

# *Study on Discourse Behavior, Immediacy, and Willingness to Communicate of Chinese English Teachers*

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**Abstract:** Communication not only connects emotions, but education also relies on communication. Whether between teachers and students or between parents and children, communication is necessary to achieve the purpose of education or emotional development. In China, most students tend to view English as dull and useless, which leads to a lack of interest in learning English. However, the incorrect communication style of English teachers can lead to students becoming bored with English and their teachers. Immediacy has a direct impact on communication, and teachers' words, behaviors, and other factors directly affect their immediacy, willingness to communicate and communication effectiveness. So, in order to make communication smoother and improve the effectiveness of education, this article pointed out the connections between discourse behavior, immediacy and willingness to communicate, and proposed some methods and communication skills on how to improve one's own immediacy. After conducting practical research on the methods proposed in this article, the results showed that the immediacy scores of the four teachers who conducted the practice increased by about 12 points before and after the interview, and students' ratings for the four teachers were all 90 points higher, confirming that the methods proposed in this article can effectively enhance immediacy and strengthen communication between teachers and students.

## 1. Introduction

Education cannot be separated from communication, and the effectiveness of communication directly affects the effectiveness of education. Appropriate language and behavior, as well as good immediacy, directly affect willingness to communicate and communication effectiveness when communicating. Therefore, teachers should always pay attention to their own words and behaviors when teaching, and need to enhance their immediacy in daily behavior.

Many scholars have conducted research on discourse behavior. Scholar Qiao Han classified the receptive response strategies used by third parties in joking language into five sub strategies:

ascending, descending, stuttering, contrasting, and inverting, by summarizing and analyzing the conversation corpus in the program. On this basis, the pragmatic motivation for third parties to choose receptive response strategies in the dynamic construction of joking jokes in the entertainment context was explored [1]. Scholar Guo Xu conducted a diachronic analysis of crisis response discourse in 25 press conferences from the perspective of interpersonal harmony management, and explored the application trends of discourse behavior. He found that the crisis response discourse of spokespersons tends to be mainly expository, supplemented by commitment [2]. Scholar Jiang Hui advocated the construction of discourse meaning between interactive subjects based on mutual understanding and mutual knowledge, based on the theory of communicative behavior. Through the analysis of restatement markers in the ELF academic conference, it is found that speakers would use self-initiated restatement markers to enhance the understandability and comprehensibility of information in order to convey the discourse content truly and effectively in the seminar, which can provide sufficient background knowledge for the hearers to reach common knowledge and consensus [3]. Scholars have achieved different results in the study of discourse behavior.

In order to enhance students' willingness to communicate and the effectiveness of communication between teachers and students, this article conducted research on discourse behavior, immediacy, and willingness to communicate, and explored the connections between these three variables. Its aim is to help Chinese English teachers get along well with students, enabling harmonious communication between teachers and students, and improving educational effectiveness. After practice, the results showed that students scored 90 points higher than the four teachers who conducted the practice, confirming that the method proposed in this article is indeed effective.

## **2. Discourse Behavior, Immediacy and Willingness to Communicate**

### **2.1 Discourse Behavior**

As for discourse behavior, many scholars have conducted research and finally summarized the discourse behavior. Discourse is a unique way of human behavior, and people cannot do without this unique way of behavior in interpersonal communication. Discourse behavior can be roughly divided into three types:

- (1) The act of expressing a certain idea is called a predicate act.
- (2) Discourse behavior with power is called a tenor act.
- (3) The language expressed has achieved a certain effect, which is called language effect behavior [4].

To complete a tenor action, the first step is to complete a predicate action, which is closely related but still has boundaries. For example, some predicate actions cannot simultaneously serve as tenor actions [5]. There is also a significant difference between tenor behavior and effect behavior. The former has power but not coercion but persuasion, while the latter not only has power but also coercion. When using language to express, the discourse behavior proposes three kinds of behaviors:

**Verbal behavior:** it refers to the act of using words, phrases, allusions, etc., spoken while using language for expression, the act of expressing an idea through its literal meaning or the story behind it.

**Non verbal behavior:** It refers to expressing one's own intention through certain actions during expression. Non verbal behavior can be further divided into five categories: narrative, directive, declarative, expressive, and committed, all of which have common and universal purposes.

**Post verbal behavior:** It refers to the actions that occur after the expression is completed due to

the expressed content, such as realizing that one has said the wrong thing and feeling regretful, making actions such as apologizing or leaking awkward expressions [6-7].

The classification of discourse behavior is shown in Figure 1.

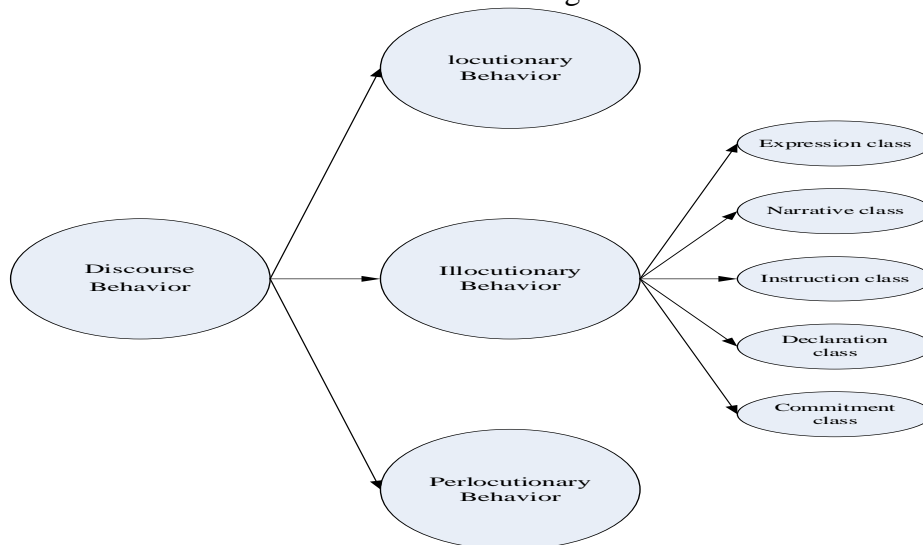


Figure 1: Discourse Behavior Classification

## 2.2 Immediacy

Immediacy refers to a force that can make people willing to be close and in contact with each other, and it expresses not the physical distance between people, but the convergence of the soul [8]. Immediacy comes from the equality and respect between people, which is a kind of moral character that comes from the heart and is based on a broad, loving, and kind heart [9].

## 2.3 Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to Communicate is any process in which people spread ideas, share information, and convey emotions. The essence of education is to spread ideas (establish students' worldviews, values, and outlooks on life) and share information (impart knowledge). In this process, emotions can also be conveyed (such as when students encounter difficulties in learning and feel oppressed without anyone to talk to, teachers can help students alleviate their emotions and engage in emotional communication and exchange) [10].

The basic modes of communication include: (1) verbal communication: it includes oral language, written language, images, etc. to communicate and share information. (2) body language communication: it includes communication with expressions, movements, expressions, etc. [11].

Communication is not limited to oral expression, written expression, and physical expression. There is an idiom called "teaching by example". Oral, written, and physical expressions belong to the aspect of "language communication", and "example teaching" is a more important and effective way of communication and education than word of mouth. The Tao Te Ching says, "It is a teaching based on the sage's inaction and practice without words. It can be seen that "example teaching" is a very important way of communication and education [12-13].

## 2.4 Connection between the Three

Willingness to Communicate is generally achieved through speech acts, so appropriate discourse behavior can directly affect communication effectiveness. When communicating, immediacy also

directly affects willingness to communicate and communication effectiveness. Discourse behavior directly affect immediacy, so discourse behavior indirectly affect willingness to communicate and communication effectiveness by influencing immediacy. The communication effectiveness can also directly affect immediacy. If the communication effect is poor, the teacher's immediacy for students would be severely damaged; conversely, it would enhance the teacher's immediacy among students [14-15]. The connection between the three is shown in Figure 2.

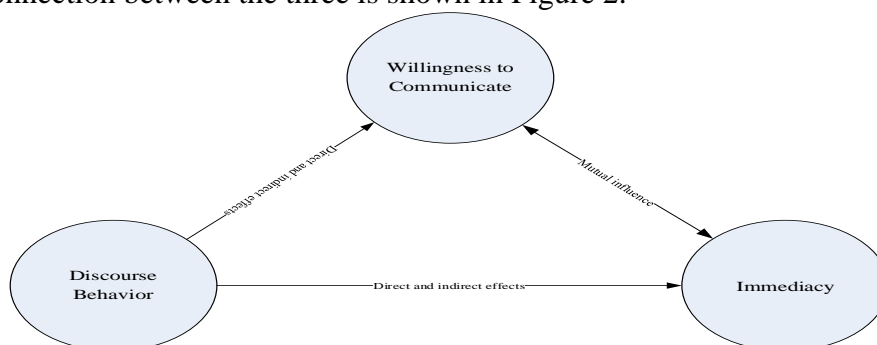


Figure 2: Relationship between Discourse Behavior, Immediacy, and Willingness to Communicate

Verbal behavior directly and indirectly affects immediacy and willingness to communicate, and communication and immediacy interact with each other.

### 3. Specific Methods for Improving Immediacy and Willingness to Communicate

#### 3.1 Standardization of One's Own Discourse Behavior

When communicating, one should smile instead of saying rude words or taking inappropriate actions with a cold face. When communicating, some soothing actions such as touching the head and patting the shoulder can also be carried out based on the students' age, physical and mental condition, so that students would not be affected by nervousness during communication [16]. In particular, attention needs to be paid to the eyes, which are the windows to the soul. Passing the teacher's heart to the students' hearts with caring eyes can establish a good communication bridge.

#### 3.2 Norms for One's Daily Behavior

Teachers need to pay attention to their daily behavior and use their own behavior to educate students. In the teacher's carelessness, students often focus their attention on the professor. If a teacher's daily behavior is not proper, then students would not respect the teacher, and teachers would not be able to achieve friendly communication between teachers and students to achieve educational goals. Therefore, teachers need to always pay attention to their own behavior to lead by example, in order to help students establish the correct three values and teach students the way to behave in society [17].

#### 3.3 Understanding and Respecting Students

Each student's native background is different, resulting in each student having more or less problems [18]. Teachers should not only focus on students' problems, but should pay attention to the causes of these problems. They should not choose to despise, insult, curse, or give up students just because of their problems. Teachers should try to understand and tolerate students, and help them improve these problems.

When communicating, teachers should place themselves and their students on an equal footing

and cannot communicate with students in a commanding tone, as it is impossible to achieve true communication.

### 3.4 Understanding Oneself

To understand others, one must first understand oneself. No one is perfect, and everyone has their own flaws. One needs to understand one's own flaws and accept them, only then can one truly understand and accept others [19]. Teachers should communicate with students based on a deep understanding of themselves. Teachers should use students as mirrors to identify their shortcomings and use their own experiences as a reference to think about the causes and solutions of students' problems.

### 3.5 Methods for Enhancing Immediacy

Immediacy directly affects the willingness and effectiveness to communicate between students and teachers, and the teacher's own immediacy is the foundation for students' willingness to communicate with teachers [20]. If the willingness to communicate between students and teachers is not strong, no matter how excellent the teacher's discourse behavior are, there would not be good communication between teachers and students. So, enhancing immediacy is the top priority.

Several methods to enhance immediacy are as follows:

- (1) Teachers need to improve their moral cultivation and have a broad mind.
- (2) Teachers need to pay more attention to students' small matters. Helping students solve some daily small problems can effectively enhance teachers' immediacy for students.
- (3) Teachers should showcase their gentle side and be patient in daily communication. When students encounter learning difficulties, teachers should patiently explain and not show impatience, otherwise students would be afraid to seek help from the teacher.
- (4) Teachers need to pay attention to their tone during communication and always remind themselves and students to communicate equally.
- (5) Teachers need to maintain appropriate authority. Teachers cannot blindly handle situations where students often do not write assigned homework, and appropriately displaying their authority as teachers can also effectively enhance their immediacy.
- (6) Teachers need to communicate with students more emotionally. When students encounter difficulties and setbacks, enlightening them can effectively enhance the relationship between teachers and students. In daily life, teachers can also ask students more about whether they would encounter any problems (such as emotional issues, issues with their native background, and especially whether there is campus bullying).
- (7) Teachers should be good at discovering students' hobbies and strengths, and should not persist in classifying students according to their grades, which has destroyed the equal relationship. Teachers should be treated equally and should not favor a particular student. This not only effectively avoids cracks in the relationship between students, but also enhances one's own immediacy.
- (8) Improving one's personal image, mental outlook, and having a good personal image and mental outlook can effectively improve the immediacy of teachers.

#### 4. Practice of Enhancing Immediacy Methods

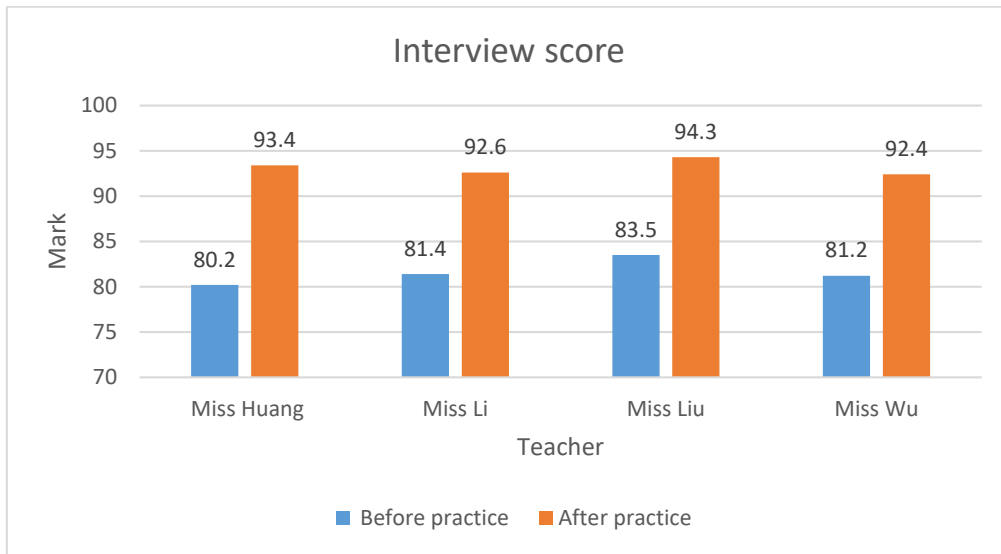


Figure 3: Interview Scoring Results

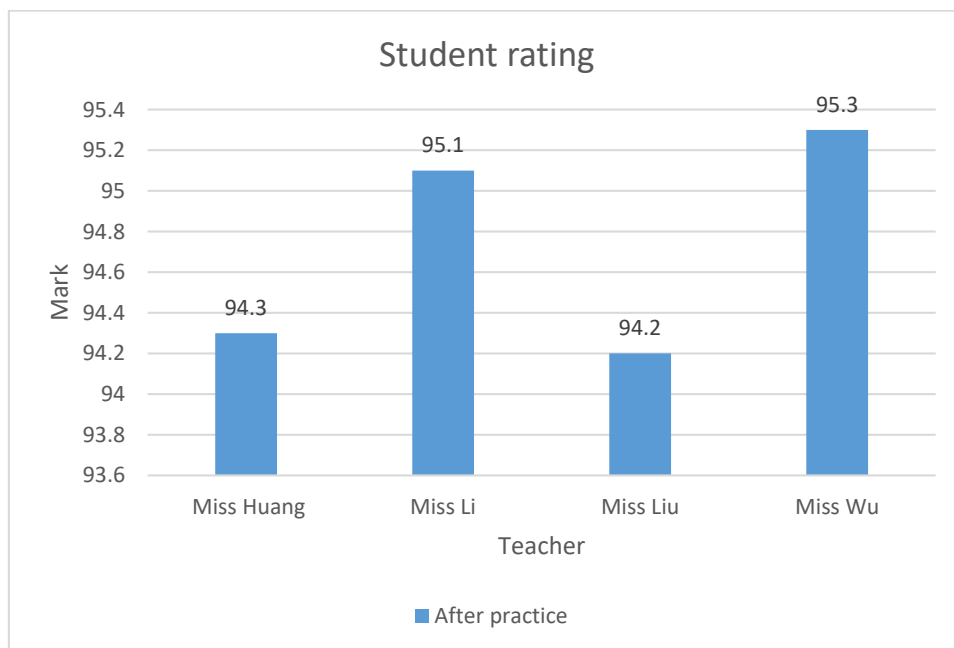


Figure 4: Student Rating Results

In order to verify the effectiveness of the methods studied in this paper, they were applied to practice. Four Chinese English teachers (including Teacher Huang, Teacher Li, Teacher Liu, and Teacher Wu) were selected to use the methods analyzed in this article to enhance their immediacy and carry out teaching practices. These four teachers each lead two classes with 40 students in each class. This paper conducted a three-month practical teaching program. Before and after teaching, these four teachers were rated for their immediacy, and four English teachers were interviewed. Five interviewers were asked to give comprehensive ratings to each of the four teachers, including communication ability, professional ability, emotional management, mental outlook, personal image, appearance and etiquette, and flexibility. The immediacy scores before and after practice were compared. After completing the practical teaching, a questionnaire survey and interviews were

conducted on the students participating in this practice, and the interview results and questionnaire survey results of the students were comprehensively rated. The results of the interview scoring experiment are shown in Figure 3, and the student ratings are shown in Figure 4.

From figures 3 and 4, it can be seen that after using the methods analyzed in this article for practice, both the interview scores and the students' ratings of teachers were 90 points higher. It has been confirmed that the method proposed in this article can effectively enhance the immediacy of teachers.

## 5. Experimental Summary

In order to verify the effectiveness of the methods derived from the study of discourse behavior, immediacy and willingness to communicate in this article, they were applied in practice. Four Chinese English teachers were selected for practice and asked to use the method designed in this article for a three-month teaching period. Before and after the practice, five interviewers were invited to interview the four teachers and provide a comprehensive rating of their immediacy. After the practice was completed, students were interviewed and graded by the students. The practical results showed that the four teachers' scores increased by about 12 points before and after the interview, and students' scores for all four teachers were 90 points higher, confirming that the method proposed in this article was indeed effective.

## 6. Conclusion

For the study of discourse behavior, immediacy and willingness to communicate of Chinese English teachers, this article points out the relationship between discourse behavior, immediacy and willingness to communicate through studying discourse behavior, immediacy, willingness to communicate, and communication methods. Discourse behavior directly or indirectly affects immediacy and willingness to communicate; immediacy and willingness to communicate interact with each other. In order to enhance the immediacy of Chinese English teachers and improve willingness to communicate and communication effectiveness between teachers and students, this article proposed some methods based on analysis and applied them to practical experiments. After the experiment, it was found that the immediacy scores of the four teachers who conducted the practice had significantly improved, increasing by about 12 points. After completing the practice, students were interviewed, and the students had good evaluations of the teachers, with all four teachers scoring above 90 points.

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