to teaching, and thus use a great deal of communication in an instructional role. Due to a culture of obviously different experiences in educational systems, the ITAs expect students to be quiet and take notes during lectures. Thus, comfort in the use of high

immediacy behaviors in the classroom might be significantly different between USTAs and ITAs.

### Summary

Graduate school international admissions in the United States have rapidly increased within the past two decades, with an additional increase in the number of international teaching assistants who teach higher education. Not only is there a lack of spoken English skills among ITAs, but there is also little understanding of U.S. culture in the classroom, which impacts students' learning. Therefore, this study explores how undergraduate students' attitudes toward ITAs relate to immediacy behaviors and students' learning. The study also compares male TAs with female TAs in the use of nonverbal immediacy behavior, verbal immediacy behavior, and humor.

Further, the study identifies that USTAs use more nonverbal immediacy behaviors than ITAs. Findings reveal that USTAs interact with students by using nonverbal immediacy behaviors more often than do ITAs in the classroom. Since collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize and value nonverbal behaviors, as opposed to individualistic cultures that emphasize and value verbal communication, the result is not surprising. In addition, ITAs who use English as a second language are more concerned with correctly communicating the information to students, rather than focusing on how to interact with those students while in the classroom.

In the comparison of male TAs with female TAs on using nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors, results show that there are no significant differences between these two groups. The results are surprising to the researcher, however, due to the fact that numerous studies indicated through collected data show that differences between male and female in using verbal and nonverbal communication prevail. However, when comparing male TAs and female TAs in the use of humor in the classroom, results confirmed past research that indicated males tend to use more humor in the classroom than females. Additionally, this study finds that students' perceptions of TAs on immediacy behaviors strongly relate to students' learning. The results suggest that both nonverbal

and verbal immediacy behaviors of ITAs correlate with students' learning, except the USTA behavior, which correlates with cognitive learning.

The final hypothesis finds that students' attitudes toward ITAs reflect a direct relationship to students' learning. The more positive the students' attitudes are toward ITAs, the more affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning increase among the students in the classroom. For example, when a questionnaire item asked whether students would attempt to transfer to a different section of the course if the student got an ITA with a strong accent, almost 40 percent of the participants reported that they would attempt to transfer to a different section. This result echoes the findings of Fox (1992) and Plakans (1997), who noted that undergraduate students complain of not understanding ITAs' spoken English. Particular complaints indicated that students feel that not only are ITAs' mispronunciations difficult to comprehend, but ITA instruction frequently includes cross-cultural misunderstandings. In addition, students averred that some ITAs are unable to clarify, rephrase, or give examples during classroom instruction. Students also indicated that some ITAs lack skills in personal comprehension of spoken English, especially in American idioms and slang.

### Conclusion

Over the past two decades, scholars investigated international teaching assistant problems. Researchers reported that undergraduate students frequently complain that students have difficulty understanding the spoken English of ITAs, and that the cultural and pedagogical expectations of ITAs differ from the American culture. This dissertation examined undergraduate students' attitudes toward ITAs, and concludes that verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors are significantly related to students' learning. Additionally, the results show that male teachers apply more humor than female teachers, which may also indicate that the more immediate teachers use humor and thus affect increased learning.

In the researcher's opinion, diversity in the classroom has the potential to be as educational



an experience as the diversity on campus. Exposure to other cultures tends to be an educationally broadening experience. In this manner, each student is prepared for a world that is religiously, socially, and economically diverse, regardless of one's culture. An effective use for this research would focus on increased competency in spoken English during ITA classroom instruction, as well as heightened awareness of the use of nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom setting with the accompanying benefits.

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APPENDIX A  
SURVEY VERSION I: ITA

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. Please write only on the machine scored answer sheet for your answer. Please Use a #2 pencil. You are to remain anonymous; do not fill in your name. I am interested in your responses whether or not you have had any International Teaching Assistants.

\*\*\*Thank you for your responses. And if you(re interested in and have some suggestions on the subject of international teaching assistants, feel free to contact me at 225-578-6889, or email me at tsaech1@lsu.edu. Again, thank you for your answers.

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### Questionnaire about International Teaching Assistants

#### I. Background Information

1. Your sex: A = male B = female

2. Indicate your year in school

A = Freshman B = Sophomore C = Junior D = Senior E = Other

3. Academic College:

A = Engineering B = Business C = Art and Sciences D = Education E = Other

4. Are you a U.S. citizen? A = yes B = no

5. Your predominant ethnic/racial background:

A = European American  
B = African American  
C = Asian American or Pacific Islander  
D = Hispanic or Spanish surname  
E = Other

6. Have you ever had a course or section (discussion, recitation, lab) of a course in which the instructor was an international teaching assistant (ITA) whose first language was not English?

A = Yes B = No

If yes, please continue to answer all questions below; If no, go on to Section III (#76 to #84)

#### II. Experience with International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)

General experience with ITAs

7. How many courses have you had in which an ITA had some teaching responsibilities?

A = none B = one C = two D = three E = four or more

Before filling out this portion of survey, please think back to your most recent experience with a class taught by an International Teaching Assistant (ITA).

8. Sex of ITA:                                    A = Male                    B = Female

9. Region of origin of an International Teaching Assistant

A=Asian (including China, Korea, Thailand, Japan, & India)

B=European (including Ukraine, Russia, Romania)

C=Canada, Australia, or New Zealand

D=Latin America

E=Other

10. Rate the level of the accent of your International Teaching Assistant

1 = A = Minimal accent(similar to American accent)

2 = B = Slight accent

3 = C = Moderate accent

4 = D = Strong accent

5 = E = Very strong accent (very difficult to understand)

11. What grade did you get from International Teaching Assistant in the class which you are referring

A = A

B = B

C = C

D = D

E = F

12. What course was taught by the ITA

A = Mathematic

B = Science

C = Education

D = Engineering

E = Other

### Nonverbal Immediacy Measurement

Please respond to the statements in terms of how well they apply to the specific ITA that you have experienced. Please use the following scale to respond to each of the statements:

A = Never,    B = Rarely,    C = Occasionally,    D = Often,    E = Very often

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Gestures while talking to the class

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. Leans toward students when talking to them

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. Moves closer to students when talking to them

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. Looks at the class while talking

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. Touches students on the shoulder or arm while talking to them

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. Smiles at the class while talking.

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. Moves around the classroom while teaching

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. Be animated when talking to students

\_\_\_\_\_ 21. Sits or stands close to students while talking to them

\_\_\_\_\_ 22. Has a very relaxed body position while talking to the class

\_\_\_\_\_ 23. Maintains eye contact with students when talking to them

\_\_\_\_\_ 24. Uses his/her hands and arms to gesture while talking to students

Please use the following scale to respond to each of the statements:

A = Never, B = Rarely, C = Occasionally, D = Often, E = Very often

- \_\_\_\_ 25. Smiles at individual students in the class
- \_\_\_\_ 26. Looks directly at students while talking to them
- \_\_\_\_ 27. Uses a variety of vocal expressions when talking to the class

#### Verbal Immediacy Measurement

Please respond to the statements in terms how well they apply to specific ITA that you have experienced. Please use the following scale to respond to each of the statements:

A = Never, B = Rarely, C = Occasionally, D = Often, E = Very often

- \_\_\_\_ 28. Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class.
- \_\_\_\_ 29. Asks questions or encourages students to talk.
- \_\_\_\_ 30. Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan.
- \_\_\_\_ 31. Uses humor in class.
- \_\_\_\_ 32. Addresses students by name.
- \_\_\_\_ 33. Use physical or vocal comedy
- \_\_\_\_ 34. Addresses me by name.
- \_\_\_\_ 35. Gets into conversations with individual students before or after class.
- \_\_\_\_ 36. Has initiated conversations with me before, after or outside of class.
- \_\_\_\_ 37. Shares funny anecdotes or stories
- \_\_\_\_ 38. Refers to class as "my" class or what "I" am doing.
- \_\_\_\_ 39. Refers to class as "our" class or what "we" are doing.
- \_\_\_\_ 40. Provides feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussion, etc.
- \_\_\_\_ 41. Calls on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they want to talk.
- \_\_\_\_ 42. Asks how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topic.
- \_\_\_\_ 43. Invites students to telephone or meet with him/her outside of class if they have questions or want to discuss something.
- \_\_\_\_ 44. Asks questions that have specific, correct answers.
- \_\_\_\_ 45. Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.
- \_\_\_\_ 46. Praises students' work, actions or comments.
- \_\_\_\_ 47. Criticizes or points out faults in students' work, actions or comments.
- \_\_\_\_ 48. Will have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.
- \_\_\_\_ 49. Is addressed by his/her first name by the students.

Affective and Behavioral Learning Scale

Please choose the letter for each item which best represents your feelings with particular the ITA.

My attitude about this course:

	[5]	[4]	[3]	[2]	[1]	
(50) Good	A	B	C	D	E	Bad
(51) Valuable	A	B	C	D	E	Worthless
(52) Fair		A	B	C	D	E Unfair
(53) Positive	A	B	C	D	E	Negative

My attitude about the behaviors recommended in this course:

(54) Good	A	B	C	D	E	Bad
(55) Valuable	A	B	C	D	E	Worthless
(56) Fair		A	B	C	D	E Unfair
(57) Positive	A	B	C	D	E	Negative

My attitude about the instructor of this course:

(58) Good	A	B	C	D	E	Bad
(59) Valuable	A	B	C	D	E	Worthless
(60) Fair		A	B	C	D	E Unfair
(61) Positive	A	B	C	D	E	Negative

My likelihood of actually attempting to engage in the behaviors recommended in this course

(62) Likely	A	B	C	D	E	Unlikely
(63) Possible	A	B	C	D	E	Impossible
(64) Probable	A	B	C	D	E	Improbable
(65) Would	A	B	C	D	E	Would not

My likelihood of actually enrolling in another course of related content, if I had the choice and my schedule permits: (if you are graduating, assume you would still be here.)

(66) Likely	A	B	C	D	E	Unlikely
(67) Possible	A	B	C	D	E	Impossible
(68) Probable	A	B	C	D	E	Improbable
(69) Would	A	B	C	D	E	Would not

The likelihood of my taking another course with the teacher of this course, if I have a choice and my schedule permits: (if you are graduating, assume you would still be here.)

(70) Likely	A	B	C	D	E	Unlikely
(71) Possible	A	B	C	D	E	Impossible
(72) Probable	A	B	C	D	E	Improbable
(73) Would	A	B	C	D	E	Would not

Cognitive Learning Scale

(74) On a scale of 0-4, with 0 meaning you learned nothing and 4 meaning you learned more than in any other class you have had (choose one)

- |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | (B) | (C) | (D) | (E) |
| 0   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   |

(75) How much do you think you could have learned in this class (choose one)

- |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | (B) | (C) | (D) | (E) |
| 0   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   |

Section III: Scale of Preference

Before filling out this portion of survey, please think back to your most recent experience with the class taught by an International Teaching Assistant (ITA), OR IMAGINE it would be if you took a class with an ITA.

Please select the appropriate number in the column on the right to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Some statements are similar, but read and respond to each one as accurately as you can.

Use the following scale:

- |                      |              |               |          |                   |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|----------|-------------------|
| A= Strongly Disagree | B = Disagree | C = Uncertain | D= Agree | E= Strongly Agree |
|                      |              |               | Agree    | Disagree          |

- |  |                   |   |   |   |   |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 76. If I got an ITA with a strong foreign accent, I would try to transfer to a different section of the course.                | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 77. When there are communication problems between students and ITAs, students can do very little to improve the situation.     | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 78. The intercultural communication that occurs in a class with an ITA has little relationship to the "real world."            | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 79. It would be better if ITAs were not allowed to teach at this university.   |                   | A | B | C | D |
| 80. ITAs usually make a less sincere effort to communicate effectively in the classroom.                                       | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 81. Many ITAs have difficulty understanding and answering students' questions.   | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 82. If I could choose the section of a course myself, one of my main criteria would be to get into a section taught by an USTA | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 83. It is not reasonable to expect students to make listening and/or speaking adjustments in order to communicate with ITAs    | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 84. International graduate students should not be allowed to teach classes   | A                 | B | C | D | E |
| 85. Have you ever had a course with an ITA?  | A = Yes    B = No |   |   |   |   |

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY VERSION II: USTA

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. Please write only on the machine scored answer sheet for your answer. Please Use a #2 pencil. You are to remain anonymous; do not fill in your name. I am interested in your responses whether or not you have had any U.S. Teaching Assistants.

In Section III of this questionnaire, which are asked your experienced with an International Teaching Assistants, if you do not have any experiences with them, please imagine one if you took the class with any International Teaching Assistants.

\*\*\*Thank you for your responses. And if you're interested in and have some suggestions on the subject of both international teaching assistants and/or U.S. teaching assistants, feel free to contact me at 225-578-6889, or email me at [tsaech1@lsu.edu](mailto:tsaech1@lsu.edu). Again, thank you for your answers.

### Questionnaire about U.S. Teaching Assistants

#### I. Background Information

1. Your sex    A = Male                    B = Female

2. Indicate your year in school

A = Freshman                    B = Sophomore                    C = Junior                    D = Senior                    E = Other

3. Academic College:

A = Engineering                    B = Business                    C = Art and Sciences                    D = Education

E = Other

4. Are you a U.S. citizen?                    A = Yes                    B = No

5. Your predominant ethnic/racial background:

A = European American

B = African American

C = Asian American or Pacific Islander

D = Hispanic or Spanish surname

E = Other

6. Have you ever had a course or section (discussion, recitation, lab) of a course in which the instructor was an U.S. teaching assistant?

A = Yes                    B = No

If yes, please continue to answer all questions below; if no, go on to Section III (#76 to #85)

#### II. Experience with U.S. Teaching Assistant (USTA)

General experience with USTA

7. How many courses have you had in which an USTA had some teaching responsibilities?

A = none                    B = one                    C = two                    D = three                    E = four or more



Before filling out this portion of survey, please think back to your most recent experience with a class taught by an U.S. Teaching Assistant (USTA).

8. Sex of USTA:            A = Male                            B = Female

9. Region of origin of an U.S. Teaching Assistants

A=Northern US

B=Southern US

C=Eastern US

D=Western US

E=Midwest US

10. Rate the level of the accent of your U.S. Teaching Assistant

1=A=No accent

2=B=Slight accent

3=C=Moderate accent

4=D=Strong accent

5=E=Very strong accent

11. What grade did you get from U.S. Teaching Assistant in the class which you are referring?

A = A

B = B

C = C

D = D

E = F

12. What course was taught by the USTA

A = Mathematic

B = Science

C = Education

D = Engineering

E = Other

#### Nonverbal Immediacy Measurement

Please respond to the statements in terms of how well they apply to the specific USTA that you have experienced with. Please use the following scale to respond to each of the statements:

A = Never,    B = Rarely,    C = Occasionally,    D = Often,    E = Very often

\_\_\_\_ 13. Gestures while talking to the class

\_\_\_\_ 14. Leans toward students when talking to them

\_\_\_\_ 15. Moves closer to students when talking to them

\_\_\_\_ 16. Looks at the class while talking

\_\_\_\_ 17. Touches students on the shoulder or arm while talking to them

\_\_\_\_ 18. Smiles at the class while talking.

\_\_\_\_ 19. Moves around the classroom while teaching

\_\_\_\_ 20. Be animated when talking to students

\_\_\_\_ 21. Sits or stands close to students while talking to them

\_\_\_\_ 22. Has a very relaxed body position while talking to the class

\_\_\_\_ 23. Maintains eye contact with students when talking to them

\_\_\_\_ 24. Uses his/her hands and arms to gesture while talking to students

Please use the following scale to respond to each of the statements:

A = Never, B = Rarely, C = Occasionally, D = Often, E = Very often

- \_\_\_\_ 25. Smiles at individual students in the class
- \_\_\_\_ 26. Looks directly at students while talking to them
- \_\_\_\_ 27. Uses a variety of vocal expressions when talking to the class

#### Verbal Immediacy Measurement

Please respond to the statements in terms how well they apply to specific USTA that you have experienced. Please use the following scale to respond to each of the statements:

A = Never, B = Rarely, C = Occasionally, D = Often, E = Very often

- \_\_\_\_ 28. Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class.
- \_\_\_\_ 29. Asks questions or encourages students to talk.
- \_\_\_\_ 30. Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan.
- \_\_\_\_ 31. Uses humor in class.
- \_\_\_\_ 32. Addresses students by name.
- \_\_\_\_ 33. Use physical or vocal comedy
- \_\_\_\_ 34. Addresses me by name.
- \_\_\_\_ 35. Gets into conversations with individual students before or after class.
- \_\_\_\_ 36. Has initiated conversations with me before, after or outside of class.
- \_\_\_\_ 37. Shares funny anecdotes or stories
- \_\_\_\_ 38. Refers to class as "my" class or what "I" am doing.
- \_\_\_\_ 39. Refers to class as "our" class or what "we" are doing.
- \_\_\_\_ 40. Provides feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussion, etc.
- \_\_\_\_ 41. Calls on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they want to talk.
- \_\_\_\_ 42. Asks how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topic.
- \_\_\_\_ 43. Invites students to telephone or meet with him/her outside of class if they have questions or want to discuss something.
- \_\_\_\_ 44. Asks questions that have specific, correct answers.
- \_\_\_\_ 45. Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.
- \_\_\_\_ 46. Praises students' work, actions or comments.
- \_\_\_\_ 47. Criticizes or points out faults in students' work, actions or comments.
- \_\_\_\_ 48. Will have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.
- \_\_\_\_ 49. Is addressed by his/her first name by the students.

### Affective and Behavioral Learning Scale

Please choose the letter for each item which best represents your feelings with particular the USTA.

My attitude about this course:

	[5]	[4]	[3]	[2]	[1]	
(50) Good	A	B	C	D	E	Bad
(51) Valuable	A	B	C	D	E	Worthless
(52) Fair		A	B	C	D	E      Unfair
(53) Positive	A	B	C	D	E	Negative

My attitude about the behaviors recommended in this course:

(54) Good	A	B	C	D	E	Bad
(55) Valuable	A	B	C	D	E	Worthless
(56) Fair		A	B	C	D	E      Unfair
(57) Positive	A	B	C	D	E	Negative

My attitude about the instructor of this course:

(58) Good	A	B	C	D	E	Bad
(59) Valuable	A	B	C	D	E	Worthless
(60) Fair		A	B	C	D	E      Unfair
(61) Positive	A	B	C	D	E	Negative

My likelihood of actually attempting to engage in the behaviors recommended in this course

(62) Likely	A	B	C	D	E	Unlikely
(63) Possible	A	B	C	D	E	Impossible
(64) Probable	A	B	C	D	E	Improbable
(65) Would	A	B	C	D	E	Would not

My likelihood of actually enrolling in another course of related content, if I had the choice and my schedule permits: (if you are graduating, assume you would still be here.)

(66) Likely	A	B	C	D	E	Unlikely
(67) Possible	A	B	C	D	E	Impossible
(68) Probable	A	B	C	D	E	Improbable
(69) Would	A	B	C	D	E	Would not

The likelihood of my taking another course with the teacher of this course, if I have a choice and my schedule permits: (if you are graduating, assume you would still be here.)

(70) Likely	A	B	C	D	E	Unlikely
(71) Possible	A	B	C	D	E	Impossible
(72) Probable	A	B	C	D	E	Improbable
(73) Would	A	B	C	D	E	Would not

Cognitive Learning Scale

(74) On a scale of 0-4, with 0 meaning you learned nothing and 4 meaning you learned more than in any other class you've had (choose one)

- |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | (B) | (C) | (D) | (E) |
| 0   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   |

(75) How much do you think you could have learned in this class (choose one)

- |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | (B) | (C) | (D) | (E) |
| 0   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   |

Section III: Scale of Preference

Before filling out this portion of survey, please think back to your most recent experience with the class taught by an International Teaching Assistant (ITA), OR IMAGINE it would be if you took a class with an ITA

Please select the appropriate number in the column on the right to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Some statements are similar, but read and respond to each one as accurately as you can. Use the following scale:

A= Strongly Disagree      B = Disagree      C = Uncertain      D= Agree      E= Strongly Agree

	Agree		Disagree		
	A	B	C	D	E
76. If I got an ITA with a strong foreign accent, I would try to transfer to a different section of the course.	A	B	C	D	E
77. When there are communication problems between students and ITAs, students can do very little to improve the situation.	A	B	C	D	E
78. The intercultural communication that occurs in a class with an ITA has little relationship to the real world	A	B	C	D	E
79. It would be better if ITAs were not allowed to teach at this university.	A	B	C	D	E
80. ITAs usually make a less sincere effort to communicate effectively in the classroom.	A	B	C	D	E
81. Many ITAs have difficulty understanding and answering students' questions.	A	B	C	D	E
82. If I could choose the section of a course myself, one of my main criteria would be to get into a section taught by an USTA	A	B	C	D	E
83. It is not reasonable to expect students to make listening and/or speaking adjustments in order to communicate with ITAs	A	B	C	D	E
84. International graduate students should not be allowed to teach classes	A	B	C	D	E
85. Have you ever had a course with an ITA?	A = Yes		B = No		

APPENDIX C  
CONSENT FORM

Consent Form Study

Title: Sex Differences in Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy: Students' Perception of International Teaching Assistants and Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Learning

Performance Site: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Investigator: Tiwa Saechou

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to recognize the amount of experience American Students have with International Teaching Assistants and to examine the students' perceptions of verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors by male and female ITA instructors, and to discover the effects of immediacy on cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning.

Subject Inclusion: Undergraduate students who have experienced with International Teaching Assistants and U.S. Teaching Assistants

Number of Subject: 700

Study Procedures: The subjects will spend approximately 15-20 minutes completing questionnaires, one about experiences with International Teaching Assistants; nonverbal and verbal immediacy; scale of affective and behavioral, and cognitive learning; and finally attitude toward International Teaching Assistants.

Benefits: Subjects will be received extra credits in the study by their instructors

Risk: There will be no risk for the study. Subjects will be kept confidential and no identified

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Signature:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dr. James Honeycutt, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-4172. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

---

Signature of Subject

---

Date

## VITA

Born in Phuket, Thailand, Tiwa Saechou attended an elementary school at Phuket Thai Houa Chinese school, a women's junior high school, and Jugkapong Puwanard High School. As an undergraduate at Ramkhumhaeng University in Bangkok, she took courses in general business and public relations. She was also employed with the modeling agency as a secretary, where she practiced her skills as public relationist too, and graduated in three years in 1994. In 1996, Saechou received a master's degree in communication arts from Sripatum University with a major in public relations. In 1999, she received another master's degree in speech communication at West Texas A&M University at Canyon, Texas, with an honor from Lamda Phi Eta. She also was employed with the University as a part-time instructor before admission to Louisiana State University for a doctoral program in communication studies. Saechou taught public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication in the Communication Studies department. Saechou focused her coursework in communication theory with a particular emphasis on gender and sex differences in communication, intercultural communication, and verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. She will receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the August 2005 Commencement.