5-2009

The effect of instructor nonverbal immediacy behaviors and feedback sensitivity on student affective learning outcomes in writing conferences

Laura Martin
University of Texas-Pan American

THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTOR NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS

AND FEEDBACK SENSITIVITY

ON STUDENT AFFECTIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

IN WRITING CONFERENCES

A Thesis

by

LAURA MARTIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2009

Major Subject: Communication

THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTOR NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS

AND FEEDBACK SENSITIVITY

ON STUDENT AFFECTIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

IN WRITING CONFERENCES

A Thesis

By

LAURA MARTIN

Approved as to style and content by:

Dr. Timothy P. Mottet
Chair of Committee

Dr. Jeffrey McQuillen
Committee Member

Dr. Dora E. Saavedra
Committee Member

May 2009

ABSTRACT

Martin, Laura A., <u>The Effect of Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors and</u>

<u>Feedback Sensitivity on Student Affective Learning Outcomes in Writing Conferences.</u>

Master of Arts (MA), May 2009, 90 pp., 4 Tables, References, 79 Titles.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effect of teacher nonverbal immediacy and

verbal feedback sensitivity on affective learning outcomes in one-on-one writing

conferences. The assumption is that if the teacher-student relationship is made stronger

through the use of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors, then verbal feedback can be

more direct and task-oriented, thereby allowing teachers to be more efficient in their

evaluation. The hypotheses presented are that students who experience an immediate

instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for the teacher, more affect

for writing conferences, and more affect for writing in general than students who

experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback

provided. Participants in this survey included 179 high school students. All hypotheses

were supported. Results of the study are discussed. Conclusions, limitations and topics

for further research are addressed.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Bill, and my amazing children, Avery, Jacob and Kendall. Without their patience, support, and most of all love, the completion of this work would not have been possible. I hope that through these efforts I can show my children the value of hard work and the idea that even the largest of tasks can be accomplished if you work one step at a time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most extraordinary thing about a really good teacher is that he or she

transcends accepted educational methods. Such methods are designed to help average

teachers approximate the performance of good teachers. – Margaret Mead

In the wake of the "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2001, the stakes have never

been higher for educators. Teacher jobs and school budgets are increasingly dependent on

student success. Rather than being evaluated on their ability to manage a budget or retain

teachers, school administrators are now being assessed by student performance on state

end-of-the-year testing instruments (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003). This, in turn, is

placing pressure on teachers to perform at highly effective levels (Goldrick, 2002).

At the same time, public schools are functioning with fewer and fewer resources

(Bainbridge, 2005). The student population in many public schools is increasing at a

rapid rate, causing space, equipment, and time to become more limited. With classes of

30 or more students, teachers are forced to spread their time among many; and with an

increased desire for classrooms to be diversified, teachers have to serve the special needs

of students within these large classroom settings. Their lessons must address average

students, gifted students, students with special needs, and students for whom English is a

second language.

Societal expectations are high, differentiation and individualized instruction are imperative, but time and resources are limited. This is a quandary for good educators. New and proven methods of teaching are needed to help meet the needs of effective teachers, especially in the area of writing instruction. Given the lack of writing skills of our present day students (Manzo, 1999), finding solutions in the area of writing instruction is imperative, now more than ever.

<div style="text-align:center">Students Lack Writing Skills</div>

A 1998 writing test given by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) showed horribly low abilities in the writing of American students. In fact, the report showed that "few [students] can write precise, engaging, and coherent prose appropriate to their grade levels" (Manzo, 1999). The results of the test reported that 16 percent of 4th and 8th grade students and 22 percent of 12th grade students have not mastered the most basic of writing skills.

"Glass-half-full" proponents might look at the numbers and comment that 78 percent of 12th graders *have* mastered basic writing skills. However, for many educators, these numbers are depressing. Marilyn Whirry, a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP, commented:

> Writing at the basic level-- even at 12th grade--is not particularly sophisticated and certainly not powerful... The sobering side of the coin is that such a small proportion of students ... can write the effective, fully developed response that is required for proficient writing. (Manzo, 1999, p.2)

In all fairness, however, students' scores on NAEP's writing test have improved. The test has been given twice more – once in 2002 and again in 2007. Since 1998, scores have increased in 28 states (Nation's, 2008). While this is a move in the right direction, it's simply not good enough.

These encouraging results unfortunately contrast with other recent indicators of American students' lack of writing proficiency. A survey of 120 corporations conducted by the College Board in 2003, for instance, concluded that one-third of employees at the nation's top companies wrote poorly, and that businesses were spending billions of dollars on remedial training, even for new hires straight out of college (Dillon, 2008). A 2006 survey of college professors reported that most high school graduates come to college with limited writing skills (Dillon, 2008).

As a result, many universities are adding new writing components to their entrance requirements and are placing a much higher value on the ability to write as a prerequisite for acceptance. Officials at Northwestern University, for example, say that too many students arrive on campus without the ability to write coherently. "We are hoping high schools will pay more attention to writing," said Carol Lunkenheimer, Dean of Undergraduate Admission at Northwestern University (Newbart, 2004, p.1).

It seems obvious that there is a general degradation in the quality of writing instruction nationally; the current system simply isn't working. If teachers ever hope to make improvements in this area of education, they need to figure out new ways to approach current methodologies. The writing needs of students must be addressed.

Feedback on Student Writing

An area that could definitely use refining in both high school and college classrooms is the use of feedback on student writing. Typically, instructor feedback on student essays is delivered in red ink, handwritten in the margins of an essay. One of the biggest problems with this type of feedback is the amount of time it takes out of a teacher's already overloaded schedule. In a history research paper study conducted in 2002, the Concord Review reported that while 95% percent of teachers surveyed felt it was important that high school students be able to write a research term paper, 62% of the same teachers never assign an essay of more than 3,000 words in length. Why? Teachers simply don't have the time to grade and provide feedback on substantial essays of this length (Fitzhugh, 2002). Even though teachers understand that these types of assignments are essential in preparing students for college, they don't have the time to grade them, so they don't assign them.

In most schools, there is no time provided for grading and commenting on major essays. Teachers report that grading usually takes place during their personal time at home (Fitzhugh, 2002). Consider an average teacher in a public school who teaches five classes with approximately 30 students per class. If he/she assigns a 20-page research report to all 150 students, that ends up being over 3,000 pages to read and evaluate. On top of preparation and teaching of classes, there just isn't time for teachers to provide useful feedback on essays of significance.

This type of product feedback is also ineffective for students because it occurs after students have written their papers. Once they've received a grade on the writing, most students don't feel the need to look at comments because revisions will no longer

affect their score. High school students, in particular, are notorious for ignoring product feedback that is delivered in this fashion (Sipple, 2007). One teacher expresses the problem of traditional product feedback:

> A poor grade on the paper is as indelible as the stone hieroglyph and will feed its poison inevitably into the final mathematical reckoning. The only chance to improve the mark is to do better on the next assignment, but many a student finds it difficult to believe that the teacher's comments on this essay will be very relevant to the varied and perplexing errors sure to sabotage her next paper. So instead of taking the paper back to his or her room to chew and digest the teacher's comments, the student, after visually gulping the all-important grade, is all too likely to drop the essay, together with its cogent comments, into the wastebasket, or into a notebook which serves as a wastebasket. (Fassler, 1978, p. 186-187)

Pedagogical research on handwritten product feedback is indecisive (Anderson, Benson & Lynch, 2001). Most researchers agree that handwritten feedback alone – absent of any significant relationship between teacher and student – is ineffective in changing or improving student writing on subsequent assignments (Given & Schallert, 2008).

However, the idea of providing feedback is worthwhile. According to researcher Lynn Goldstein, "Teachers and students agree that despite the time-consuming nature of providing written commentary and revising using this commentary, teacher feedback is both desirable and helpful" (2004). The problem is not in the usefulness or the intent of written feedback; rather the problem seems to be the way in which the feedback is

constructed and delivered. Perhaps this is because hand-written feedback does nothing to feed the teacher-student relationship, which has been proven to influence learning (DeVito, 1986).

<div align="center">Writing Conferences and the Teacher-Student Relationship</div>

One method of more effectively and efficiently delivering feedback that has been gaining attention in English classrooms is writing conferences. One-on-one student conferences provide students with process feedback – feedback that allows them to alter their writing before final assessments are made. These conferences allow teachers the ability to differentiate their instruction based on individual needs of students, and findings indicate that this type of personal feedback on student writing is making a significant difference in student growth in overall writing quality (Davis & Fulton, 1997).

What impacts the effectiveness of writing conferences is the teacher-student relationship. For the past three decades, instructional communication researchers have been examining the impact of the teacher-student relationship on a variety of student outcome variables including learning, compliance, and motivation. Research suggests that the stronger the quality of the teacher-student relationship, the more likely students are to retain information and skills learned in the classroom (Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006). In fact, the better the student's relationship with the teacher, the more likely he is to apply learned skills in the real world (Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006). Unfortunately, the majority of these three decades of instructional communication research have focused on college students with few studies using primary and secondary students as research participants. The question that many instructional communication researchers have been asking is whether the findings generalize to primary and secondary

education students. For example, Frymier and Houser (2000) studied the teacher-student relationship as an interpersonal relationship and found that many of the same relational skills necessary to maintain a friendship were seen as important to students in their relationships with teachers. However, once again, the research was solely conducted with college students as subjects.

Even with the success teachers are finding with the conferencing method of student writing evaluation, there is little research as to *how* to best conduct these conferences. Specifically, does the WAY the message is delivered affect its results? Does the relationship between the teacher and student affect the usefulness of the feedback? Will nonverbal immediacy affect the way the feedback is received? What about the sensitivity of the feedback? How does each of these factors influence the affective learning that takes place as a result of conferencing? Ultimately, how can teachers best deliver feedback in order to improve student success in writing? The purpose of this study is to examine these questions, and more specifically, to focus on how the teacher-student relationship impacts the student's use of feedback in order to achieve higher levels of affective learning.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The core argument that is presented in this thesis is that there is a relevant connection that exists between the teacher-student relationship and student learning outcomes in individual communication educational settings where feedback is required. Within this chapter, the following claims will serve as a guide for the present argument and will be supported with relevant research literature.

Claim 1: Feedback is a necessary but problematic tool in the teaching of writing.

Claim 2: One-on-one teaching conferences are an effective form of providing feedback because they feed the relational aspect of teaching.

Claim 3: Because nonverbal immediacy behaviors improve the teacher-student relationship in traditional classroom settings, they can also be expected to improve the teacher-student relationship in writing conferences.

Claim 4: Communicating direct, task-oriented feedback is an important and effective tool in teaching writing as long as it is a part of a positive teacher-student relationship.

This thesis argues that the teacher-student relationship frames and affects how students perceive and interpret direct feedback ensuring that the feedback is used and learning is enhanced.

The previous chapter revealed the struggles that writing teachers face when providing feedback to their students, and specifically the need for better and more efficient feedback communication practices. Within this chapter an in-depth evaluation of each of these concepts will be reviewed through the existing literature in the field. This review of literature is divided into four different domains and related topics: 1) feedback and writing pedagogy, 2) task and relationship dimensions of teaching, 3) nonverbal immediacy and affective learning, and 4) a rationale for the hypotheses tested.

Feedback and Writing Pedagogy

Claim 1: Feedback is a necessary but problematic tool in the teaching of writing.

Instructional Feedback

Feedback from a teacher is considered one of the most powerful and influential variables that can enhance or affect student learning (Mottet, 2008). In fact, J. A. Hattie (1992) claims that it is "the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement...The simplest prescription for improving education must be dollops of feedback" (p. 2). That said, Hattie and Timperley (2007) also caution that the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differentially effective. In developing a teacher model for feedback, Hattie and Timperley point to particular properties and circumstances that make feedback more effective, including timing and the effects of positive versus negative feedback.

In communication literature, feedback is described as a response to a message that provides information about its correctness, appropriateness or accuracy (Ilgen, Fisher, &

Taylor, 1979). In instructional settings, feedback more specifically refers to messages given by teachers to indicate the appropriateness (or lack thereof) of student behavior or performance (Mottet, 2008).

The research on instructional feedback is diverse. Feedback can be discussed in terms of type – classroom management, interaction feedback, and competency-based feedback (Mottet, 2008). It is also discussed in terms of its characteristics – valence *(positive or negative), timeliness, specificity, frequency, and sensitivity (Mottet, 2008).* For the purposes of the current study, however, the focus will be on the sensitivity of the feedback provided during feedback interventions. Feedback interventions are actions taken by an individual to provide information about task performance.

Normally, the concept of feedback sensitivity describes the sensitivity of the person *receiving* the feedback rather than the person *providing* the feedback. Feedback sensitivity generally refers to the belief that people vary in their sensitivity towards recognizing, processing, and internalizing messages provided to them (Smith & King, 2004). In their work on feedback sensitivity, Edwards and Pledger (1990) developed a scale measuring individual levels of sensitivity. In this scale, four factors were determined to contribute to receiver sensitivity to feedback -- sensitivity to attention, socially desirable feedback, socially undesirable feedback, and anticipation of response.

Utilizing this scale, Edwards and Pledger (1990) discovered a positive relationship between feedback sensitivity and levels of self-monitoring, self-esteem and interaction involvement. They also found a negative relationship between feedback sensitivity and communication apprehension. Highly sensitive individuals engage in more interpretation of feedback messages than do low sensitive individuals. High and medium

sensitives are perceived as attractive and satisfying partners in task-related activities (Edwards & Pledger, 1990). Interestingly enough, however, there is no research on the sensitivity of the feedback *provider* and how this potentially affects the way the feedback is received.

While most of the research agrees that feedback is essential for student learning, there are some discrepancies. On one hand, feedback is considered a "trigger" that can prompt a learner to evaluate new information, compare new information with past experiences, and to form or rebuild new beliefs (Brandl, 1995). The mental processes involved in feedback evaluation are important because they "influence how feedback is perceived and, thereby, whether learning occurs" (Smith & King, 2004).

On the other hand, some researchers maintain that feedback – if focused on more than just task behavior – can adversely affect subsequent task performance (Smith & King, 2004). After performing a meta-analysis of all available feedback research, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that over one-third of all feedback interventions resulted in diminished task performance.

In order to explain when feedback can be most effective, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) developed the Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT). Their assumption was that feedback interventions are for the purpose of improving or correcting a behavior in some fashion, and they had two resulting claims. First, the effectiveness of feedback interventions depends on the nature of the task (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

The second claim made in FIT is that task-focused feedback will result in improved performance. Subsequently, feedback that focuses on "meta-task processes," such as threats or praise to the learner, will actually retard growth (Kluger & DeNisi,

1996). In other words, when feedback is more direct, objective and targeted on the task, learning results; however, if feedback is indirect, subjective or is targeted on feelings and emotions, then learning is diminished. Regardless of whether the relational feedback is perceived as positive or negative, learning is diminished because the learner's focus is diverted away from the task itself (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

The distinction of task feedback vs. meta-task feedback originally described by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) will be redefined for the purposes of this study. To further develop the distinction, these two types of feedback will be identified in terms of their level of *feedback sensitivity*. *Feedback sensitivity* refers to the feedback's level of task or relational information. *High feedback sensitivity* is defined as feedback interventions that are more relational in nature, where the teacher focuses the message on the feelings and emotions of the learner. In sensitive feedback, task-related behavior may only be alluded to or approached in an indirect fashion. This feedback can be either full of praise or riddled with criticism, but it will be considered highly sensitive either way because of the focus on emotions and feelings of the learner rather than on the behavior or actions of the learner.

Low feedback sensitivity is defined as feedback interventions that are more direct in nature and focus specifically and solely on task. These messages make no reference to the learner with regard to the learner's feelings, but are solely directed at the learner's performance in writing an essay.

Unlike the findings of Kluger and DeNisi (1996), it is this study's aim to show that sender feedback sensitivity is irrelevant as long as there is a positive relationship

between the sender and the receiver, in this case the sender being the teacher and the receiver being the student. The premise for this argument will be laid out in detail later in the review of literature.

Feedback as a Tool in Writing Pedagogy

The previous section laid out the relevant research on feedback as an instructional tool. This section focuses on the use of feedback, particularly as it is used in the English classroom.

English teachers are constantly searching for the most effective methods and tools to teach writing to their students. More specifically, teachers are persistently on the lookout for the best ways to respond to students' writing in a way that teaches, reformulates writing, and encourages the student all at the same time. "If there were a Holy Grail in the teaching of composition, it would probably contain the secrets of how to most effectively respond to our students' writing" (Johanson, 1999).

As previously stated, the research regarding effectiveness of feedback on student essays is indecisive at best. Competing claims argue for its usefulness and its lack of effectiveness (Anderson, Benson & Lynch, 2001). Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) and Hillocks (1986) have done extensive reviews of available research regarding instructor feedback in first language classrooms (as cited in Truscott, 1996). They found that grammar correction, in particular, had little or no effect on students' writing abilities. "It made no difference who the students were, how many mistakes were corrected, which mistakes were corrected, how detailed the comments were, or in what form they were presented. The corrections had no effect" (Truscott, 1996, p. 327). In his research on

second language learners, Truscott also agreed with these findings. Grammar correction and feedback on essays had no significant effect on correct use of grammar in subsequent essays (Truscott, 1996).

However, Truscott's research was solely based on *grammar* correction and did not focus on essay feedback of any other kind. In fact, Truscott (1996) himself was purposeful in making this distinction:

> Nor do I generally reject feedback as a teaching method; I will have very little to say about responses to the content, organization, or clarity of a composition, for instance, and I certainly will not suggest that such responses are misguided. (p. 327)

Other researchers, conversely, believe that feedback on student writing – whether it centers on content, organization, clarity, grammar or any other aspect of an essay -- is imperative to the overall learning process. In *Focus on Form*, Doughty and Williams (1998) explained the importance of obvious correction over subliminal correction. In order for students to truly identify, understand, and correct their mistakes, they must be given the opportunity to first *notice* their mistakes (Anderson, Benson & Lynch, 2001). Once they observe their mistakes or understand how they can improve upon their essays, students can attend better to them. Without feedback from the teacher, this part of the learning process is not possible.

Unfortunately, problems surrounding traditional handwritten feedback exist. Many English teachers become discouraged by the number of hours spent on providing effective feedback when they observe the lack of attention to their comments. Teacher Robert Johanson (1999) explains many teachers' sentiments:

I began to realize that the comments and corrections I had so painstakingly

scribbled in the margins were going unheeded. It seemed that no matter

how carefully I had constructed my feedback, there was a major gap of

understanding between what I thought I was saying in my comments and

how they were perceived by my students. (p. 4)

More often than not, students can misinterpret feedback written in the margins of their

papers.

According to Johanson (1999), there are additional problems with handwritten

feedback. He claims that when students read written comments on their corrected papers,

"they have no way of knowing the order in which the comments were made and which

ones the teacher considers particularly important" (p. 4). Comments often have to be

succinct enough to fit in the margins of the paper, and therefore cannot completely

convey the depth of thought intended or necessary for understanding. Without a verbal

component to the feedback, students aren't able to utilize the comments in order to

improve their essays.

Another problem is that handwritten feedback on corrected and graded papers is

considered "product feedback". Product feedback is often considered ineffective because

it occurs after students have written their papers. High school students are notorious for

ignoring product feedback (Sipple, 2007). In the eyes of the student, the grade is already

recorded in the grade book, so why take the time to read the comments? Improving the

current essay won't help their grade any. Once again, further indication that written

feedback often goes unheeded.

So if educators can agree with the research regarding the importance of feedback on student learning in the English classroom, but are troubled by the lack of effectiveness of handwritten feedback, it seems essential to find a form of feedback that does not carry all of these negative drawbacks.

Task and Relationship Dimensions of Teaching

Claim 2: One-on-one teaching conferences are an effective form of providing feedback because they feed the relational aspect of teaching.

Writing Conferences

In the 1970s, a shift occurred in the theory of writing instruction. Teachers began to move away from a focus on the written product to a serious concentration on the process of writing (Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987). With this shift, teachers and professors searched for new ways to connect with their students during the writing process. Originally perceived as a liberal approach to providing feedback, writing conferences began to gain popularity on college campuses (Fassler, 1978). One professor recalls:

> Nine years ago, into the midst of our six-member English department,
> which taught composition with a traditional reader-rhetoric and the usual
> red-ink system of evaluating student themes, arrived a new teacher who
> had informed us he wouldn't be interested in the position unless he could
> be free to teach writing through individual conferences with students. So
> he and his method were installed in our hallways...the conference method

of evaluating student writing has remained a unanimous and, we believe, a uniquely effective aspect of our composition classes. (Fassler, 1978, p. 186)

A writing conference is a teacher-student discussion about aspects of a student's writing. After initially spreading across college campuses, the concept made its way into elementary schools. The writing conference was further developed and expanded by Lucy McCormick Calkins in the first edition of her book, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1986). In this book, she discussed various types of writing conferences, including those that examine content, balance content with form, and ask process and evaluation questions. The purpose of a writing conference, according to Calkins, is that it teaches students to have a dialogue with themselves.

Calkins' belief stems from the fact that writing helps students develop their thinking; it "fastens our thoughts onto paper" (1994, p. 222). For most professional writers, the process of writing involves a dialogue between the writer and the emerging text. "We shift from being writers to being readers of our own drafts" (Calkins, 1994, p. 222). However, most student writers don't yet have this ability. So in order for young writers to learn to interact with their own writing and develop as both writers and readers of their work, instructors must show them how to have these dialogues.

According to Calkins, there are three stages to productive conferences – researching, deciding, and teaching (1994). During the researching phase, teachers ask questions in order to understand the writer and the essay. These questions might be anything from, "Can you tell me about how you wrote this?" to, "What kind of writing are you trying to do?" (Calkins, 1994, p. 226).

After listening to students' responses, a teacher must then decide what aspects of the essay to focus on. This is the decision portion of the conference, which then quickly moves into the teaching phase. Here, Calkins says that it is most important to "teach the writer and not the writing" (1994, p. 228). A teacher's decision about the feedback provided in this phase must focus on what can best help the student as a writer rather than on what will make this particular essay better. "If the piece of writing gets better but the writer has learned nothing that will help him or her another day on another piece, then the conference was a waste of everyone's time" (Calkins, 1994, p. 228).

The only drawback of Calkins' work on writing conferences is that she has focused all of her research and development on elementary classrooms. Teachers in the elementary classrooms have more time to focus on conferencing because they only have one class full of students. By no means is it being implied that teaching elementary school is easier, but it is at least conceivable for an elementary teacher to meet one-on-one with each of her students several times during one marking period.

Middle school and high school teachers, on the other hand, may be working with anywhere from 100 to 170 students on their rosters. The idea of conferencing with each one of these students even once during a grading period is daunting, especially if the conference is supposed to consist of the three phases described by Calkins (1994).

However, college teachers have reported finding the conferencing process to be much more efficient – even with large class sizes. "Simply in terms of quantity, one can give much more feedback per minute orally than if one had to write it out" (Fassler, 1978, p. 187). Beyond that, the teacher can check immediately for comprehension and cut down on wasted time and other distractions that tend to occur while hand grading papers. "If

the acolyte is watching the priestly functions with rapt attention, how can the priest let his mind wander, dash off some muddled pronouncement, or munch peanuts?" (Fassler, 1978, p. 187). Having a student sitting right there as his paper is being evaluated forces the teacher to focus on the essay and nothing else.

The potential effectiveness of writing conferences for middle school and high school aged children cannot be overlooked. An article by Gordon Wells (1990) challenged teachers to examine whether or not they were encouraging literate thinking in their classrooms. He believed that literacy acquisition must be a collaborative process. "Children can learn most effectively through participation in meaningful joint activities in which their performance is assisted and guided by a more competent member of the culture" (as cited in Toner, 1999). Writing conferences are exactly the type of meaningful activity that can help students to think and evaluate their own learning and learning processes.

Writing conferences allow teachers the ability to differentiate their instruction based on individual needs of students. In addition, teachers can convey their comments accurately and in depth; they can convey the proper "hierarchy of errors"; and they can offer positive feedback along with encouraging suggestions without the time constraints of writing comments (Johanson, 1999). Fewer errors in perception occur because students have the opportunity to ask for clarification or further explanation.

Findings indicate that this type of personal feedback on student writing is making a significant difference in student growth in overall writing quality (Davis & Fulton, 1997). One-on-one conversations about writing seem to be more efficient for the teacher and more effective for the students, "who get better feedback through conferences, learn

more from participating in decisions about the composition, and become more comfortable with the writing and revision processes" (Marshall, 1986). One reason these conferences work is because teachers seem to strike a balance between encouraging students to participate more purposefully in the writing process and intervening to encourage growth and overall improvement (McCarthey, 1989).

In light of the pros and cons of utilizing writing conferences in the upper grade levels, a more direct approach to conferencing must be developed. Keeping in mind the time constraints of their schedules, secondary teachers must find a way to conduct writing conferences with each of their students in as efficient manner as possible.

Teaching as a Relational Activity

Another reason that conferences appear to be the answer to feedback on student writing is because they emphasize and enhance the teacher-student relationship. After all, researchers claim that writing is a social activity (Bruffee, 1984; Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987; Scribner & Cole, 1981). Nystrand (1989) agrees, arguing that writing is a socially interactive process between writers and readers. If the process of writing is inherently a social activity as these researchers suggest, then the teaching of the writing process should also involve social interaction.

Similarly, DeVito (1986) acknowledged that teaching is best approached from a relational standpoint. He suggested that "it is useful not only to view teaching as an interpersonal process, but also to explore how teaching follows the life cycle of a personal relationship" (p. 53). This life-cycle referred to by DeVito (1986) moves naturally from "precontact" through "dissolution" just like other interpersonal relationships and similarly includes continual dialogue between both parties.

The requisite skills identified to maintain the teacher-student relationship resemble those of a friendship or other interpersonal relationship. They include the ability to (1) communicate effectively, (2) progress to deeper levels of conversation, (3) manage self-disclosure, (4) compliment, reinforce, and reward, (5) establish, maintain, and relinquish control, (6) deal with conflict, (7) listen, (8) develop a sensitivity to verbal and nonverbal cues, and (9) repair the relationship (Graham, West & Schaller, 1992).

Writing conferences tap into each of these requisite skills. Similar to any relationship, both teachers and students hold expectations about the relationship, establish goals they wish to accomplish through the relationship, and depend on each other to negotiate the relationship itself (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Writing conferences are the perfect setting to further develop and enhance these aspects of the teacher-student relationship. Together, the teacher and the student will work to establish goals and negotiate solutions.

When teaching is seen as a relational activity, it makes sense to assume that more learning will take place as the relationship grows stronger. It can also be surmised that stronger relationships will be further enhanced when encouraging and supportive, one-on-one communication takes place on a consistent basis. The relationship that develops between teachers and students influences learning in a number of ways. When the relationship is positive, students tend to have better attitudes toward the teacher and the subject, which in turn increases cognitive learning (Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971; Ellis, 1999; Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996).

According to Mottet, Richmond and McCroskey (2006), the most effective teachers do more than just *teach* content to increase cognitive learning. More importantly,

expert teachers help students to internalize and value the process of learning itself. In order to do this, teachers must adapt their instruction to the attitudes, beliefs and values of their students. "Master teachers find ways of 'turning students on' to their knowledge. These teachers make knowledge approachable and palatable to students by getting to know their students and then using that knowledge to customize the educational experience" (Mottet, Richmond & McCroskey, 2006, p. 9).

During typical writing conferences, the teacher and the student decide together what improvements should be made in the essay. Both parties become participants in the communication process which increases both parties' investment in the relationship and ultimately in the product (Marshall, 1986). Just as in any relationship, the more investment there is in the relationship and the more open the lines of communication, the more positive outcomes will result.

Nonverbal Immediacy and Affective Learning

Claim 3: Because nonverbal immediacy behaviors improve the teacher-student relationship in traditional classroom settings, they can also be expected to improve the teacher-student relationship in writing conferences.

Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors

Immediacy is a perception of closeness that is enhanced by the use of specific communication behaviors (Mehrabian, 1971). In an instructional context, immediacy consists of communication behaviors that "indicate a teacher's willingness to approach and be approached by students and is influential in reducing the perceived physical or psychological distance between communicators" (Mottet, Richmond & McCroskey,

2006, p.169-170). Many researchers refer to immediacy as one of the most important types of teacher behaviors impacting student learning (Moore, Masterson, Christophel, & Shea, 1996).

Nonverbal immediacy behaviors include the use of varied vocal pitch, volume and rate; smiling; leaning inward; face-to-face body positioning; decreased physical barriers; overall relaxed body movements and positions; spending time with students; and wearing informal but socially appropriate clothing (Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006). The more effectively teachers utilize these nonverbal behaviors in their relationships with students, the closer students will ultimately feel toward them.

Ambady and Rosenthal (1993) purport that teachers who make use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors will have more influence over their students and will have a greater impact on student learning outcomes. They suggest the following:

> Teachers with higher ratings tended to be more nonverbally active and
> expressive. They were more likely to walk around, touch their upper
> torsos, and smile. Less effective teachers were more likely to sit, touch
> their heads, and shake rather than nod their heads. These results suggest
> that teachers with higher ratings showed more nonverbal expressiveness
> and involvement than less effective teachers (p. 436-437).

The combined impact of immediacy behaviors such as a forward body lean, eye contact, smiling, and vocal expressiveness indicate an "approach orientation towards others resulting in perceptions of interpersonal closeness, sensory stimulation, warmth, and friendliness. Immediacy behaviors indicate liking, while nonimmediacy behaviors

reflect disliking" (Mehrabian, 1967, 1968, 1969 taken from Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996 p. 294). Hence, nonverbal immediacy behaviors help improve relationships between teachers and students.

In addition to creating a closer relationship, it is widely believed and substantiated that teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors impact student motivation and affective learning as well as cognitive learning (Andersen, 1979; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994; McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986). In fact, positive immediacy behaviors such as smiles, head nods, and eye contact have been shown to increase learning (Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004) and student information-seeking strategies (Myers & Knox, 2001) while decreasing student apprehension (Ellis, 1995; Frymier, 1993; Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001) and resistance (Kearney & Plax, 1991). This study will focus on the effects of teacher nonverbal immediacy on affective learning within a writing conference setting between teacher and student.

The current body of research regarding the influence of teacher nonverbal immediacy on affective learning lies solely in the study of group communication. There is no research on the impact of teacher nonverbal immediacy in individual communication settings. This study seeks to change that. It would seem logical that if teacher immediacy is effective in group communication situations where one teacher speaks to a group of students, it will be just as influential when used in individual communication settings -- in one-on-one instruction like writing conferences. With an

increase of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors, there will be a natural improvement of the teacher-student relationship, which in turn should increase the amount of affective learning.

Nonverbal immediacy behaviors of importance during a student-teacher writing conference would be decreased physical barriers, eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body positioning. Ivey, Gluckstern and Ivey (1984) identified several nonverbal behaviors they term "attending skills" that help in interpersonal relationships. Philip Morse (1989) claimed that these same attending skills can be utilized just as effectively in the teacher-student relationship and especially during writing conferences. Morse (1989) recommends that teachers do the following during conferencing communication: 1) make "gentle" (p. 2) eye contact to show attention, 2) assume a relaxed body posture with a "slightly forward trunk lean" (p. 2) to express interest, and 3) speak in a normal, friendly tone of voice. In addition, Morse recommends silent listening combined with head nods and gestures to encourage the student to speak openly. While both Ivey et al (1984) and Morse (1989) term these behaviors "attending skills", they are the same nonverbal immediacy behaviors referred to in communication literature…the same nonverbal immediacy behaviors that can ultimately lead to affective learning (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996).

Affective Learning

The affective learning domain focuses on student emotions, feelings and the degrees of student acceptance regarding the teacher, the class or the subject material (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). When teachers instruct in a way that can address,

change or reinforce student attitudes about the knowledge and skills being presented, they are essentially impacting the affective learning domain (Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006).

Affective learning is said to occur when a student exhibits self-motivation, when the student takes ownership of his own learning, and when the student displays an inherent respect or appreciation for the knowledge or skills being acquired (Mottet et al., 2006). Affective learning, however, should not be seen as the goal in and of itself. Affective learning, rather, is a means to a larger end, namely cognitive learning (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996).

Teachers can rely on communication variables like immediacy to increase affective learning, thereby increasing a student's buy-in – either to the teacher-student relationship, the course, or the subject matter. By doing so, there is a greater investment on the part of the student, which will likely increase the students' time spent on course work. Therefore, by focusing on the teacher-student relationship and by addressing students' emotions, values, beliefs and attitudes, a teacher can ultimately influence cognitive learning (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996). Cognitive learning should ultimately be the goal of successful educators, and affective learning is a means to that end.

The first affective learning measure to be used by instructional communication researchers came from the work of Andersen (1979) and McCroskey (1966). Their instrument assessed students' affect toward content, affect toward instructor, and affect

toward behaviors. It also measured the likelihood that students would take another course in this subject, take another course by this instructor, or would use the behaviors learned in this class (Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006).

Later, McCroskey (1994) revised the original instrument to be more inclusive of courses that do not actually address educational "behaviors". For the purposes of this study, the instrument has been revised further to address the specific instructional setting of writing conferences. Following the same pattern of McCroskey's work (1994), this study assesses students' affect toward content -- students would willingly choose to attend another writing conference in general; affect toward instructor -- students would choose to attend another writing conference with this teacher; and affect toward behaviors -- students willingly utilize the information gained during the conference to make changes to the discussed piece and in future works.

Rationale for Hypotheses

Claim 4: Communicating direct, task-oriented feedback is an important and effective tool in teaching writing as long as it is a part of a positive teacher-student relationship.

So far, this study has set forth several claims with support from prior research. First of all, feedback is a necessary but problematic tool in the teaching of writing. As previously stated, the focus of this study is on the sensitivity of the provider's feedback. While researchers have claimed that feedback is more effective when it is task-focused (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), it is this study's aim to show that sender feedback sensitivity is irrelevant as long as there is a positive relationship between the teacher and the student.

Based on the other claims set forth in this study, it is understood that writing conferences are an effective way to provide feedback because they feed into the relational aspects of teaching. Since teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors influence the teacher-student relationship (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996), teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors influence affective learning (Andersen, 1979; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994; McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986), and a constructive teacher-student relationship influences affective learning (Graham, West & Schaller, 1992) , then it seems natural to assume that teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors used in a writing conference will increase the teacher-student relationship and thereby influence affective learning, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback message. The present argument is that nonverbal immediacy behaviors will have a greater impact on affective learning than the sensitivity of the feedback provided. While the case could be made that the exact opposite could also be true, the fact still remains that there is no available research on the impact feedback sensitivity has on affective learning. So there is no way to know at this point. One of the purposes for this research is to provide some clarity and direction on this issue.

The present research maintains that the closer the relationship between the teacher and student through the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors, the more direct the teacher can be without worrying about the sensitivity of the feedback provided. Utilizing nonverbal immediacy behaviors will help increase the teacher-student relationship, making it possible to deliver direct, task feedback messages that will increase affective learning.

Studying how teacher nonverbal immediacy influences conferencing situations will greatly benefit English teachers. If teacher immediacy has a positive impact on affective learning, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback, then teachers can be instructed on how to deliver effective feedback within limited time constraints. The feedback can be more direct (albeit immediate) without the worry that it will be taken in a negative light or disregarded. This discovery will help teachers individualize their instruction to produce desired results given the current limits of their time – desired results being a positive feeling about the teacher, a positive feeling about conferencing in general, and a willingness to use the information gleaned during a conference in future writing tasks. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been tested:

H1: Students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for the teacher than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference.

H2: Students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for the writing conferences than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference.

H3: Students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for writing in general than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the methodology that was used to test the hypotheses presented in this thesis. Specifically, this chapter reviews participants, procedures, and survey instrumentation. For a view of all descriptive statistics for the measurements, please refer to Table 1 at the end of this chapter.

Participants

The convenience sample for this study included 179 students enrolled in English Language Arts classes at a public charter school in South Texas. In terms of class ranking, 45% ($n = 81$) of the students were classified as sophomores, 33% ($n = 59$) as juniors, and 22% ($n = 39$) as seniors. Because the school serves a predominantly Hispanic population, 96% ($n = 172$) of the participants were Hispanic. In terms of student sex, 41% ($n = 73$) were male and 59% ($n = 106$) were female. Participants did not receive any reward for their participation.

Procedures

Upon receiving approval from the internal review board (IRB#2008-088-09 -794), students were asked to volunteer as survey participants. After explaining the study and ensuing procedures, willing participants were given participant assent forms to sign and parental consent forms to be signed by their parents. With the permission of the Principal

and each English instructor, students were surveyed during the 8th week of the semester. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions.

Students were told that they were about to have a hypothetical one-on-one conference with a teacher similar to conferences they have had in their current English classes. Each participant then randomly received one of the conferencing scenarios. Students were asked to read the conferencing scenario, imagining that it was a scene from one of their own writing conferences with a teacher regarding an essay they had written. After reading the scenario, participants completed the survey containing measures of the dependent variables, brief demographic information, and a writing apprehension questionnaire used as a control variable. Participants were assured anonymity and were clearly informed that the survey would not affect their course grade and they could choose not to participate in the study.

Research Design

Using a 2X2 factorial design, participants were exposed to one of four scenarios. The first independent variable was teacher nonverbal immediacy, operationalized as immediate and non-immediate. To create the immediate scenarios, the teacher was described as sitting in a chair directly next to the student, smiling frequently, sitting in a relaxed position leaning forward, maintaining eye contact with the student, using a soft tone of voice, and gesturing with her hands while asking questions. In the non-immediate scenarios, the teacher was described as sitting at her desk with the student on the other side, not smiling, appearing stiff and leaning back in her chair, providing little eye contact and maintaining a louder, less pleasant tone of voice.

The second independent variable was teacher feedback sensitivity. Utilizing the research of Kluger and DeNisi (1996), sensitivity of teacher feedback was operationalized by high and low levels of meta-task language present in the feedback. For high sensitive feedback, the responses focused more on the student and the student's feelings. In the low sensitivity scenarios, the feedback focused on the writing task, aspects of the writing that could be improved upon, and specific suggestions as to how to proceed with revisions. In the low sensitivity cases, little reference was made to the student's feelings about his/her writing.

In an earlier study by Thweatt and McCroskey (1998), four scenarios were developed to study the impact of teacher immediacy and misbehaviors on teacher credibility. These scenarios were used and modified in the development of the scenarios in this study. The words used in the scenarios were patterned after sample writing conferences conducted by English teachers at the school where the participants were from and through recommendations made by Lucy Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1990). The scenarios are reported in Appendix C.

<div align="center">Manipulation Checks</div>

A convenience sample of 80 students was used to perform a manipulation check on the two independent variables. This sample consisted of male and female students enrolled in a 9th grade writer's workshop course at a public charter school in South Texas. This sample included children of all ability levels.

Nonverbal Immediacy Independent Variable

In order to assess the manipulation of the nonverbal immediacy variable, 39 students were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (immediate and non-

immediate) and read through given scenarios. After reading the scenario, students were asked to complete a brief nonverbal immediacy measure patterned after Anderson's (1979) Generalized Immediacy Scale. See Appendix D. The results of this manipulation yielded a mean of 16.48 (SD = 8.06) and a Cronbach alpha of .93. Students reading the immediate scenarios (M = 23.4, SD = 4.44) perceived significantly more nonverbal immediacy behavior than students reading the non- immediate scenarios (M = 9.55, SD = 3.55), $F(1,39)$ = 118.77, p < .01. The results indicate that the immediate and non-immediate conditions were manipulated correctly, with 76% of the variation in the nonverbal immediacy manipulation check variable being attributed to the immediate and non-immediate conditions.

Feedback Sensitivity Independent Variable

In order to assess the manipulation of the feedback sensitivity variable, 39 students were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (high sensitivity and low sensitivity) and read through given scenarios. After reading the scenario, students were asked to complete a brief feedback sensitivity instrument. This instrument, designed using the same structure as the immediacy manipulation check, asked participants to decide whether the comments in the scenario were: focused on student's feelings or not, direct or indirect, focused on improving the essay or not, and sensitive or insensitive. See Appendix E. The results of this manipulation yielded a mean of 15.825 (SD = 7.27) and a Cronbach alpha of .92. Students reading the high sensitivity scenarios (M = 20.85, SD = 3.5) perceived significantly more verbal sensitivity than students reading the low sensitivity scenarios (M = 10.80, SD = 6.57), $F(1,39)$ = 36.42, p < .01. The results indicate that the high and low verbal feedback sensitivity conditions were manipulated

correctly with 49% of variation in the verbal manipulation check variable being attributed to the high and low feedback sensitivity conditions.

<div align="center">Survey Instrumentation</div>

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was affective learning, which was divided into three areas of focus: student affect for the instructor, student affect for writing conferences, and student affect for writing in general. To measure each area of affective learning, students were asked to complete a 5-item measure patterned after Mottet and Richmond's (1998) Affective Learning Scale. The original scale includes constructs such as attitude about the instructor, attitude about the course, likelihood of developing appreciation for the content, the likelihood of recalling course information in "real life," likelihood of enjoying the discussion of course content with others outside the classroom, likelihood of enrolling in another course of similar content, likelihood of reading similar material to course content outside of class, and the likelihood of taking another course with the same instructor. This scale was modified to include references to the writing conference, rather than to a specific course; to writing as the specific content/subject matter; and to future actions involving applying the writing skills and knowledge to "real life" situations or other areas outside the classroom. See Appendix F.

Within this instrument, items #4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 25, 26 and 27 referred to student affect for the writing instructor and were used to test H1. Items #1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 referred to student affect for writing conferences and were used to test H2. Items # 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 referred to student affect for writing in general and were used to test H3. *Affect for teacher*, with a range of 9-45,

yielded a mean of 25 (*SD* = 10.19) and a Cronbach alpha of .97. *Affect for writing*

conferences, with a range of 12-60, yielded a mean of 39 (*SD* = 11.64) and a Cronbach

alpha of .94. *Affect for writing in general*, with a range of 12-60, yielded a mean of 25

(*SD* = 7.88) and a Cronbach alpha of .95.

Data Analysis

To test H1, the data were subjected initially to multiple two-way analyses of

variance with instructor nonverbal immediacy and verbal feedback sensitivity serving as

the independent variables. Items referring to "Student Affect for Teacher" were

condensed into one variable, which served as the dependent variable. To test H2, the data

were subjected initially to multiple two-way analyses of variance with instructor

nonverbal immediacy and verbal feedback sensitivity serving as the independent

variables. Items referring to "Student Affect for Writing Conferences" were condensed

into one variable, which served as the dependent variable. To test H3, the data were

subjected initially to multiple two-way analyses of variance with instructor nonverbal

immediacy and verbal feedback sensitivity serving as the independent variables. Items

referring to "Student Affect for Writing in General" were condensed into one variable,

which served as the dependent variable.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviation, Ranges, and Reliabilities for All Tested Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Alpha
Affect for Teacher	25	10.19	9-45	.97
Affect for Writing Conferences	39	11.64	12-60	.94
Affect for Writing in General	25	7.88	12-60	.95

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter reviews the results of the analyses of variance that were computed to test the hypotheses. After a discussion of the control variables, the chapter is organized by hypotheses.

Control Variables

Daly and Miller (1975) developed and tested a 26-item questionnaire to better understand why writing produces such a great sense of anxiety in certain individuals. Subsequent studies have determined the effects of writing apprehension are extensive. Petrosko, Kaiser, and Dietrich (1986) confirmed Daly's findings and determined that levels of writing apprehension in writers can predict the quality of compositions that will result. Similarly, Faigley, Witte, and Daly (1981) found that apprehensive writers avoid writing situations and writing instruction, which in turn limits their ability to develop as writers.

Because writing apprehension has been shown to influence student learning outcomes so dramatically (Walsh, 1986), writing apprehension was examined before any of the hypotheses were tested to see if apprehension impacted either of the variables in the study. See Appendix E for writing apprehension measurement. Three separate analyses of variance were computed with writing apprehension (high/low, using median split), teacher nonverbal immediacy (immediate/non-immediate) and feedback sensitivity

(high/low) serving as the independent variables and affect for writing conferences, affect for teacher, and affect for writing in general serving as the dependent variables. All complex F-ratios were nonsignificant, $F(1,178) = .83, p = .36$ for affect for writing conferences, $F(1,178) = .53, p = .47$ for affect for teacher, and $F(1,178) = 1.19, p = .28$ for affect for writing in general. Three additional analyses of variance were computed to determine if writing apprehension had a main effect for each of the dependent variables. Each of these analyses of variance were lacking in statistical significance or if statistically significant, were lacking in meaningfulness because of the minimal variance that writing apprehension had on the dependent variables.

Hypothesis One

H1 predicted that students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for the teacher than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference. This hypothesis was supported. When the two independent variables (nonverbal immediacy and feedback sensitivity) were subjected to an analysis of variance, with Affect for Teacher serving as the dependent variable, the analysis yielded a nonsignificant interaction effect, $F(1,178) = .450, p > .05$, and a significant main effect for instructor nonverbal immediacy, $F(1, 178) = 59.88, p < .05$. The main effect for instructor feedback sensitivity was nonsignificant, $F(1,178) = .173, p > .05$. Means and standard deviations for H1 are reported in Table 2.

The data suggest that instructor nonverbal immediacy and verbal feedback sensitivity do not interact to impact students' Affect for their Teacher. Regardless of the instructor's verbal feedback sensitivity during a writing conference, nonverbal

immediacy cues tend to preserve student perceptions of and feelings toward the

instructor, accounting for 25% of the variance.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Effects of Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy and Verbal Feedback Sensitivity on Student Affect for Teacher

	Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy		
	Immediate	*Non-Immediate*	*Row Totals*
High Feedback Sensitivity	28.42	18.88	23.35
	(8.89)	(8.30)	(10.18)
Low Feedback Sensitivity	29.91	18.53	25.99
	(9.14)	(9.08)	(10.10)
Column Totals	29.28$_a$	18.75$_a$	
	(8.53)	(9.06)	

Note: Numbers in parentheses denote the standard deviation. Means with the same subscripts are significantly different at p <.05.

Hypothesis Two

H2 predicted that students who experience an immediate instructor during a

writing conference will have more Affect for Writing Conferences than students who

experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback

provided in the conference. This hypothesis was supported. The analysis of variance

produced a nonsignificant interaction effect, $F(1,178) = .829, p > .05$ and two significant

main effects, one for instructor nonverbal immediacy, $F(1,178) = 27.21, p < .05$, and one

for feedback sensitivity, $F(1,178) = 6.95, p < .05$. Means and standard deviations for H2

are reported in Table 3.

The data suggest that instructor nonverbal immediacy and verbal feedback

sensitivity do not interact to impact students' Affect for Writing Conferences.

Independently, both nonverbal immediacy and verbal feedback sensitivity impact student

Affect for Writing Conference. However, the data suggest that instructor nonverbal

immediacy has a stronger influence on student affect for writing conferences, accounting

for 14% of the variance, while feedback sensitivity accounted for only 4% of the variance

in student affect for writing conferences.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Effects of Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy and Verbal Feedback Sensitivity on Student Affect for Writing Conferences

	Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy		
	Immediate	*Non-Immediate*	*Row Totals*
High Feedback Sensitivity	39.81	32.84	36.10_b
	(9.77)	(12.70)	(11.89)
Low Feedback Sensitivity	45.56	35.63	42.14_b
	(9.20)	(10.08)	(10.58)
Column Totals	43.09_a	33.90_a	
	(9.83)	(11.78)	

Note: Numbers in parentheses denote the standard deviation. Means with the same subscripts are significantly different at p <.05.

Hypothesis Three

H3 predicted that students who experience an immediate instructor during a

writing conference will have more Affect for Writing in General than students who

experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback

provided in the conference. This hypothesis was supported. The analysis of variance

produced a nonsignificant interaction effect, $F(1,178) = .059$, $p > .05$ and a significant

main effect for instructor nonverbal immediacy, $F(1, 178) = 21.97$, $p < .05$. The main

effect for instructor's feedback sensitivity was nonsignificant, $F(1,178) = .051$, $p > .05$.

Means and standard deviations for H3 are reported in Table 4.

The data suggest that instructor nonverbal immediacy and verbal feedback sensitivity do not interact to impact students' Affect for Writing in General. Regardless of the instructor's verbal sensitivity during a writing conference, nonverbal immediacy cues clearly influence students' Affect for Writing in General, accounting for 11% of the variance.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for the Effects of Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy and Verbal Feedback Sensitivity on Student Affect for Writing in General

	Instructor Nonverbal Immediacy		
	Immediate	*Non-Immediate*	*Row Totals*
High Feedback Sensitivity	27.42	22.31	24.70
	(6.67)	(8.64)	(8.15)
Low Feedback Sensitivity	27.44	21.77	25.48
	(7.17)	(7.10)	(7.61)
Column Totals	27.43 $_a$	22.10 $_a$	
	(6.93)	(8.05)	

Note: Numbers in parentheses denote the standard deviation. Means with the same subscripts are significantly different at p <.05.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the study using the claims that form the argument for this thesis. A review and analysis of each claim will be provided, followed by conclusions, implications for teachers, limitations, and direction for further research. The conclusion of this chapter will also provide a summary of the entire study.

The purpose of this study was to show that instructor use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors will influence affective learning in writing conferences, regardless of the level of feedback sensitivity provided. Four claims were offered in support of this argument:

Claim 1: Feedback is a necessary but problematic tool in the teaching of writing.

Claim 2: One-on-one teaching conferences are an effective form of providing feedback because they feed the relational aspect of teaching.

Claim 3: Because nonverbal immediacy behaviors improve the teacher-student relationship in traditional classroom settings, they can also be expected to improve the teacher-student relationship in writing conferences.

Claim 4: Communicating direct, task-oriented feedback is an important and effective tool in teaching writing as long as it is a part of a positive teacher-student relationship.

Review and Analysis of Claims

Claim One

Claim one asserts that feedback is a necessary but problematic tool in the teaching of writing. Feedback is a necessary part of learning as it can help prompt a learner to evaluate new information, reevaluate past information, and build new understandings (Brandl, 1995). However, Smith and King (2004) maintain that feedback can distract rather than help, particularly if the feedback focuses on more than just the task performance.

Much of the present argument stems from the work of Kluger and DeNisi (1996), who supported Smith and King in their assessment of feedback effectiveness. Their work shows that feedback focused on emotions or feelings rather than on tasks actually decreases future performance. It is their assertion that feedback must be direct, specific and focused on the task at hand, or the receiver's attention will be diverted and the feedback will not be effective.

When placed in the context of the English classroom, the argument made by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) has important implications. Except where grammar is concerned, most educational researchers maintain the importance of feedback on student essays. However, the traditional method – handwritten margin notes in red ink – is not the most effective means for providing necessary feedback (DeVito, 1986; Fassler, 1978; Given & Schallert, 2008; Sipple, 2007). First of all, if it is given after the student has already received a grade, the feedback may potentially be ignored by the student (Fassler, 1978; Sipple, 2007). Additionally, these notations can often be misinterpreted, misunderstood, or unreadable.

This presents a conflict. Feedback must be direct and task-specific (Kluger &

DeNisi, 1996), but direct hand-written feedback is not effective. In order to resolve this

discrepancy, there needs to be a way to provide direct feedback through other means.

Claim Two

Claim Two asserts that one-on-one teaching conferences are an effective form of

providing feedback because they feed the relational aspect of teaching. Writing

conferences are one-on-one conversations between teachers and students where teachers

can spend time evaluating student writing and providing constructive feedback. Writing

conferences are widely considered to be effective because they allow teachers to

differentiate instruction, convey their comments accurately and in depth, and offer

positive feedback along with criticism, while also allowing students the opportunity to

clarify questions (Johanson, 1999).

One of the reasons that writing conferences are such an effective way for teachers

to provide feedback on student writing is because they enhance the teacher-student

relationship. Researchers maintain that writing is a social activity (Bruffee, 1984;

Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987; Nystrand, 1989; Scribner & Cole, 1981).

Likewise, teaching is a relational activity. When the relationship between a teacher and

student is positive, students tend to have better attitudes toward the teacher and the

subject, which in turn increases cognitive learning (Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971;

Ellis, 2000; Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996). Because a writing conference can tap

into this relational aspect of both writing and teaching, it would seem to be more effective

in producing learning than traditional forms of written feedback.

However, most available literature on conferencing focuses on elementary students and college students. In elementary schools, teachers only have an average of 30 students with which to conference. Similarly, college professors have few students to conference with because the conferencing is generally at the discretion of the student. High school teachers, on the other hand, often have over 100 students in their classes – making writing conferences for every student on every essay very difficult to accomplish. Given the time constraints of teachers' schedules, secondary teachers must find a way to conduct writing conferences with each of their students in as efficient manner as possible.

Claim Three

Claim Three asserts that because nonverbal immediacy behaviors improve the teacher-student relationship in traditional classroom settings, they can also be expected to improve the teacher-student relationship in writing conferences. Teachers who make use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors, such as varied vocal pitch, volume and rate; smiling; leaning inward; face-to-face body positioning; decreased physical barriers; overall relaxed body movements and positions; spending time with students; and informal but socially appropriate clothing (Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006), have more influence over their students and a greater impact on student learning outcomes (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993).

Unfortunately, all available research on teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors has been conducted in traditional classroom settings, in other words, a group communication setting. Because there is no existent research regarding the effect of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors in one-on-one interpersonal settings, this study aims to address the need.

Claim Four

Claim Four asserts that communicating direct feedback is an important and effective tool in teaching writing as long as it is a part of a constructive teacher-student relationship.

Since teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors influence the teacher-student relationship (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996), teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors influence affective learning (Andersen, 1979; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994; McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986), and a constructive teacher-student relationship influences affective learning (Graham, West & Schaller, 1992) , then it seems natural to assume that teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors used in a writing conference will increase the teacher-student relationship and thereby influence affective learning, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback message. The present argument is that nonverbal immediacy behaviors will have a greater impact on affective learning than the sensitivity of the feedback provided.

The above argument provided the basis for the proposed and tested hypotheses. The following section will review the hypotheses and the results supporting each.

Affective Learning and Writing Conferences

H1: Affect for Teacher

Hypothesis one predicted that students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for the teacher than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference. This hypothesis was confirmed. When the instructor in the

scenario utilized nonverbal immediacy behaviors such as a smile, a forward lean, and a pleasant tone of voice, students overwhelmingly had more affect for her. It did not matter whether her verbal feedback was task-oriented and direct or relationally-oriented and focused on the student's feelings. The feedback itself had no bearing on how the students felt about the teacher. In both cases, students seemed to have more positive feelings toward the instructor based on her nonverbal behaviors alone. Instructor relational messages seemed to neutralize the negative impact that direct verbal feedback could potentially have on student affective learning. Although the present study did not specifically test for these factors, the data seems to support previous work indicating that students perceive nonverbally immediate instructors to be more competent and more credible (Mottet, Parker-Raley, Beebe, & Cunningham, 2007). Similarly, other research has suggested that instructor nonverbal immediacy behaviors have a neutralizing effect on students' interpersonal perceptions when instructors misbehave or violate student expectations (Kelse, Kearney, Plax, Allen, & Ritter, 2004; Mottet, Parker-Raley, Cummingham, Beebe, & Raffeld, 2006; Schrodt & Witt, 2006; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998; Witt & Schrodt, 2006 as cited in Mottet, Parker-Raley, Beebe, & Cunningham, 2007). In essence, the teacher's nonverbal immediacy actually reduces the affect of the student's previous assumptions about the teacher and/or the given task. The present study supports this body of research further indicating the powerful effects of instructor nonverbal immediacy behaviors and their impact on affective learning.

H2: Affect for Writing Conferences

Hypothesis Two predicted that students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for the writing conferences than

students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference. This hypothesis was also confirmed. In the same way that nonverbal immediacy behavior impacted affect for teacher, it also had an impact on the students' feelings towards the value of writing conferences.

For this hypothesis, there was a main effect indicated for both teacher nonverbal immediacy and feedback sensitivity. This means that separately, both nonverbal immediacy and feedback sensitivity affected the way that students feel about writing conferences. When nonverbal immediacy behaviors were utilized by the instructor, students felt more positively about writing conferences. Likewise, when the teacher's comments were highly sensitive, more focused on feelings and perceptions than on task, students also felt more positively about writing conferences.

However, the main effect found for nonverbal immediacy was much stronger than that of feedback sensitivity. Additionally, there was no interaction effect, meaning that the combination of nonverbal immediacy behaviors with feedback sensitivity had no influence on the amount of student affective learning. In essence, there was a significant difference in student affective learning between the immediate teacher and the nonimmediate teacher. Likewise, there was a significant difference in student affective learning between the teacher who used highly sensitive feedback and the teacher who used low-sensitive feedback. However, the effect of instructor nonverbal immediacy was much stronger, accounting for 14% of the variance, while feedback sensitivity accounted for only 4%.

Thus, like previous research indicates, teacher nonverbal immediacy is one of the more important teacher behaviors that can impact student learning (Moore, Masterson,

Christophel, & Shea, 1996). More specifically in this study, instructor nonverbal immediacy behaviors used during a writing conference have more impact on students' affect for writing conferences than the sensitivity of the feedback provided. Hence, students like writing conferences better and find them more valuable when teachers are more immediate, regardless of the sensitivity of their comments.

H3: Affect for Writing

Hypothesis Three predicted that students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more affect for writing in general than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided in the conference. This hypothesis was also confirmed. In essence, students place more value in the task of writing when teachers utilize nonverbal immediacy behaviors during writing conferences. Similar to Hypothesis One, the sensitivity of the feedback provided during the writing conference had no impact on the students' feelings towards writing.

Regardless of whether the feedback provided was task oriented or focused on feelings, students felt positive feelings toward the instructor, writing conferences, and writing in general. This supports the current body of research indicating the tremendous importance of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Previous research indicates that teachers who make use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors will have more influence over their students and will have a greater impact on student learning outcomes than teachers who don't (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). By impacting student motivation, cognitive learning, information-seeking strategies, decreasing student apprehension and resistance, and affective learning, it is evident that teacher nonverbal immediacy is one of the most

important teacher behaviors (Andersen, 1979; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994; McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986; Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004; Myers & Knox, 2001; Ellis, 1995; Frymier, 1993; Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001; Kearney & Plax, 1991). Furthermore, said behaviors are so powerful that they neutralize other negative comments or actions a teacher might impose – in this case, more powerful than direct and insensitive feedback (Kelse, Kearney, Plax, Allen, & Ritter, 2004; Mottet, Parker-Raley, Cummingham, Beebe, & Raffeld, 2006; Schrodt & Witt, 2006; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998; Witt & Schrodt, 2006 as cited in Mottet, Parker-Raley, Beebe, & Cunningham, 2007).

Implications for Writing Instruction

Three important implications were gained from this study, implications for both writing instruction and future research regarding writing instruction.

The most important implication yielded from this study is that teachers can be more direct with their feedback during writing conferences without worrying about the effects of the feedback itself. Even if the teacher's comments are direct and to-the-point, nonverbal immediacy cues will keep the teacher-student relationship in tact so that affective learning can take place.

This implication is significant when considering the time constraints of secondary writing conferences. Remember that most schools do not provide extra time for grading or evaluating essays (Fitzhugh, 2002). Writing conferences with students must be performed during classtime, or if the teacher is willing, during her lunch break, study hall, or before and after school.

Consider an average teacher with approximately 150 students to evaluate. Experts suggest that good conferences should last anywhere from five to 20 minutes (Bishop & Reichert, 2006). Taking into account 150 students, at 20 minutes a piece, experts are actually recommending that teachers need to spend 3000 minutes or 50 hours on evaluating just one essay per student. Unfortunately, with today's rigorous curriculum demands and large classroom sizes, most teachers do not have the time to have leisurely 20 minute conversations with their students – especially not for every piece of writing completed throughout the year. That's an impossible goal! Instead, high school English teachers must be realistic about what they accomplish in a writing conference. If they only have a few minutes with each student– five at the most – they need to make that time count.

The current study implies that teachers can be more efficient with these conferences. If the teacher utilizes nonverbal immediacy behaviors within the conference, then the teacher's comments can be more direct. This study further indicates that the feedback provided during writing conferences can be more focused on writing instruction, with less regard for the teacher-student relationship.

In her training on writing conferences, Calkins (2004) implies that teachers should focus more on the writer than on the writing. Many experts in the field of writing instruction agree with Calkins. Murray (2003) encourages teachers to ask their students questions concerning what they feel is good or what they feel may be weak.

In her book, *Writing through Childhood*, Harwayne (2001) lays out four guidelines to keep in mind when conducting conferences, including finding out 1) how the student feels about being asked to write, 2) if the student takes risks as a writer, 3) if

the student understands what writing is for, and 4) if the student knows how to improve their writing. Three of these four suggestions focus heavily on the feelings of the writer, rather than on the skill of writing itself. Perhaps this is good advice for elementary school teachers who should concentrate on student self esteem. A good attitude and a desire to write are important as a basis for future writing skills to be developed.

However, as students grow and advance in their studies, important writing skills must be learned. In secondary education, the focus must move from self-esteem to serious and pointed writing instruction. The findings from this study suggest that secondary teachers can feel comfortable doing just that. Teachers can condense Harwayne's (2001) four guidelines into just one: do students know how to improve their own writing? Her first guideline – how the student feels about being asked to write – can be taken completely out of the equation. The data from this study indicate that if the teacher is effectively utilizing nonverbal immediacy behaviors, then the student will have a high affect for the task of writing – even if her comments are direct and insensitive.

Avery (2002) approaches writing conferences as natural conversations between teachers and students. Questions she might ask students include, "What is happening in your story?" or "How did you get that idea?" She maintains that questions like this are helpful and can often give teachers a sense of where the student needs to go with his/her writing. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, questions like these can help build a rapport between the teacher and the student.

Rapport is a recurring theme in suggestions on how to conduct student-teacher conferences. The consensus seems to be that if a student and teacher have a good working

relationship and a positive rapport has been established, then students will more likely trust the opinions and suggestions of the teacher (Dixon, 1989).

This study shows that teachers can establish an instant rapport with students through the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors, such as sitting next to the student, leaning forward, dressing casually, and smiling. If teachers can remove all of the sensitivity rhetoric and the questions meant only to probe about feelings, they can spend the small amount of time they have on more direct and pointed feedback. The conference can be focused on pure writing instruction. The nonverbal immediacy behaviors present during the conference will lead to affective learning. Through these means, the student will find value in the teacher, the conference, and in writing itself. Then, the student will be more likely to apply what he/she has learned in the conference to the essay and to future writing.

The second implication that can be drawn from this study is that teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors are effective when used in one-on-one communication settings in the high school classroom. This is key. The current body of research showing the importance of instructor nonverbal immediacy has focused almost entirely on college classrooms, and there is no current research at all regarding the use of these behaviors in one-on-one communication settings.

Furthermore, the guidance provided for teachers regarding how to best conduct writing conferences is focused mainly on instruction in the elementary classroom or in a college setting. There is very little available literature for secondary teachers on effective conferencing methods. This study provides one approach that can help secondary teachers conduct efficient and direct writing conferences that promote learning. Teachers

can feel confident with their direct comments, knowing that through the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors, the relationship and motivation for writing are still in tact.

The third implication presented by this study will be potentially helpful in future research in writing instruction. An unintended and unexpected result from this study provided a closer look at the effects of writing apprehension within the context of writing conferences. While this variable was simply included as a control measure, the unexpected result was that a student's level of writing apprehension had no effect on their level of affective learning. This was quite surprising.

Previous research would indicate quite the opposite. Faigley, Witte, and Daly (1981) contend that apprehensive writers avoid writing situations and writing instruction, which in turn limits their ability to develop as writers. Instead, the present study shows that students found the writing conference and writing in general to be valuable regardless of their level of apprehensiveness.

Perhaps this indicates that writing conferences where the teacher-student relationship is positive actually helps alleviate writing apprehension. Although the findings are not specific enough to make this leap, it does raise the question of how writing conferences might affect student levels of apprehension. This is certainly an interesting direction for future research.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The results of this study have provided support for the influence of nonverbal immediacy behaviors on affective learning within the context of writing conferences, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback. Although the information yielded from this study is meaningful, there are a number of limitations this study encountered. First, the

methodology is a limitation in and of itself. Secondly, the participants may not be a representative population. Third, the present study did not control for the feedback sensitivity of the students involved. These limitations will be presented along with the future directions for research suggested by the limitations.

The first limitation of this study is the utilization of scenarios. A more authentic measure through actual conferences between teacher and student could have yielded potentially more reliable data. If the purpose of the study was to study the impact of nonverbal immediacy behaviors on affective learning, it would have been more prudent to witness the effects during a live conferencing scenario. The experience would have been more realistic for the participants, and therefore may have elicited more genuine results.

If time constraints were not an issue, actual conferences would have been set up between the researcher and participants. One reason why this might have been more effective is because it would have felt real to the students. The students would have been actively involved in conferencing over a piece of their own writing, and the results would actually matter to the student because it would be for a grade. A more authentic response on the part of the student would be expected.

In addition, it would have been much easier for the researcher to see if knowledge from the conferences was actually applied. Essays could be analyzed before and after to determine if the student actually found value in the conference by making suggested changes to the essay. By using scenarios instead, there was no useful knowledge gained and no accounting for students' actual use for writing instruction beyond the conference.

To test the validity of this study, a future study should be conducted based on actual conferences between teachers and students. Provided enough time to conduct this research, it could be done one of two ways. Teacher participants could be trained in the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors and in feedback sensitivity. The same four conditions created in the scenarios of the current study could also be utilized by the teacher participant in the future study. The researcher could simply videotape the authentic interactions. Then, students could complete the same measures or could be interviewed by the researcher directly following the conference.

Another possibility would be to simply videotape and analyze a series of actual writing conferences. Researchers could observe the actual use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors (or lack thereof) and analyze the effects based on student essays. It would be interesting to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of how writing conferences are actually being conducted in today's English classrooms.

The second limitation of this study was the sample of participants. This was a potential limitation for two reasons: the type of students represented and the relationship of these students with the researcher.

First, the students chosen to participate in this study are from a charter school whose mission is to offer quality, college-preparatory curriculum to students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. It is a school of choice. Now, these students are not necessarily cream of the crop. There are no admission requirements, and students of all intelligence levels attend. Just like regular public schools, student abilities range from special education with learning disabilities to second language learners to gifted and talented.

However, the students who attend this school chose to be there and have accepted the rigorous demands of the curriculum. These are students who want a better life for themselves and are willing to work hard to accomplish their goals. Given that understanding, these students may not actually be a representative sample of all high school students. Perhaps these particular students are more likely to understand the importance of writing conferences and of writing in general. Perhaps they were more likely to experience affective learning through these scenarios than students in a regular public school. Future studies should include a more diverse population from other types of high schools.

Another drawback of this particular set of participants is their existing relationship with the researcher. Most of these students had previously taken an English or writing composition course with this researcher as the instructor. Most of the students had a pre-existing, positive rapport with the researcher which may have impacted their perceptions of the given scenarios. In fact, one participant actually commented that the teacher in the scenario "sounded like" the researcher. There was no way to control for this pre-existing relationship except by using another population entirely.

The final limitation of this study was that the feedback sensitivity of the students was not taken into account. Sensitivity to feedback and overall self-concept is an important consideration when looking at how feedback is received. The importance between self-concept and any aspect of communication is shown in the way individuals work to maintain their perceptions of self (Edwards, 1990). Individuals actively desire to receive feedback that is consistent with their view of self thus supporting their self-concepts (Swann, 1983; Swann & Read, 1981).

Given the potential impact of receiver feedback sensitivity, the variable either needs to be studied in the context of writing conferences or at least controlled for within the constructs of a similar study. In the future, a study which incorporates a direct measurement of receiver feedback sensitivity would assess the influence this variable might have on affective learning within writing conferences.

Conclusion

Given the lack of writing skills of today's students (Manzo, 1999), improvements in writing instruction are imperative. One strategy, teacher-student writing conferences, provides students with necessary feedback to improve their writing skills and makes a significant difference in overall writing quality (Davis & Fulton, 1997).

However, because of increased class sizes and teachers' ever-decreasing time, writing conferences need to be as efficient as possible in order to produce results. While there is anecdotal literature available on writing conferences, there has been no solid research as to how to effectively and efficiently deliver feedback in these conferences. And while compassion is important, teachers need to be able to focus their limited time on instruction rather than on worrying about the sensitivity of their feedback.

The hypotheses proposed for this study were that students who experience an immediate instructor during a writing conference will have more Affect for the Teacher, more Affect for Writing Conferences, and more Affect for Writing in General than students who experience a non-immediate instructor, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided.

To test these hypotheses, students were asked to read a hypothetical conferencing scenario, imagining that it was a conference on their own writing. Students were then

asked to complete a survey evaluating their affect towards the teacher, the writing conference, and writing in general, as well as a writing apprehension instrument. Each hypothesis was supported.

This study has successfully shown the important effects of nonverbal immediacy behaviors within the context of teacher-student writing conferences. When nonverbal immediacy behaviors are utilized, the teacher-student relationship is enhanced and affective learning takes place, regardless of the sensitivity of the feedback provided. Although much has been left for further probing, the main purpose of this study has been achieved. There is certainly relevance for further investigation regarding how best to conduct writing conferences when we view them in terms of their interpersonal communication constructs.

REFERENCES

Abrams, L. M., Pedulla, J. J., & Madaus, G. F. (2003). Views from the classroom: Teachers' opinions of statewide testing programs. Theory in Practice, 42, 1, 18-29. (Retrieved September 23, 2008 from ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ERIC No. EJ673901).

Ambady, N., & Rosenthal, R. (1993). Half a minute: Predicting teacher evaluations from thin slices of nonverbal behavior and physical attractiveness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64, 431-441.

Anderson, J. F. (1979). Teacher immediacy as a predictor of teacher effectiveness. Communication Yearbook, 3, 543-559.

Anderson, K., Benson, C., & Lynch, T. (2001). Feedback on writing: Attitudes and uptakes. Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics, 11, 1-20.

Avery, C. & Graves, D. (2002). And with a Light Touch: Learning About Reading, Writing and Teaching with First Graders: Second Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bainbridge, W. L. (2005). National school numbers show growth, diversity, pluses & minuses. www.educationnews.org.

Bishop, W. & Reichert, N. (2006). Conferencing: Preparing for a conference. Florida State University. Retrieved April 3, 2009. www.writing.fsu.edu.

Bloom, B. S., Hastings, J. T., & Madaus, G. F. (1971). Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning. New York: McGraw Hill.

Brandl, K. K. (1995). Strong and weak students' preferences for error feedback options and responses. The Modern Language Journal, 79, 194-211.

Bruffee, K. A. (1984). Collaborative learning and the conversation of mankind. College English, 46, 635-652.

Calkins, L. M. (1986). The Art of Teaching Writing, First Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Calkins, L. M. (1994). The Art of Teaching Writing, New Edition. Ontario, Canada: Irwin Publishing.

Calkins, L. M., White, Z. R., & Hartman, A. (2004). Conferring with Primary Writers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Christensen, L. J. & Menzel, K. E. (1998). The linear relationship between student reports of teacher immediacy behaviors and perceptions of state motivation, and of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. Communication Education, 47, 82-90.

Christophel, D. M. (1990). The relationships among teacher immediacy behaviors, student motivation, and learning. Communication Education, 39, 323-340.

Comstock, J., Rowell, E., & Bowers, J. W. (1995). Food for thought: Teacher nonverbal immediacy, student learning, and curvilinearity. Communication Education, 44, 251-266.

Daly, J. A. & Miller, M. D. (1975) The empirical development of an instrument to measure writing apprehension. Research in the Teaching of English, 9, 242-250.

Davis, W. & Fulton, J. (1997). The effects of professors' feedback on the growth of

    students' overall writing quality in two college freshman English courses.

    (Retrieved September 16, 2008 from ERIC Document Reproduction Service,

    ERIC No. ED414570).

DeVito, J. A. (1986). Teaching as relational development. In J. M. Civikly (Ed.),

    Communication in College Classrooms (pp. 51-59). San Francisco: Jassey-Bass.

Dillon, S. (2008). In test, few students are proficient writers. New York Times. April 3,

    2008.

Dixon, K. G. (1989). Partners in knowledge: Negotiating a student-teacher relationship.

    Paper presented at Pennsylvania State University Conference on Rhetoric and

    Composition. (Retrieved April 3, 2009 from ERIC Document Reproduction

    Service, ERIC No. ED310410).

Doughty, C. and Williams, J. (eds). (1998). Focus on Form in Classroom Second

    Language Acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, R. & Pledger, L. (1990). Development and construct validation of the

    sensitivity to feedback scale. Communication Research Reports, 7, 83-89.

Ellis, K. (1995). Apprehension, self-perceived competency, and teacher immediacy in

    the laboratory-supported public speaking course: Trends and relationships.

    Communication Education, 44, 64-78.

Ellis, K. (1999). Perceived teacher confirmation: The development and validation of an

    instrument and two studies of the relationship to cognitive and affective learning.

    Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication

    Association, Chicago, Il.

Faigley, L., Witte, S., & Daly, J. A. (1981). The role of writing apprehension in writing performance and comprehension. Journal of Educational Research, 75, 16-21.

Fassler, B. (1978). The red pen revisited: Teaching composition through student conferences. College English, 40, 2, 186-190.

Fitzhugh, W. (2002). History research paper study. The Concord Review, Center for Survey Research and Analysis. Retrieved October 15, 2008. http://www.tcr.org/tcr/institute/historytcr.pdf.

Freedman, S., Dyson, A. H., Flower, L., & Chafe, W. (1987). Research in Writing: Past, Present and Future (Technical Report No. 1). Berkeley: University of California, Center for the Study of Writing.

Frymier, A. B. (1993). The relationships among communication apprehension, immediacy and motivation to study. Communication Reports, 6, 8-17.

Frymier, A. B. (1994). A model of immediacy in the classroom. Communication Quarterly, 42, 133-144.

Frymier, A. B. & Houser, M. L. (2000). The teacher-student relationship as an interpersonal relationship. Communication Education, 49, 3, 207-219.

Given, L. & Schallert, D. L. (2008). Meeting in the margins: Effects of the teacher-student relationship on revision processes of EFL college students taking a composition course. Journal of Second Language Writing, 17, 3, 165-182.

Goldrick, L. (2002). Improving Teacher Evaluation to Improve Teacher Quality. National Governors Association. Retrieved December 1, 2003. http://www.nga.org/center/divisions/1,1188,C_ISSUE_BRIEF%5ED_4732,00.hT ml.

Goldstein, L. M. (2004). Questions and answers about teacher written commentary and student revision: Teachers and students working together. Journal of Second Language Writing, 13, 1, 63-80.

Graham, E. E., West, R., & Schaller, K. A. (1992). The association between the relational teaching approach and teacher job satisfaction. Communication Reports, 5, 1, 11-22.

Harwayne, S. (2001). Writing Through Childhood: Rethinking Process and Product. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hattie, J.A. (1992). Measuring the effects of schooling. Australian Journal of Education, 36, 1, 5-13.

Hattie, J. A. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. Review of Educational Research, 77, 81-112.

Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). Research on written composition: New direction for teaching. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills/National Conference on Research in English.

Ilgen, D. R., Fisher, C. D., & Taylor, M. S. (1979). Consequences of individual feedback on behavior in organizations. Journal of Applied Psychology, 64, 349-371.

Ivey, A. E., Gluckstern, N. B., & Ivey, M. B. (1984). Basic Attending Skills. North Amherst, MA: Microtraining Associates.

Johanson, R. (1999). Rethinking the red ink: Audio-feedback in the ESL writing classroom. Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education, 4, 1, 31-38.

Kearney, P., & Plax, T. G. (1991). An attributional analysis of college students'

    resistance decisions. Communication Education, 40, 325-342.

Kluger, A. N. & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effect of feedback interventions on performance:

    A historical review, a meta-analysis and a preliminary feedback intervention

    theory. *Psychological Bulletin,* 119, 254-284.

Knoblauch, C. H. & Brannon, L. (1981). Teacher communication on student writing:

    The state of the art. *Freshmen English News*, 10, 2, 1-4.

Krashen, S. D. (1984). Writing: Research Theory and Application. Oxford: Pergamon

    Institute of English.

Krathwohl, D. R., Bloom, B. S., & Masia, B. B. (1964). Taxonomy of education

    objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook 2: Affective

    domain. New York: McKay.

Leki, I. (1990). Coaching from the margins: Issues in written response. In B. Kroll

    (Ed.), Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom (pp. 57-

    68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Manzo, K. K. (1999). U. S. students lack writing proficiency. Education Week, 19, 6,

    1-18.

Marshall, M. J. (1986). Writing without tears: Advanced writing for academic success.

    (Retrieved September 15, 2008 from ERIC Document Reproduction Service,

    ERIC No. ED271962).

McCarthey, S. J. (1989). The teacher, the author, and the text: Variations in the form

    and content of writing conferences. (Retrieved September 15, 2008 from ERIC

    Document Reproduction Service, ERIC No. ED305657).

McCroskey, J. C., Fayer, J. M., Richmond, V. P., Sallinen, A., Barraclough, R. S. (1996). Nonverbal immediacy and cognitive learning: A cross-cultural investigation. Communication Education, 4, 200-211.

Mehrabian, A. (1971). Silent messages. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Messman, S. J., & Jones-Corley, J. (2001). Effects of communication environment, immediacy, and communication apprehension on cognitive and affective learning. Communication Monographs, 68, 184-200.

Moore, A., Masterson, J. T., Christophel, D. M., & Shea, K. A. (1996). College teacher immediacy and student ratings of instruction. Communication Education, 45, 29-39.

Morse, P. (1989). Using communication skills in the writing conference. The Writing Lab Newsletter, 14, 1, 1-6.

Mottet, T. P. (2008). Teacher feedback. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), The International Encyclopedia of Communication Vol. XI (pp. 4976-4980). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Mottet, T. P., Parker-Raley, J., Beebe, S. A., & Cunningham, C. (2007). Instructors who resist "College Lite": The neutralizing effect of instructor immediacy on students' course-workload violations and perceptions of instructor credibility and affective learning. Communication Education, 56, 145-167.

Mottet, T. P. & Richmond, V. P. (1998). Newer is not necessarily better: A reexamination of affective learning measurement. Communication Research Reports, 15, 370-378.

Mottet, T. P., Richmond, V. P. & McCroskey, J. C. (2006). Handbook of Instructional

Communication: Rhetorical and Relationship Perspectives. Boston, MA:

Pearson Education, Inc.

Murray, D. M. (2003). A Writer Teacher Writing Revised. Independence, KY:

Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Myers, S. A., & Knox, R. L. (2001). The relationship between college student

information-seeking behaviors and perceived instructor verbal behaviors.

Communication Education, 50, 343-357.

Nation's Report Card: Writing 2007. Institute of Educational Sciences, U.S. Department

of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved October

14, 2008 from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008468.

Newbart, D. (2004). 30 on ACT? Let's see if you can write. Chicago Sun Times,

October 17, 2004.

Nystrand, M. (1989). A social-interactive model of writing. Written Communication, 6,

66-85.

Petrosko, J. M., Kaiser, M. M., & Dietrich, J. C. (1984). Relationships among writing

ability, grade level, writing apprehension and knowledge of composing as a

process in secondary school students. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the

American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Plax, T. G., Kearney, P., McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, B. P. (1986). Power in the

classroom VI: Verbal control strategies, nonverbal immediacy and affective

learning. Communication Education, 35, 43-55.

Rodriguez, J., Plax, T. G., & Kearney, P. (1996). Clarifying the relationship between teacher nonverbal immediacy and student cognitive learning: Affective learning as the central causal mediator. Communication Education, 45, 293-305.

Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). The Psychology of Literacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sipple, S. (2007). Ideas in practice: Developmental writers' attitudes toward audio and written feedback. Journal of Developmental Education, 30, 3, 22-24, 26, 28, 30-31.

Smith, C. D. & King, P. E. (2004). Student feedback sensitivity and the efficacy of feedback interventions in public speaking performance improvement. Communication Education, 53, 3, 203-216.

Swann, W. B. (1983). Self-verification: Bringing social reality into harmony with the self. In J. Suls & A. G. Greewald (Eds). Psychological Perspectives on the Self (Volume 2, pp. 33-66). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Eribaum.

Swann, W. B. & Read, S. J. (1981). Acquiring self-knowledge: The search for feedback that fits. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 41, 1119-1128.

Thweatt, K. S. & McCroskey, J. C. (1998). The impact of teacher immediacy and misbehaviors on teacher credibility. Communication Education, 47, 348-358.

Toner, L. (1999). Focus on writing conferences. Inside Learning Network Schools. Katonah, New York: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.

Travers, K. J. & Hendrix, T. M. (2002). Review of literature on writing conferences. Technology Based Education Reform. Taken from http://www.mste.uiuc.edu/courses/ci407su02/resources.html. (Retrieved November 11, 2008).

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 classes. Language Learning, 46, 2, 327-369.

Walsh, S. M. (1986). New directions in research on writing apprehension. (Retrieved March 31, 2009 from ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ERIC No. ED361716).

Willis, A. I. (2000). Critical issue: Addressing literacy needs in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. North Central Regional educational Laboratory. www.ncrel.org.

Witt, P. L., Wheeless, L. R., & Allen, M. (2004). A meta-analytical review of the relationship between teacher immediacy and student learning. Communication Monographs, 71, 184-207.

APPENDIX A

The University of Texas – Pan American

Informed Consent Form

Investigator: Laura Martin

Background: I am conducting a research study to examine writing conferences between teachers and students. I was a former teacher at IDEA and am now completing my master's thesis at the University of Texas-Pan American. My faculty advisor is Dr. Tim Mottet.

This study will collect anonymous data from middle school and high school students from IDEA College Preparatory in Donna.

Procedure: Participants in the study will be asked to read a hypothetical scenario describing a writing conference between a teacher and a student. Students will be asked to imagine that this is a conference about their own writing and will complete a survey about what they learned from the conference. Students will be asked to complete statements such as, "The likelihood of me revising my essay using what I learned form this writing conference is…likely/unlikely." Participants will not disclose any other personal information and will not indicate their name. The total time to participate in the study will be approximately 20 minutes. Students who participate will complete the study during their English class, and it will have no effect on their grades.

Risks or Possible Discomforts Associated with the Study: There are no anticipated risks associated with your child's participation in the study.

Benefits of Participation: There will be no incentive or reward for participation.

Voluntary Participation: Your child's participation in this study is voluntary and will not in any way interfere with their class grade; your child may discontinue from participating in the study at any time without penalty. Your child will be asked if he/she wants to participate in the study and only then will your child be able to participate in the study. If your child participates in the study and there are questions that your child would prefer not to answer, he/she simply leaves those items blank. If your child chooses not to participate, he/she will be asked to stay in the room and read a book. I encourage you to discuss this research with your child to see whether he/she wants to participate.

Anonymity and/or Confidentiality: All questionnaires will be picked up by the investigator who will place them in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Texas-Pan American. Access will not be given to anyone who is not actively participating in the study without the written consent of the parent. After three years, any printed data files will be shredded.

Who to Contact for Research Related Questions: For any questions regarding the research, please contact Laura Martin at 605-7741 or **lmartin@ideapublicschools.org**, or contact Dr. Tim Mottet at 381-3583 or **mottettp@utpa.edu**.

Who to Contact Regarding Your Child's Rights as a Participant: If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant, or if you feel that your child's rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, contact the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection at (956) 384-5004.

Consent to Participate: By signing and marking either yes or no indicates whether or not your child can participate in this study. Please return this consent form with your child to his/her English teacher.

Child's Name:

_____

     O **YES**, permission has been given for my child to participate in this study.

     O **NO**, permission is not given for my child to participate in this study.

_____

Parent's or Guardian's Name (please print)

_____

Parent's or Guardian's Signature   **Date**

<div align="center">

Universidad de Pan America
Forma de Consentimiento

</div>

Investigadora: Laura Martin

Detalles: Estoy haciendo una investigación sobre conferencias entre alumno y maestro. El objetivo es observar como los maestros proporcionan ayuda al estudiante en cuanto a redacciones escritas cuando se reúnen individualmente con el maestro. He trabajado en la Preparatoria de IDEA como maestra de Ingles y al momento estoy completando mis estudiados de Masters en la Universidad de Pan Am, y mi profesor es el Dr. Tim Moffet.

Este estudio será anónimo y se colectara información de la secundaria y preparatoria de la Preparatoria de IDEA en Donna.

Procedimiento: los participantes leerán un escenario hipotético el cual describirá una reunión entre maestro y estudiante hablando del tema de la escritura. Se le pedirá que imagine que esta es una reunión personal sobre su propia escritura y completaran una encuesta de lo que aprendieron de la reunión. Se le presentara extractos como: " la posibilidad de que yo haga cambios a mi escritura usando las sugerencias presentadas .. es probable/improbable." Los participantes no darán ninguna otra información ni tampoco su nombre. La reunión llevara como 20 minutos y se conducirá durante la clase de Ingles no se tomara en cuenta como parte de su calificacion de la clase.

Posibles Incomodidades o riesgos del estudio: No anticipa ningún riesgo asociado con este estudio.

Beneficios del estudio : No Habrá incentivo o recompensa alguna con este estudio.

La Participación es totalmente voluntaria.
La participación del alumno es totalmente voluntaria y no afectara el grado del alumno. Podrá retirarse en cualquier momento de la reunión . Se le preguntara con anticipación si desea participar en el estudio, si el alumno participa y no desea contestar ciertas preguntas en el cuestionario simplemente las puede dejar en blanco. Si el alumno opta en no participar podrá permanecer en el salón y podrá leer un libro. Favor hablar con su hijo/a si le interesa participar o no.

Anonimato y Confidencialidad: Todos los cuestionarios serán colectados por la persona quien conduce el estudio y se mantendrán bajo llave en la Universidad de Texas de Pan Am. No se compartirán con personas ajenas al estudio conducido sin el permiso escrito del padre. La estadística coleccionada se destruirá después de 3 años.

Persona a quien se puede contactar en cuanto al estudio :
Para cualquier pregunta favor llamar a la Sra. Laura Martin at 605-7741 o mandar un correo electrónico : **lmartin@ideapublicschools.org**, o contactar al Dr. Tim Mottet en: **mottettp@utpa.edu** o al teléfono 381-3583

A quien contactar en cuanto a los derechos del Participante :
En caso de alguna duda en cuanto a la manera que se condujo el estudio o disatisfaccion alguna favor contacte al Instituto siguiente: Institucional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection al telefono (956) 384-5004.

Permiso para Participar:
Al firmar favor indique si desea o no, que su hijo/a participe en este estudio. Favor enviar este permiso al maestro de Ingles.

Nombre del alumno:

_____

O **Si,** mi hijo/a tiene permiso para participar en este estudio.

O **NO,** mi hijo/a no tiene permiso para participar en este estudio.

_____

Nombre del Padre o Tutor

_____

Firma   **Fecha**

APPENDIX B

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

1. My name is Laura Martin, and I used to be an English teacher here at IDEA.

2. I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about writing conferences between teachers and students.

3. If you agree to be in this study, you will read a scenario and answer a few survey questions about the scenario. You will not put your name on the study.

4. There are no risks involved in participating in this study.

5. If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop. If you decide not to take part, you will just stay in the room and read a book instead.

6. You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me at 605-7741 or ask me next time.

7. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study.

_____

Your Name (please print)

_____   _____

Signature   Date

APPENDIX C

Experimental Manipulations

Scenarios

Scenario 1: High Immediate Teacher/High Sensitivity Feedback

Dear Student:

I would like to thank you for helping me.

Please read the following scenario carefully. Imagine that this is a scene from a writing conference between you and a teacher regarding your essay.

 Begin reading...

Scenario

Mrs. Garza is seated right next to you at a table looking over your essay with you. She looks very comfortable in her jeans, college t-shirt and tennis shoes. She seems very relaxed and has a pleasant look on her face as she reads through your essay. After a while, she leans toward you, smiles and says, "You sure know how to come up with great ideas. I can see you've been putting in a lot of effort. Where do you think you're going to go from here?"

You respond, "Oh, I like the essay just the way it is. I think it's finished, and I'm going to..."

Mrs. Garza interrupts politely by gesturing her hand forward gracefully and nodding her head. Looking you in the eye, she says, "I'm sorry; I'm going to stop you for a second. I know you feel like you're finished, but I know this is something you really care about, and I think it's important for you to take time with it."

"Okay," you say, "but what should I work on?"

"Well," she says in her pleasantly soft voice, "what are your feelings about the introduction? Are you happy with it?" As she says this, she lightly touches your shoulder and smiles.

"It could probably use some work, maybe."

"That's up to you," she says, again smiling.

"I was paying attention the day we went over introductions, and I thought my attention getter was pretty good. Do you think I need to change it?"

She tilts her head to one side and smiles. "That's completely up to you. If you think it's good enough and you're proud of it, that's all that matters. You're the writer."

"What about this part," you point to a particular part you felt needed some work. "Is it okay? Does it have enough detail?"

"Well," she smiles, looking you in the eye, "I don't know. How do you feel about it? Do you feel like you added enough detail?"

"Maybe."

Relaxing a bit in her chair, she says, "Okay then get back to work. I'm really proud of you, and I can't wait to see your next draft." As she says this, she pats you lightly on the back and smiles. She leans forward and waits to see if you have anything else to say.

After you get up, she shakes your hand, and you walk back to your desk.

Stop reading and move on to the next page.

Scenario 2: Low Immediate Teacher/High Sensitivity Feedback

Dear Student:

I would like to thank you for helping me.

Please read the following scenario carefully. Imagine that this is a scene from a writing conference between you and a teacher regarding your essay.

 Begin reading...

Scenario

Mrs. Garza is seated across from you at her desk. She briefly looks at your paper with her head down so you can't see the expression on her face. She is wearing a blue pant suit with a button-down shirt and looks somewhat uncomfortable in her chair. After a moment, she leans back in her chair with a bland expression and says, "You sure know how to come up with great ideas. I can see you've been putting in a lot of effort. Where do you think you're going to go from here?"

"Oh, I like the essay just the way it is. I think it's finished, and I'm going to..."

With her arms crossed, shaking her head, Mrs. Garza interrupts you. "I'm sorry; I'm going to stop you for a second. I know you feel like you're finished, but I know this is something you really care about, and I think it's important for you to take time with it."

"Okay, but what should I work on?"

"Well," she says in a dull, monotone voice, "what are your feelings about the introduction? Are you happy with it?" As she says this, she avoids eye contact with you and seems to be looking somewhere else in the room.

"It could probably use some work, maybe," you respond.

"That's up to you," she says, sounding tired.

"I was paying attention the day we went over introductions, and I thought my attention getter was pretty good. Do you think I need to change it?"

She shrugs her shoulders and tilts her head to one side. "That's completely up to you. If you think it's good enough and you're proud of it, that's all that matters. You're the writer."

"What about this part," you point to a particular part you felt needed some work. "Is it okay? Does it have enough detail?"

"Well," she says, still not really looking at you. "I don't know. How do you feel about it? Do you feel like you added enough detail?"

"Maybe."

With almost no expression on her face or in her voice, she says, "Okay, then get back to work. I'm really proud of you, and I can't wait to see your next draft." She leans back in her chair and moves your essay out of the way, indicating she's ready to talk to the next student.

There is still almost no expression on her face.

You start to shake her hand, but she quickly turns away from you. You get up and walk back to your desk.

Stop reading and move on to the next page.

Scenario 3: High Immediate Teacher/Low Sensitivity Feedback

Dear Student:

I would like to thank you for helping me.

Please read the following scenario carefully. Imagine that this is a scene from a writing conference between you and a teacher regarding your essay.

Begin reading...

Scenario

Mrs. Garza is seated right next to you at a table looking over your essay with you. She looks very comfortable in her jeans, college t-shirt and tennis shoes. She seems very relaxed and has a pleasant look on her face as she reads through your essay. After a while, she leans toward you, smiles and says, "You need to work on your essay."

You respond," Oh, I like it just the way it is. I think it's finished, and I'm going to..."

After you begin to speak, Mrs. Garza interrupts politely by gesturing her hand forward gracefully and nodding her head. Looking you in the eye and smiling, she says, "You can do better than this. I don't like it. It's not your best work. Let's take a look at the introduction. What is the first thing every introduction needs to do that yours doesn't seem to do?" Her voice is pleasantly soft, and she asks this, she lightly touches your shoulder.

"Um, an attention getter, right? I thought I included one, but I guess it could probably use some work."

She nods and looks pleased that you remembered. "Yes, it needs work," she says with a smile, gesturing to the introduction. She tilts her head to one side and smiles. Slowly and patiently, she proceeds to explain. "Remember the specific strategies we discussed for writing attention getters? We've learned about quotes, stories, interesting statistics, well developed rhetorical questions, and hypothetical 'imagine if' statements. Any one of those would work well in your essay."

"But how exactly do I decide which one to use?"

Leaning towards you, she says, "Here's what I want you to do. Choose three of the methods I mentioned and rewrite the introduction three times using each of those methods. Then we can talk again." She smiles.

"Okay."

"Your thesis is also not good. I don't like it," she says calmly and quietly. She touches your shoulder again. "Remember that every essay needs to have a clear thesis statement – or truism as we've called it in this class. It doesn't have to appear in the introduction, but it does need to be there somewhere. I don't see one anywhere here."

"What about this part?" you point to a particular part of the essay you felt needed some work. "Is it okay? Does it have enough detail?"

In a sweet voice, leaning forward, she says, "It's weak. It needs work. Remember the lesson on showing versus telling? You need to include as many details as possible to make the reader feel like her is there with you. Using dialogue is a great way to do this. Try adding some dialogue here." She looks you in the eye as she makes this suggestion.

"Maybe."

Relaxing a bit in her chair, she pats you lightly on the back and smiles. "Okay,

then get back to work. Remember the next draft is due tomorrow." She leans forward

and waits to see if you have anything else to say.

After you get up, she shakes your hand, and you walk back to your desk.

Stop reading and move on to the next page.

Scenario 4: Low Immediate Teacher/Low Sensitivity Feedback

Dear Student:

I would like to thank you for helping me.

Please read the following scenario carefully. Imagine that this is a scene from a writing
conference between you and a teacher regarding your essay.

Begin reading...

Scenario

Mrs. Garza is seated across from you at her desk. She briefly looks at your paper

with her head down so you can't see the expression on her face. She is wearing a blue

pant suit with a button-down shirt and looks somewhat uncomfortable in her chair. After

a moment, she leans back in her chair with a bland expression and says, "You need to

work on your essay."

"Oh, I like the essay just the way it is. I think it's finished, and I'm going to..."

With her arms crossed, shaking her head, Mrs. Garza interrupts you. "You can do better than this. I don't like it. It's not your best work." Looking down at your paper, she continues, "Let's take a look at the introduction. What is the first thing every introduction needs to do that yours doesn't seem to do?"

"Um, an attention getter, right? I thought I included one, but I guess it could probably use some work."

"Yes, it needs work," she says leaning away from you. In a dull, monotone voice, she continues. "Remember the specific strategies we discussed for writing attention getters? We've learned about quotes, stories, interesting statistics, well developed rhetorical questions, and hypothetical 'imagine if' statements. Any one of those would work well in your essay." As she says this, she avoids eye contact with you and seems to be looking somewhere else in the room.

"But how exactly do I decide which one to use?"

She shrugs her shoulders and tilts her head to one side. "Here's what I want you to do. Choose three of the methods I mentioned and rewrite the introduction three times using each of those methods. Then we can talk again."

"Your thesis is also not good. I don't like it," she says, sounding tired. "Remember that every essay needs to have a clear thesis statement – or truism as we've called it in this class. It doesn't always have to appear in the introduction, but it does need to be there somewhere. I don't see one anywhere here."

"What about this part," you point to a particular part you felt needed some work. "Is it okay? Does it have enough detail?"

"Well," she says, frowning and still not really looking at you. "It's weak. It needs work. Remember the lesson on showing versus telling? You need to include as many details as possible to make the reader feel like he is there with you. Using dialogue is a great way to do this. Try adding some dialogue here." Her face continues to remain expressionless.

"Maybe."

With almost no expression on her face or in her voice, she says, "Okay, then get back to work. Remember, the next draft is due tomorrow." She leans back in her chair and moves your essay out of the way, indicating she's ready to talk to the next student.

You start to shake her hand, but she quickly turns away from you. You get up and walk back to your desk.

STOP Stop reading and move on to the next page.

APPENDIX D

Nonverbal Immediacy Measure Utilized in Manipulation Check

Directions:

Please circle the number that corresponds to the word that best describes the teaching style of this instructor. The word "immediate" means friendly and warm.

Immediate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not immediate
Cold	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Warm
Unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Friendly
Close	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Distant

APPENDIX E

Feedback Sensitivity Measure Utilized in Manipulation Check

Directions:
Please circle the number that corresponds to the word that best describes the teacher's focus in this scenario.

Focused on student's feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not focused on student's feelings
Direct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Indirect
Focused on improving the essay	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not Focused on improving the essay
Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Insensitive

APPENDIX F

Affective Learning Measure

Please read the following before moving on.

- Your teachers will not look at this worksheet, so be as honest as possible.

- If you need to refer back to the scenario at any time, please feel free to do so.

- If you get tired, take a break.

- Read slowly and carefully. Be as honest as possible.

- For all items, circle your response in the following manner:

Circle your response this way:

| 0 = Never | 1 = Rarely | 2 = Occasionally | 3 = Often | 4 = Very Often |

Do not circle your response this way:

| 0 = Never | 1 = Rarely | 2 = Occasionally | 3 = Often | 4 = Very Often |

Directions: Pretending that the scenario you just read was actually a conversation between *you* and *your teacher* about *your essay* and that the final draft of your essay is due tomorrow, please circle the number that best reflects your feelings after reading the scenario.

Example:

	My attitude about this experience is. . .						
Circle One Number Here➔	Bad	1	2	3	4	⑤	Good
Circle One Number Here➔	Not Valuable	1	2	③	4	5	Valuable
Circle One Number Here➔	Negative	1	2	3	4	⑤	Positive

➔Begin Here:

	If you were the student in this scenario, your attitude about this writing conference would be...						
1. Circle One Number Here➔	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Good
2. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	Valuable
3. Circle One Number Here➔	Negative	1	2	3	4	5	Positive

IMPORTANT:

Did you circle one number for each item (1, 2, & 3) above?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If you put NO, then please return and complete all three items. If you have questions, please raise your hand.

	If you were the student in this scenario, your interest in having <u>another writing conference with this teacher</u> would be . . .						
4. Circle One Number Here➔	Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
5. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Motivated	1	2	3	4	5	Motivated
6. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were the student in this scenario, the likelihood of your <u>taking more writing classes</u> in the future would be...						
7. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely
8. Circle One Number Here➔	Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	Would
9. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were required to attend writing conferences with <u>this teacher</u>, your attitude at the <u>next writing conference with this teacher</u> would be. . .						
10. Circle One Number Here➔	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Good
11. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	Valuable
12. Circle One Number Here➔	Negative	1	2	3	4	5	Positive

	If you were the student in this scenario, your interest in **participating in writing conferences**, in general, would be...						
13. Circle One Number Here➔	Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
14. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Motivated	1	2	3	4	5	Motivated
15. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were the student in this scenario, the likelihood of your having a **desire to write** would be...						
16. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely
17. Circle One Number Here➔	Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	Would
18. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were the student in this scenario, the likelihood of your revising your essay **using what you learned from this writing conference** would be...						
19. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely
20. Circle One Number Here➔	Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	Would
21. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were this student, the likelihood of your writing another essay <u>using what you learned from this writing conference</u> would be…						
22. Circle One Number Here➜	Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely
23. Circle One Number Here➜	Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	Would
24. Circle One Number Here➜	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were the student in this scenario, your attitude about the teacher who held <u>this writing conference</u> would be…						
25. Circle One Number Here➜	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Good
26. Circle One Number Here➜	Not Fair	1	2	3	4	5	Fair
27. Circle One Number Here➜	Negative	1	2	3	4	5	Positive

	If you were the student in this scenario, the likelihood of your developing an <u>appreciation for writing</u> would be …						
28. Circle One Number Here➜	Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely
29. Circle One Number Here➜	Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	Would
30. Circle One Number Here➜	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

	If you were the student in this scenario, the likelihood of your <u>pursuing a career in writing</u> would be...						
31. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely
32. Circle One Number Here➔	Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	Would
33. Circle One Number Here➔	Not Interested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested

A few questions about you, and then you're done:

34. I am (Check One)

	Male
	Female

35. I am (Check One):

	White/Non-Hispanic
	Hispanic
	African-American
	Other

APPENDIX G

Writing Apprehension Measure

Read the following:

On the next page, there are a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling the number that shows whether you *strongly agree*, *agree*, are *uncertain*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* with the statement. While some of these statements may be repetitious, please respond to all of them.

Take your time and try to be as honest as possible.

strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	strongly disagree	
1	2	3	4	5	36. I avoid writing.
1	2	3	4	5	37. I have no fear of my writing's being evaluated.
1	2	3	4	5	38. I look forward to writing down my ideas.
1	2	3	4	5	39. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated.
1	2	3	4	5	40. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience.
1	2	3	4	5	41. Handing in a composition makes me feel good.
1	2	3	4	5	42. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on my composition.
1	2	3	4	5	43. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.
1	2	3	4	5	44. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.
1	2	3	4	5	45. I like to write down my ideas.

1	2	3	4	5	46. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas clearly in writing.
1	2	3	4	5	47. I like to have my friends read what I have written.
1	2	3	4	5	48. I'm nervous about writing.
1	2	3	4	5	49. People seem to enjoy what I write.
1	2	3	4	5	50. I enjoy writing.
1	2	3	4	5	51. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly.
1	2	3	4	5	52. Writing is a lot of fun.
1	2	3	4	5	53. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them.
1	2	3	4	5	54. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.
1	2	3	4	5	55. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.
1	2	3	4	5	56. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course.
1	2	3	4	5	57. When I hand in a composition, I know I'm going to do poorly.
1	2	3	4	5	58. It is easy for me to write good compositions.
1	2	3	4	5	59. I don't think I write as well as most people.
1	2	3	4	5	60. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated.
1	2	3	4	5	61. I'm not good at writing.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Laura Martin is a project manager at The Collaborative, an organization that manages and develops college readiness programs for UPLIFT Education in Dallas and IDEA Public Schools in the Rio Grande Valley.

Prior to joining The Collaborative, Ms. Martin was an instructional coach, grade team leader and high school English teacher at IDEA College Preparatory in Donna, Texas. She also served as a content specialist for Teach For America, an organization dedicated to eliminating educational inequity. Her previous teaching experience includes high school speech and debate at Nikki Rowe High School in McAllen, Texas and 6th grade English at Zachry Middle School in San Antonio, TX.

In addition to teaching, Ms. Martin has served as communications director for the Texas Produce Association and was a feature writer for the national publication, *Diversity Careers in Engineering and Information Technology.*

Ms. Martin is a 1993 graduate of Texas State University with a Bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism. She also attended Texas A&M University where she obtained teacher certification in English and communication.

She is married, has three children, and resides in Edinburg, Texas.

Permanent Address: 16327 The Hills Drive
                     Edinburg, Texas 78542