

Achievement Emotions as Mediators of Teacher Communication Behavior and Student Participation

—A Model Construction

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Abstract—Communication between teachers and students is the most basic form of classroom teaching in universities. Teacher communication behavior also runs through the whole process of classroom teaching. Effective teacher communication behavior can not only create a good educational atmosphere, but also create a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, thus improving the quality of education. This paper reviews literature about the impact of teacher communication behavior on student participation in classroom based on the perspective of achievement emotions, and constructs a theory model in which achievement emotion is as intermediary. In future studies, if this model is proven to be right, then it will give practical suggestions to class teaching that teachers should make full use of all kinds of communication behaviors to arouse students' positive emotions, so as to promote students classroom participation and achieve good learning results.

Keywords—*teacher communication behavior; teacher immediacy; teacher clarity; teacher communication competence; student participation; achievement emotion*

I. INTRODUCTION

College students' classroom participation is a common concern of educators in recent years. More and more teachers complain that students participation in classroom is not high, that students are unwilling to answer questions, and that they are unwilling to interact with teachers, etc. Of course, the responsibility of low students participatory is not all on students, teachers also have a great responsibility. For example, teachers' use of traditional teaching styles, aggressive language and expression of strong anger will inhibit students participation in classroom. This shows that teachers behavior will affect students participation in classroom. Communication between teachers and students is the most basic form of classroom teaching in universities. Teacher communication behavior also runs through the whole process of classroom teaching. Effective teacher communication behavior can not only create a good educational atmosphere, but also create a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, thus improving the quality of education. This paper mainly studies the relationship between teachers communication behavior and students classroom participation, and explores whether achievement emotions play a mediating role in it.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teacher Communication Behavior

Interpersonal communication is the process of communicating ideas, feelings and exchanging information between people. For education, teachers communication behavior runs through the whole process of education communication. Communication between teachers and students is a simultaneous process of cognitive, emotional and personality communication. Teachers transmit cognitive information, students understand and process meaning on the basis of receiving information, and feedback the results to teachers. Teachers adjust their communication status and prepare for the next communication. Teachers communication behavior includes immediacy (Andersen, 1979)^[1], clarity (Comadena, Hunt, & Simonds, 2007)^[2], and teacher communication competence (Ellis, 2004)^[3].

Teacher immediacy refers to verbal or nonverbal behaviors that attempt to reduce the physical or psychological distance between teachers and students (Christophel & Gorham, 1995)^[4]. Verbal immediacy refers to calling students by name, using personal examples, using humor and asking for students' opinions (Frymier, Shulman, and Houser, 1996)^[5]. Nonverbal immediacy is described as "eye contact, smiling, moving close to students, using vocal variety, and using positive gestures" (Andersen, 1979). Immediacy minimizes the perception of distance and therefore promotes a relational component (Frymier & Houser, 2000)^[6]. Immediacy behaviors may promote stronger relations because they provide social cues which reinforce the speaker to continue talking and stop at an appropriate time. Studies about immediacy in the classroom shows that immediacy can strengthen teacher-student relationship, because people are attracted to people or things they like and value highly, while avoiding people or things they dislike and evaluate negatively (Mehrabian, 1971). Studies have found that teacher immediacy positively affects students' state motivation (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994), cognitive learning (Hinkle, 1998; McCroskey, Richmond, & Bennett, 2006)^[7], recall of information (Kelley & Gorham, 1988), and willingness to talk (Menzel & Carrell, 1999)^[8], which will strengthen the relationship between teachers and students. When students feel more kindness from teachers, they will have a more positive attitude towards the curriculum and

teachers. When teachers are kind, students will be willing to obey and participate in learning better (Burroughs, 2007)[9].

Teacher clarity is defined as the teacher's ability to present information in a way that students understand (Frymier & Weser, 2001), including using examples, descriptions and explanations to help students understand information. Teacher clarity has been shown to have a positive influence on student outcomes (Bush, Kennedy, & Cruickshank, 1977). For example, through teacher observations and report, Hines et al. (1985) found that high teacher clarity is closely related to students' achievement and satisfaction, including using relevant examples in teaching, reviewing course content and teaching in a step-by-step manner. Teacher clarity behaviors that have an impact on students' performance also include pointing out the overall structure of teaching, drawing outlines on the blackboard, using specific examples, repeating difficult points, illustrating practical applications and emphasizing key points (Murray, 1983).

Teacher communication competence derives from the impression of individuals' communication effectiveness and appropriateness (Rubin, 1985; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984), including a perceived ability to encode and decode messages effectively (Monge, Backman, Dillard, & Eisenberg, 1982). When teachers encode messages effectively, by being supportive of student's needs, students report higher levels of emotional engagement and lower levels of boredom, anxiety, and frustration (Skinner, Furrer, Marchland, & Kindermann, 2008). In addition, when teachers can decode all aspects of communicative situations more effectively, including their relationship with students, students will feel happier in class (Glaser-Zikuda & Fuss, 2008)[10]. Teachers who lack communication competence would generally be perceived as poor listeners and would have difficulty, or even unwillingness in, expressing relational and substantive messages to students. McPherson and Bippus (2003) found that students believed teachers used embarrassment as a strategy to gain their compliance and, as a result, affective learning decreased[11]. These studies have shown that teacher communication competence has a potential impact on students' classroom emotional experience.

B. Student Participation

According to the concept of customer participation, student participation refers to the activities and resources provided by the customer in the process of receiving higher education services, including:

mental inputs - for example, students exert mental effort when preparing a class presentation or examination.

physical inputs - for example, students perform physical labour when conducting a chemistry experiment.

emotional inputs - for example, students should respect their teachers and be polite to their teachers and other teaching staff.

Although how student participate in the teaching process positively is a very realistic question which is worth studying, the issue of student participation has not received much attention from the academic community. Through literature

review, the existing researches are mainly focused on the following aspects:

1) Forms of student participation

Kotzé and Plessis (2003) consider student participation includes in-class participation and out of class participation. In-class participation mainly refers to note-taking, participation in class activities, discipline, behaviour to other students and honesty during tests. Out of class participation is divided into individual activities and group-based activities. Individual activities include preparing for lectures, reviewing class notes, asking questions, working on individual assignments, and general behaviour towards lecturers and academic support staff[12]. Dancer and Kamvounias (2005) consider student participation is an active engagement process which can be sorted into five categories: preparation, contribution to discussion, group skills, communication skills, and attendance. Bartley, Dimenäs and Hallnäs (2010) believe that the key words for student participation are negotiation, dialogue, cooperation and personal responsibility.

2) Factors affecting student participation

(1) Class traits - which include class size, students are less likely to be able to "hide", less anxious and more willing to participate in smaller classes (Weaver & Qi, 2005)[13]. Seating arrangement is considered to be a factor, and a U-shaped/circular/semicircular arrangement are more conducive to student participation in which students can see each other and communicate with each other. Counting participation as part of a student's grade, earning extra credit and allowing students to be a part of the participation grading process are helpful in increasing students participation (Fassinger, 2000; Boniecki & Moore, 2003; Zaremba & Dunn, 2004).

(2) Student traits - which include student gender and student age (Fritschner, 2000), students' confidence, self-esteem, communication ability, responsiveness and classroom apprehension (Myers & Rocca, 2001)[14].

(3) Lecturer traits - which include instructor gender, teaching techniques used, the instructor's oral assessment and body languages and the ways in which the professors communicate with students (Fritschner, 2000)[15].

3) How to make students better participate in the teaching process?

Rocca (2009) believes that there are many ways to motivate students to participate actively, such as controlling the class size, dividing the students into groups, placing the student seats in U-shaped or circular, and counting participation as part of a student's grade[16]. In addition, instructors play a key role in motivating students to participate. Instructors should respect students, pay attention to students' views and praise students when appropriate. At the same time, instructors can create supportive climates by knowing students' names (Nunn, 1996; Fritschner, 2000), showing interest and support for students' participation through eye contact and smiles, giving students verbal and nonverbal feedback (Nadler, 1990). Many authors also argue that students need to be socialized (Kelley et al., 1990; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996; Govender, 1998).

C. Achievement Emotion

According to the control-value theory, achievement emotion is defined as an emotion directly related to achievement activities or achievement outcomes. Weiller (1985) believes that achievement emotion is the emotion that students experience in school situations, especially in success or failure situations. Therefore, most of the emotions related to students' learning and achievement can be regarded as achievement emotions. However, not all the emotions in the educational context are achievement emotions and social emotions are frequently experienced in these same settings.

Achievement emotions are classified into activity emotions and outcome emotions according to the object focus. The former refers to the pleasure, boredom and anger that students experience in achievement activities, while the latter refers to the emotions generated by retrospectively or anticipating the outcomes of achievement activities.

Achievement emotions can be divided into class-related achievement emotions and test-related achievement emotions according to the difference of academic situation. Achievement emotions also can be divided into state achievement emotions and trait achievement emotions according to their stability; positive achievement emotions and negative achievement emotions according to valence; achievement emotions-Mathematics, achievement emotions-English, and so on according to subject specificity; self-based achievement emotions and task-based achievement emotions according to concerns; academic achievement emotions and non-academic achievement emotions according to achievement object.

It can be seen that achievement emotion is a complex concept, which has many categories. The existing researches on achievement emotions pay more attention to outcome emotions than activity emotions. There are more studies on negative emotions, but less on positive emotions. This study focuses on the class-related emotions of college students, which can be divided into positive emotions and negative emotions according to their valence.

III. ANALYSES ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Many studies have emphasized that interaction between teachers and students can affect students participation. Student-perceived teacher immediacy has been found to be related to an increased willingness to talk and participate in class (Rocca, 2008). The actions of the teacher are one of the most important factors in promoting participation (Weaver & Qi, 2005). Because immediacy communicates psychological availability and warmth, it seems that students would be more inclined to feel comfortable around an immediate teacher and therefore participate more frequently (Wilson & Locker, 2007)^[17].

Powell & Harville (1990)'s research showed that teacher clarity is the most closely related variable to students' evaluation of courses and teachers. Sidelinger & McCroskey (1997)'s research showed that clarity is an important part of teacher effectiveness. Teacher clarity can promote students'

cognitive learning and form students' positive attitudes towards teachers and textbooks. Chesebro (2003)'s research also showed that teacher clarity significantly affects students' attitudes towards teachers and course.

Because teachers spend a great deal of time communicating, communication competence is a necessity. Passing information to others is a primary purpose for communication, and people who are effective communicators more likely engage more effectively with others. Students struggling in class likely opt to engage with teachers who have the ability to effectively communicate.

Teachers with good communication behavior will be sensitive to students' needs, take their students' perspectives into account, and teacher-student relationships are warm, caring, nurturing, and congenial. So, students are more engaged and enthusiastic about learning.

Thus, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Teachers immediacy (H1a), clarity (H1b), and communication competence (H1c) will positively predict students participation in class.

IV. ANALYSES ON ACHIEVEMENT EMOTIONS' INTERMEDIARY MECHANISM

A. Teacher Communication Behavior and Achievement Emotions

Teachers communication behaviors can meaningfully impact students' emotions in the classroom. Emotional response theory (ERT) helps us understand the impact of instructors' communicative behaviors on students' emotional responses and behaviors (Mottet et al., 2006)^[18]. ERT posits the following: instructor classroom communication influences students' emotional responses, which then lead to specific approach or avoidance behaviors such as cognitive learning, affective learning, and motivation (Horan et al., 2012)^[19].

Given the communication-emotion-learning relationship posited by ERT, students' emotions can be measured alongside influential teacher communicative behaviors in order to ascertain elements of successful learning experiences. Titsworth et al. (2010)^[20] gave examples of the importance of focusing on teacher communication in classrooms, conceptualized emotion in the classroom based on prior research focused on social constructs such as learner empowerment (e.g. Houser & Frymier, 2009) and showed that students' emotional experiences are impacted by teachers' communication competence, immediacy and clarity.

B. Achievement Emotions and Students Participation

One of the main characteristics of emotion is that it has an immediate and direct impact on human behavior. Different emotions are accompanied by different behaviors. For example, fear can lead individuals to stay away from interaction, while anger can lead individuals to adopt hostile attitudes. Social psychologists have shown that positive emotions can reduce psychological distance between oneself and others and promote prosocial behavior. People who experience high levels of positive emotions make positive judgments, have high self-

evaluation, see the bright side of things, and use good words to describe what they do. Students have positive emotions, are more willing to accept the guidance of teachers, and interact with teachers more actively. Thus, achievement will affect student participation in class.

To sum up, we propose hypotheses:

H2: Achievement emotion mediates teachers communication behavior (teacher immediacy, teacher clarity, teacher communication competence) and students participation in class.

V. CONSTRUCTION OF THEORETICAL MODEL

All told, teachers immediacy, clarity, and communication competence will positively predict students participation in class. And achievement emotion mediates teachers communication behavior and students participation in class. For this reason, this paper constructs a theoretical model, see the following figure.

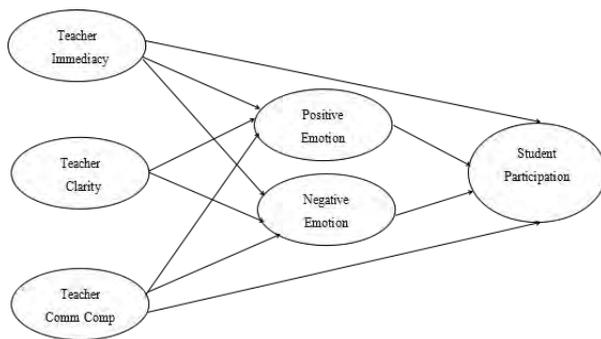


Fig. 1. Theoretical Model
Note: Teacher Comm Comp = Teacher Communication Competence

The contribution of the theoretical model is that it enriches the study on the relationship between teacher communication behavior, student participation in class and achievement emotions. Nevertheless, this is just a theoretical model, in the future it should be proven through an empirical study. If this model is proven to be right, then it will give practical suggestions to class teaching that teachers should make full use of all kinds of communication behaviors to arouse students' positive emotions, so as to promote students classroom participation and achieve good learning results.

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