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## **Assessing the Degree of Homogenous Online Teaching Textbook Infancy from 1999 to 2007 Using the Immediacy Principle**

By Erik Bean, University of Phoenix and American Public University System

### **ABSTRACT**

Since the 1920s, textbook critics have maintained that textbooks should offer a homogenous editorial approach, including an acknowledgment of a mix of author opinion and scholarly research. Several researchers indicated that some textbooks are not homogenous. The purpose of this quantitative content analysis study was to examine whether independently authored online education textbooks published in the infancy of online teaching development from 1999 to 2007 included acknowledgment of scholarly studies pertaining to a teaching technique dubbed immediacy. In consideration of the growing field of online education and its efficacy, a secondary purpose of the study was to examine the effective transformation of scholarly knowledge to practice. For this study, teacher immediacy in the online classroom was operationalized as non-verbal teacher communications that foster psychological closeness and acknowledge student feelings in a timely manner. This study examined terminology related to immediacy in the first four chapters and chapter titles. The results indicated the early online textbooks did not prominently acknowledge immediacy terminology and did not include peer-reviewed scholarly immediacy references. Compared to terminology related to general student collaboration, the textbooks did not convey significant terminology related to student feelings or closeness, thus the textbooks did not offer a homogeneous approach regarding immediacy scholarship. In addition, in this instance, the books were idiosyncratic in communicating scholarly immediacy knowledge to the field.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Numerous studies have illustrated that scholarly research has an important role in the creation of effective and credible textbooks in many fields (Alred, 2006; Bleiklie & Powell, 2005; Griggs, Proctor, & Cook, 2004; Laidlaw, Harden, Robertson, & Hesketh, 2003; Lewis, 2006; Withrow et al., 2004). Researchers examined business education, knowledge creation in general, psychology education, marketing, medical education, and criminal justice respectively, to determine whether textbooks included acknowledgment of published scholarly research and in some studies, scholarly terminology. Findings indicated scholarly journal references were limited (Alred, 2006; Griggs & Marek, 2001; Griggs et al., 2004).

For example, after examining a stratified sample of 15 introductory psychology textbooks published from 1999 to 2002, Griggs, Proctor and Cook (2004) discovered that no journal articles were cited. According to Griggs et al. (2004), “The texts do not even use common vocabulary (e.g. Zechmeister & Zeckmeister, 2000), much less cite the same articles and books” (p. 115). The studies suggested an imbalanced blend of the author’s voice with text supported by research and little commonality among chapter terminology and the order of discussion topics.

One way to approach testing whether or not a textbook cites scholarly references and germane terminology is to track specific well-documented, peer-reviewed scholarly studies. No studies have been found to have examined journal article reference count and terminology usage in textbooks related to the infancy of online education. Compelling scholarly evidence, for example, indicates the best practice of teacher immediacy can lead to more satisfied online students and higher attendance (Arbaugh, 2001; Rocca, 2004). Therefore, germane scholarly immediacy terminology is worthy of such a test.

In the early 1970s, Mehrabian, a scholar at the University of California, popularized the immediacy principle. Regarding the immediacy principle, Mehrabian (2007) said, “The association of immediacy with liking, preference, and generally good feelings on the one hand and the association with non-immediacy with dislike, discomfort, and other unpleasant feelings lead to numerous applications” (p. 109). Teacher immediacy in the online classroom has been operationalized for this study as non-verbal teacher communications that foster psychological closeness and acknowledge student feelings in a timely manner (Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Easton & Katt, 2005; Mehrabian, 1971; 2007).

Researchers have scrutinized the practice of online teacher since its infancy (Brown, 2006; Day, Smith, & Muma, 2006; Lao, 2002; Moskal, Dziuban, Upchurch, Hartman, & Truman, 2006). Online classrooms in which teacher immediacy is practiced illustrate higher student retention and a more satisfying student experience (Arbaugh, 2001; Dahl, 2004;

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Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Rocca, 2004). Scholars continue to debate how to utilize teacher immediacy in new ways in the online teaching environment.

One theory of scholarly knowledge is to supply professions with useful information and best practices (Bleiklie & Powell, 2005). Researchers conducting scholarly studies usually generate new terminology that allows for better communication in professions. Such terminology emerges through technological or medical breakthroughs or when the language of a particular field is refined as the field changes (He, 2004).

One of the three schools of thoughts regarding the formulation of textbook content, according to Coppola, Hiltz, and Rotter (2002), is that authors with field experience often write textbooks. If this were solely the case, textbooks would contain little or no scholarly citations. However, according to DeGroot and Marshak (1978), a second school of thought indicates that scholars with little practical experience author textbooks. The latter school of thought includes a recommendation that textbook authors include information generated by academicians and by those with practical experience (Arnold, 1993).

Thus, a debate about how such textbook content is developed has contributed to the following quantitative content analysis research study. The purpose of the study, however, is to examine textbook content in the growing field of online teaching to test how scholarly immediacy studies were acknowledged. The study also will quantify the number of immediacy terms prominently found in the first four chapters of online teaching textbooks dated 1999 to 2007.

A sample of 19 popular independently authored online teaching textbooks found on the Amazon.com Internet site, was selected for the study. These books were found using the words *online* and *teaching* or *learning* in the search parameter under the *textbooks* menu tab. A popular textbook is one that lists its sales ranking as the highest on the day the textbook is searched using the selected terms in the Amazon.com search engine. See Population under chapter 3 for a complete definition of the textbooks.

Prominent teacher immediacy studies, those that were peer-reviewed and included *immediacy* in the title or in an abstract, were examined to determine how frequently the online education textbooks include citations of scholarly research. Finally, definitions of online teacher immediacy were divided into two groups, broad and minor to count scholarly citations and terminology related to immediacy in the textbooks. The terminology scale included a selection of 23 terms.

The broad group included 17 words that operationalize teacher behaviors ranging from *feelings*, *closeness* and *proximity* that Mehrabian (1971; 2007) tied to immediacy as

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well as Jones and Wirtz (2006) terminology equating *emotions* tied to immediacy to terms that operationalize student behavior such as *collaboration*, *engagement*, and *interaction*. Minor terms are those associated with the instructor's timely student feedback.

## **BACKGROUND**

Online education is a relatively new field when compared to psychology education. According to Griggs, Proctor, and Cook (2004) psychology education has more than 100 years of peer reviewed scholarly studies available for textbook content. Their sample of psychology education textbooks had a broad range encompassing thousands of scholarly studies that could have been included in their chapters. However, the field of online education dates back to the early 1990s (Lao, 2002).

The sample online teaching textbooks used in this study covered asynchronous and synchronous education practices which have “not been found to be arguably effective and many higher education institutions are struggling how to best implement it [online education]” (Lao, 2002, p. 12). As online education evolves, further research into the effectiveness of online education is needed (Brown, 2006; Day et al., 2006; Moskal et al., 2006). Although the field of online higher education is expanding, the pool of peer-reviewed bibliographic citations is smaller than research available in established fields, such as psychology education.

As noted earlier, Griggs et al. (2004) noted 37,590 bibliographical entries upon examining textbooks from 1985 to 1989. However, not one bibliographical entry was attributed to a scholarly psychology study. In consideration of the vast numbers of psychology scholarly journal citations, the finding was contradictory.

Because asynchronous and synchronous online classes have only been available more widely since the mid-1990s according to Lao (2002), a large number of bibliographical entries would not be expected among the 19 online education textbooks used in the following study. For example, a cursory overview of two online teaching textbooks, *Discussion-Based Online Teaching To Enhance Student Learning* by Bender (2003) and *Collaborating Online Learning Together in Community* by Palloff and Pratt (2005), revealed that the former textbook yielded 94 bibliographical entries, and the latter contained only 41 entries. However, the focus of this study is to inquire if those scholarly journal references are related to teacher immediacy and specifically, how many terms related to immediacy are noted in these textbooks.

Three schools of thought illustrate who authors textbooks and how. DeGroot and Marshak (1978), representing the first school, claimed “textbooks are written, for the most

part, by academicians without too much practical experience and are frequently based on rehashes of other texts before them by like professors” (p. 17). Coppola et al. (2002), from the second school of thought, explained, “Instructors tend to get their training on the job” (p. 186). Hence, Coppola et al. may agree that seasoned online faculty with practical experience should write textbooks. The third school of thought on textbook development, as noted by Baker (1986), includes describing “the textbook, its authorship, and its evaluation as combining the structural aspects of teaching, research, and publication” (as cited in Arnold, 1993, p. 42).

## **Problem Statement**

The descriptive, quantitative content analysis study included an examination of immediacy terminology and immediacy scholarly references in sets of popular 1999 to 2007 online education textbooks. Online education scholars have identified the term *immediacy*, which has been operationalized for this study as non-verbal teacher communications that foster according to Mehrabian (1971; 2007) psychological closeness and acknowledge student feelings in a timely manner (Easton, 2003; Freitas & Myers, 1998; Teven & Hanson, 2004). Use of teacher immediacy in online classrooms can yield higher student retention and satisfaction (Arbaugh, 2001; Dahl, 2004; Rocca, 2004).

Several studies have noted textbooks do not necessarily reflect homogeneous content taking into consideration a mix of scholarly citations and some textbooks do not use common terminology when describing theoretical principles and best practices (Alred, 2006; Bleiklie & Powell, 2005; Griggs, Proctor, & Cook, 2004; Laidlaw, Harden, Robertson, & Hesketh, 2003; Lewis, 2006; Withrow et al., 2004). If educational textbooks do not include consistent terminology and scholarly studies, instructors are only able to read a limited number of best practices (Griggs et al., 2004). Griggs et al. (2004) conducted benchmark research to test how terminology found in scholarly studies is conveyed to the psychology education practice via textbooks. Based on an introductory psychology textbook sample, Griggs et al. determined that textbooks were idiosyncratic, meaning textbooks acknowledged few scholarly journal studies, or scholarly nomenclature.

Collegiate research has contributed to the knowledge base of many professions since academies opened their doors (Bleiklie & Powell, 2005). Researchers operationalize, test, and publish scholarly intuition. Collegiate research often yields new terminology (He, 2004). Nomenclature is the language practitioners use to document theories and paradigms.

Online scholars recommended continued collegiate research that demonstrates the effectiveness of online education in order to validate the quality of education (Brown, 2006; Day et al., 2006; Lao, 2002; Moskal et al., 2006; O’Dwyer, Carey, & Kleiman, 2007). One

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method of determining how well scholarly findings are used to inform any practice is to recognize knowledge transformation from the academy to the practice (Bleiklie & Powell, 2005). The primary problem is the degree to which online education textbooks offer idiosyncratic or homogeneous immediacy content and a secondary problem is the efficacy of validating online education, which the textbooks can perpetuate in content.

Griggs et al. (2004) maintained that introductory psychology textbooks “are not at all homogeneous except for the global dimensions of chapter topics and order” (p. 115). Chapter topics were similar but had no commonality of words expressing the same topic. According to Griggs et al., homogeneous is a term that refers to not only the number of citations in a textbook but also whether the textbook includes similar nomenclature found in scholarly studies.

Griggs et al. (2004) maintained, “Teachers should be aware of this non-homogeneity in introductory texts” (p. 115). If teacher immediacy is homogeneous among the popular texts, judged by nomenclature found in chapter headings and paragraphs containing immediacy terminology, facilitators can include online textbooks in higher educational training materials more confidently. The findings of the study may help to ensure that future online instructors follow the best practices proven to promote student retention, such as immediacy (Arbaugh, 2001; Dahl, 2004; Rocca, 2004).

Textbook authors, according to Kurtz et al. (2002), are leaders in their fields. Alred (2006), however, believed that many textbook authors oversimplify scholarly concepts to the point that they do not convey the original meaning properly. The results of the study to follow provide higher education textbook authors and editorial leadership a better understanding of whether textbooks are idiosyncratic, meaning the editorial content contains few citations, or homogeneous, meaning the content contains many citations. The study is significant to the field of educational leadership because authors, editors, and publishers can learn how to reflect on the quality, credibility, and value of their work.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study involved knowledge creation theory, transfer, and usage in practice (Bleiklie & Powell, 2005; He, 2004) and textbook and curriculum development theory (Alred, 2006; Arnold, 1993; Coppola et al., 2002; Kurtz et al., 2002; Laidlaw et al., 2003; Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens, & Weir, 2006; Marshak & DeGroot, 1978; Withrow, Weible, & Bonnett, 2004). In addition, the study involved online teacher immediacy best practice theory (Easton, 2003; Freitas & Myers, 1998). As discussed, Rocca (2004) indicated a correlation between teacher immediacy and higher college student attendance as discussed earlier. Arbaugh (2001) has shown immediacy can lead to more satisfied students.

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Researchers have affirmed teacher immediacy effectiveness in online classrooms (Arbaugh, 2001; Conaway, Easton, & Schmidt, 2005; Dahl, 2004). When operationalized for this study in terms of the online classroom teacher, immediacy includes two categories: instructor-initiated personalized communications that are particularly considerate of student feelings and build psychological closeness and instructor timely online responses. In a general application of immediacy, Mehrabian (2007) said, “Immediacy or closeness in an interaction between two persons (or between an individual and an object) involves greater physical proximity and/or increasing perceptual availability of two persons (or an object to a person)” (p. 180). Thus, words like *closeness*, *feelings*, and *proximity*, can be viewed as scholarly terms that best operationalize immediacy.

Terms such as *emotions* or *emotional* cues according to Jones and Wirtz (2006) are also related to immediacy. “Two such message features, verbal person centeredness (PC) and nonverbal immediacy (NI), have consistently been found to be particularly beneficial in bringing about emotional change” (p. 217).

Griggs et al. (2004) conducted research to investigate whether instruction in introductory psychology communicated the advice of the scholarly community. By examining and applying the results of the Griggs et al. research to the practice of online education, the study included establishing a benchmark for the frequency of teacher immediacy citation. Griggs et al. noted, “It is not unreasonable for teachers to expect that introductory texts would present the basic common core concepts of psychology as well as cite a common set of classic studies and books” (p. 115). The focus of the study to follow did not include immediacy in introductory psychology. Instead, the focus included immediacy terminology usage in online education textbooks, the extent to which the textbooks cite scholarly studies, and whether consistency exists in nomenclature choice for chapter headings.

Underlying the degree to which textbooks include acknowledgment of the scholarly community is a debate about the authors of the textbooks: Marshak and DeGroot (1978) argued that people with practical experience in the field do not necessarily write textbooks. Coppola et al. (2002) contended that online instructors learn by doing. Moore (1993) observed that “instruction is no longer an individual’s work, but the work of teams of specialists—media specialists, knowledge specialists, instruction design specialists and learning specialists” (as cited in Laidlaw et al., 2003, p. 182).

Based on the compendium by Griggs et al. (2004), an absence of teacher immediacy discussion or an absence of scholarly references pertinent to immediacy in the online educational textbooks would indicate that the books are idiosyncratic, but only in

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comparison to the best practice of immediacy. Stakeholders such as school administrators, students, and faculty may benefit from the study because the results indicated the extent to which textbooks communicated immediacy as a best practice identified by scholars. Online educational textbook audiences would want to know the effectiveness of teacher immediacy and how to employ immediacy in discourse exchanges with students.

If the presence of immediacy scholarly studies was low, the textbooks were idiosyncratic. If, however, the authors adequately cited immediacy scholars, textbooks were homogeneous. The degree to which textbooks included prominent immediacy terminology and mimicked one another in terms of immediacy terminology chapter placement shows whether such online education textbooks have commonalities that as instructional texts Griggs et al. (2004) say should be consistent for training purposes.

Griggs et al. (2004) provided a method to determine whether textbooks are idiosyncratic or homogeneous. The fewer peer-reviewed scholarly studies cited in a textbook, the more idiosyncratic the textbook. In a 2001 content analysis, Griggs and Marek discovered that 27,590 individual bibliographical entries appeared among 24 textbooks published between 1985 and 1989. However, all the texts included a citation of only one peer-reviewed journal article (as cited in Griggs et al., 2004).

Griggs et al. (2004) concluded that introductory psychology textbooks did not adequately include citations of scholarly studies. Thus, the textbooks were idiosyncratic. Because several introductory psychology textbooks were idiosyncratic, Griggs et al. maintained that instructors who rely on such texts for classroom instruction had little consistency in terms of planning classroom lessons. As noted earlier, Griggs et al. elaborated, “The texts do not even use a common core vocabulary (e.g. Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2000), much less cite the same articles and books” (p. 115). Griggs et al. concluded that the discipline of psychology education lacked a common scholarly base as well as nomenclature.

The study of independently authored higher education textbooks included replicating portions of the Griggs et al. (2004) study. The approach of Griggs et al. was employed to assess textbooks by counting citations and references associated with scholarly peer-reviewed studies. Instead of examining introductory psychology textbooks, the study involved testing the research design of Griggs et al. using online education textbooks designed to train instructors on how to engage students.

Griggs et al. (2004) concluded that textbooks are not homogeneous in terminology and conveyance of scholarly knowledge of basic psychological principles. According to Cabré, “Four stages of modern terminology are identified: the origin, the structuring, the

boom and the expansion” (as cited in He, 2004, p. 86). The study did not involve analysis of the stages. The stages affirm that terms are created and used to a higher or lesser degree. The online education textbooks represent a vehicle of communication that can disseminate immediacy best practice knowledge through common immediacy terminology.

## **Definition of Terms**

The study involved teacher immediacy terminology. A terminology scale and the Coding Book of Definitions included definitions of the terms. The term immediacy relates to teacher behaviors, not student behaviors, and from its roots in 1971, immediacy itself was defined as the psychological closeness a communicator (sender) conveys between him- or herself and the recipient of the message (Mehrabian, 1971; 2007). The study included a focus on instructor-to-learner immediacy and involved a content analysis of the prominence of online teacher immediacy terminology conveyed in popular, independently authored online teaching textbooks.

The bulk of teacher immediacy research entailed verbal (Carrell & Menzel, 2001; Swan & Richardson, 2003) and nonverbal (Freitas & Myers, 1998; Rocca, 2004) instructor behaviors. While some forms of online instruction can allow for verbal exchanges, most communication in the online asynchronous and synchronous classrooms is non-verbal dependent on written postings and exchanges.

However, body language has little influence in the asynchronous and synchronous classes offered by many colleges and universities because students do not see the instructor. Consequently, for nonverbal teacher immediacy, assessing online body language is not easy; rather, written transactions between instructor and student are the primary focus. Conaway et al. (2005) claimed, “Strategies for increasing immediacy online include writing in a conversational tone, using students’ names in the postings, and including personal notes in the group feedback” (p. 32).

Building a successful social learning rapport in the online distance learning (ODL) environment between instructor and student is an on-going process in the online classroom. The timeliness and frequency of written communications typically determine teacher immediacy. Even more important is the degree to which communications foster student psychological comfort. Easton and Katt (2005) stated, “Several factors such as teacher immediacy, interaction, and psychological comfort have been identified as influencing collaborative learning” (p. 179).

To ensure that teacher immediacy in the online classroom can radiate from written communications, “instructors need to be aware of the impact that their immediacy behaviors

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and social presence or lack thereof may have on their students' satisfaction, motivation, and learning" (Swan & Richardson, 2003, p. 81). Thus, how an instructor personalizes communications to a student ties to student satisfaction and as Rocca (2004) noted, increased student attendance. The definition of online teacher immediacy includes two distinct categories: The first category concerns personalized student responses, and the second category concerns the timeliness of responses. Before online classes existed, in a formidable definition, Duran and Zakahi (1987) claimed that being *personable*—attentive, friendly, open, relaxed—and lively comprised immediacy.

Two delineated formats observed within the popular textbooks served as the definition of teacher immediacy. The first format, *broad emphasis*, indicates the need for instructors to acknowledge personally or reinforce the feelings and emotions of the online students through communications such as email, message board postings, or assignment feedback. The second format, *minor emphasis*, references timely instructor responses.

The Coding Book of Definitions included two categories of immediacy terminology, broad and minor and a display of these terms as list can be found in the Immediacy Terminology and Reference/Citation Coding Sheets. Broad terms relate to *feelings* and *closeness*. Teacher immediacy in the online classroom has been operationalized for the study as non-verbal teacher communications that foster psychological closeness and acknowledge student feelings and emotions in a timely response. Minor terms relate to timely instructor responses, such as *quick*, *fast*, and *speedy*.

## **Assumptions**

The first assumption was that the word *immediacy* would not likely appear in the textbooks. Instead of the word *immediacy*, its operational terms, such as *feelings* and *closeness*, as defined in the Coding Book of Definitions (see Appendix B), may be acknowledged based on happenstance related to the level of online teaching experience each independent author held as an instructor. The second assumption was that the term *immediacy* may not be so readily on the mind of the independent author who had earnestly searched scholarly research databases but who only applied familiar terms, such as *collaboration*, *interaction*, and *engagement*, within such searches. Appendix A represents prominent immediacy studies those with the word *immediacy* in the title or abstract.

The scholarly field of research applied to teacher immediacy in the online classroom was less than one decade old. Conversely, Griggs et al. (2004) had more than 100 years of scholarly citations and references available to study the introductory psychology textbooks. Immediacy has been well documented in scholarly journals for approximately two decades for all modalities of classroom instruction (see Appendix A) for a complete list of prominent

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immediacy studies. However, while prominent studies, those with *online* and *immediacy* in the title or an having an abstract regarding online immediacy are becoming popular, far fewer of them have been published in the last 5 years than on-ground classroom immediacy studies (Conaway et al., 2005; Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Waldeck, Kearney, & Plax, 2001).

Researchers have studied online immediacy during the early online efficacy years of 1999 to 2007 in the online asynchronous and synchronous. Few scholarly studies emerged from exhaustive searches through the InfoTrac database, and the Google and Yahoo! search engines. Almost exclusively, peer-reviewed information on the topic of immediacy was gathered. Information regarding online immediacy was available through EBSCOhost (Elton B. Stephens Company), ProQuest Dissertations, and ERIC databases. Only peer-reviewed scholarly journals containing full texts were included in the study.

## **Limitations**

Because no other definition of online teacher immediacy was available, limitations existed due to the unique operational definition of online teacher immediacy created and used throughout this study. Capturing words other than the term *immediacy* served to determine whether the online education textbooks had discussed the scholarly concept of immediacy even if prominent scholarly references were not identified in text or in the reference section of the textbooks. In addition, training coders to recognize when the term immediacy was relative to its typical dictionary definition opposed to the scholarly based operational definition developed for the study presented a challenge. The limitation here added to additional coder training time and because too few instances of the term immediacy would be found, there were no portions of the textbooks available to test the coders' ability to find either the dictionary or a scholarly-based operational definition.

The prominent scholarly immediacy references also presented a limitation. Prominent immediacy studies were defined with the word *immediacy* in the title or in the abstract. Consequently, not all available immediacy studies were used to compare whether they were included in the reference section of the online education textbooks. The rationale for only limiting the definition of prominent immediacy studies to those using immediacy in the title or abstract had to do with the concept of immediacy itself. A belief that the relatively unknown immediacy concept would be more likely discovered in searches of scholarly studies that more prominently touted the term, guided the study.

The sample size of 19 independently authored online teaching textbooks was small based upon how Amazon.com retrieves the books and due to the relatively new field of online education. If the sample were somehow stratified, it would have been even smaller based on how the Amazon.com popularity rating and keyword search terms retrieved the

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available books. Thus, this small sample size limits the generalizable findings to other textbooks. The results of the study may be generalizable to the educational publication community.

## **Delimitations**

The textbooks for the study were not available in a portable document format (PDF). However, if each of the 19 textbooks were available electronically, the accuracy in counting among coders would not necessarily increase. Accuracy is limited even with an electronic sample that affects what coders can and cannot count in the textbooks. In the study, coders did not count bullet points, direct quotes, and sidebar stories because these did not constitute the definition of a paragraph.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

A review of the literature indicated the breadth of teacher immediacy behaviors traditionally defining this best practice as a communication technique. Therefore, a review of on-ground classroom immediacy usage and online immediacy usage was conducted. What makes teacher immediacy such an important part of online education is what has made immediacy so useful in on-ground classrooms: student satisfaction and retention (Arbaugh, 2001; Duran & Zakahi, 1987; Easton, 2003; Freitas & Myers, 1998; Rocca, 2004).

Teacher immediacy is an example of scholarly knowledge creation. According to Bleiklie and Powell (2005), universities create knowledge later used in the practice. Scholarly research illustrates a strong representation of immediacy, and the word *immediacy* appeared in scholarly texts more than 30 years ago (Mehrabian, 1971). Immediacy includes a division between the behaviors that the teacher or student elicits.

## **Title Searches**

The search for pertinent information related to immediacy included sources such as ProQuest, InfoTrac, Digital Dissertations, and Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) databases. In addition, searches on the Internet included using the search engines Google and Yahoo! and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* website. However, the most germane peer-reviewed scholarly studies related to immediacy appeared in the EBSCOhost (Elton B. Stephens Company) scholarly database. Only peer-reviewed scholarly journals with full texts available were used in the search process.

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A call for homogeneous textbooks that combine independent authorship with peer-reviewed journal research was announced as early as the late 1920s (Kulp, 1927).

Three schools of thoughts highlight how editorial content in textbooks are shaped. DeGroot and Mashak (1978) maintain textbooks are written by academics with little practical experience. Coppola et al. (2002) argue that teachers with classroom field experience write education textbooks. Others like Arnold (1993) state that textbooks should be a collaboration of those with teaching, research, and publishing experience.

Mehrabian (1971) tied immediacy to psychological closeness between the communication sender and receiver. Throughout the next three decades, the efficacy of immediacy would be analyzed in on-ground classrooms, distance learning classes, and online classrooms. Immediacy was differentiated from other online classroom terms such as *collaboration*, *interaction*, and *engagement* that might otherwise be related to behaviors cultivated from both teacher and student. Yorks (2005) said the academy should take onus for transferring knowledge to industry and the field. According to Bleiklie and Powell (2005) scholars sometimes create new terminology for use in the practice. Terminology is the language a field uses to document theories and paradigms (He, 2004). Immediacy is a term created by scholars and it is unknown how immediacy is being communicated to the practice of teacher education outside of the academy.

A review of higher education textbook publishing illustrated that some textbooks reflect independent authorship, known as idiosyncratic, and other textbooks incorporate a more homogeneous approach combining scholarly knowledge and a variety of opinions. Griggs et al. (2004) maintained that curriculum development should be tied to textbook development and that authors should strive to agree on topics, terminology, and presentation order based on chapter headings. In the Griggs et al. study, higher education introductory psychology textbooks lacked sufficient scholarly citations, and the chapter headings and nomenclature appeared to be more idiosyncratic than homogeneous. Withrow et al. (2004) observed uniformity among criminal justice introductory texts based on inclusion of relatively even numbers of scholarly studies.

The educational scholarly community documented teacher immediacy throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (Rocca, 2004). Later, researchers demonstrated how to deploy teacher immediacy in the online classroom regardless of an asynchronous or synchronous modality (Easton & Katt, 2005).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The primary purpose of the study was to document how prominently and frequently popular mass-marketed online teaching textbooks include acknowledgment of an important

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teaching approach, immediacy, and how often these textbooks include acknowledgment of prominent scholarly studies about immediacy. DeGroot and Marshak (1978) maintained that academics with little significant first-hand experience write textbooks. Coppola et al. (2002) argued that instructors who do author textbooks do have much experience, and, finally, Arnold (1993) asserted that textbooks should be a collaboration between teaching, researching, and publishing efforts.

Regardless of the author's level of experience, many scholars agree that textbooks should comprise a homogenous scholarly mix rather than reflect only the author's voice (Alred, 2006; Kulp, 1927; Laidlaw et al., 2003; Lewis et al., 2006). The homogenous approach of the textbooks was determined by examining whether the independently authored online educational textbooks included acknowledgment of the best practice of immediacy as documented by the scholars.

A secondary purpose of the study was to examine the transformation of knowledge to practice. Availability of online degree programs continues to increase. According to Kyle (2005), "The 2003 MBAInfo database indicated that 208 institutions worldwide offer MBA programs online or through distance learning. As of October 2003, USNews.com (2003) was listing 246 online graduate degree programs, up from 48 in 2001" (p. 241). However, academicians, such as Moskal, Dziuban, Upchurch, Hartman, & Truman (2006), question online education as an effective learning tool. Researchers such as these recommend that studies continue to address instructor interest in effective online teaching.

The academy exists to transfer knowledge to the practice (Bleiklie & Powell, 2005). Presence of scholarly immediacy terminology in online education textbooks indicates knowledge has been transferred. Secondly, if the practice of online education implements best practices responsibly, the practice has an opportunity to prove growth in attendance that is not simply due to convenience of the online modality. Academicians have demonstrated online immediacy is a best practice that leads to student satisfaction and retention (Arbaugh, 2001; Dahl, 2004; Rocca, 2004).

An analysis of the sample psychology texts revealed a peculiar idiosyncratic view between the terminology and scholarly references in the textbooks (Griggs et al., 2004). The online education textbook study involved using a similar method of counting terms. The study of online education textbooks involved applying the quantitative content analysis methodology to independently authored online teaching textbooks instead of introductory psychology textbooks as in Griggs et al.

Griggs et al. (2004) examined introductory psychology textbooks copyrighted from 1999 to 2002 in the context of a content analysis. Griggs et al. discovered that textbooks

were not homogeneous with regard to their reference citations and chapter headings. The order in which authors presented classic scholarly psychology topics and the terminology identified in published journal studies revealed no consistency among the textbooks. Finally, Griggs et al. noted that an inconsistency existed in the number of scholarly studies cited and the authors of the scholarly studies.

Because the study was a partial retest of the Griggs et al. (2004) benchmark research, the study included the content analysis format. A content analysis provides a superior quantifiable data investigative approach compared to a qualitative study. A quantitative study, such as the content analysis, allows variables to be measured to determine whether the hypothesis can be generalized (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

## **Terminology Scale**

A terminology scale was created that incorporated two categories, broad and minor for the purposes of researching immediacy-related terms in the textbooks. Broad terms relate to immediacy in its simplest term. For example, Mehrabian (1971) indicated immediacy as the psychological closeness experienced between sender and receiver. Thus, *closeness* was selected as one of the broad immediacy terms, whereby minor terms related to timely online instructor replies, such as *quick*, *fast*, and *speedy*.

Although the study involved tracking the more important broad definition of immediacy, tracking the minor counterpart was advantageous. The intent was to determine whether textbook paragraphs contained immediacy terminology in its most simplistic purpose as operationally defined. In the case of broad immediacy, terms such as *feelings* and *closeness* represented immediacy in its most simplistic form. The minor delineated terms included *timely*, *quick*, and *fast*.

In several cases, synonyms of the words (see Appendix B) represented terms related to immediacy. However, the more such terms departed from *feelings* and *emotions*, the more likely the terms were not included in the scale; for example, Textbook 2 contained the term *psychological*, which was eliminated from the scale. While the term may relate to the social and emotional well-being of the student, the term *closeness* was selected as it represented the outcome immediacy was intended in its most simplistic form. The term *think* did not function as a synonym for *thought* because thinking is an activity that occurs constantly and was too broad to appear in the category with *feelings* and *emotions*. Textbook 16 included the word *moderating*, which was not included in the scale.

The term *participation* emerged in several textbooks, including Textbook 19. *Participation* was judged a generic term, like *moderating*, related to *interaction* or

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*collaboration*, a low-broad immediacy term. Finally, *speedy* or *rapidly*, as defined in Thesaurus (2007), were combined because not only were *speedy* and *rapidly* synonyms of each other, but any term numbered from 18 to 23 was classified as a minor immediacy term (terms not as important to the outcome of the study). Appendix B includes a complete list of terminology used.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the quantitative research study:

1. Does the complete textbook sample offer a homogeneous or idiosyncratic approach to the usage of immediacy based on the number of scholarly immediacy citations referenced?
2. How many instances of the word *immediacy* appear in each of the online teaching textbooks, and which broad or minor immediacy terms are featured most prominently in the first four chapters?
3. How prominent is teacher immediacy terminology in chapter titles?

## **Research Hypothesis**

The following null and alternate hypotheses guided the study:

$H_0$ 1: No difference exists between the two sets of textbooks in the number of references and citations devoted to teacher immediacy regardless of the publication timeframe.

$H_1$ 1: The more recent set of textbooks contains a larger number of scholarly studies related to teacher immediacy due to the publication of more prominent scholarly immediacy studies between 2003 and 2007.

## **Instrument Rationale**

The independent variable for the study was the publication dates of the textbooks. In the study, the publication dates formed two categories: 1999 to 2002 and 2003 to 2007. The primary hypothesis indicated that the older set of textbooks would contain less discussion and terminology associated with immediacy because more online immediacy scholarly studies were published in the later period, corresponding to the newer set of textbooks. However, the earlier date set sample contained an extra textbook. The more recent the publication, the more likely online immediacy terminology would be included (see Appendix A for a list of peer-reviewed prominent immediacy scholarly studies).

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The quantitative study included the content analysis instrument to examine the two sets of online textbooks available from the most popular online bookseller, Amazon.com. The study involved comparing one set of 10 of the most popular textbooks published from 1999 to 2002, when online education was struggling for legitimacy (Lao, 2002) to a more modern set. The modern set contained 9 of the most popular online educational textbooks published from 2003 to 2007, a period in which the efficacy of online education continued (Brown, 2006; Day et al., 2006; Moskal et al., 2006). The sets did not include an equal number of textbooks because each set represented all the available most popular, independently authored online teaching textbooks based on search term criteria discussed earlier.

The textbooks were only available as traditional perfect-bound or softcover textbooks. The study involved searching each textbook for key words, such as *immediacy*, within the table of contents, text, and reference pages and tracking paragraph counts related to broad and minor operational definitions of immediacy. Percentage of total paragraphs within the chapters served as comparative data. Trained coders scanned the reference pages for scholarly immediacy authors.

## Population

The population was drawn from the largest mass-marketed bookstore online, Amazon.com. According to Creswell et al. (2003), the term *population* refers to individuals or objects that share common characteristics. The first step of deriving the population included selecting the Amazon.com website menu tab entitled *textbooks*. *Mass-marketed textbook* referred to any length manuscript for sale, other than an article, in *softcover*, also known as *perfect-bound*, or *hardcover* available to the public from online booksellers under a specific portion of such websites labeled *textbooks*.

The search included only textbooks from the *college textbook* category tab and only the most popular, independently authored hardcover or softcover texts using the terms *engaging*, *online*, *students* or *teaching*, *online*, *students*. Initially, the search included the above terms paired with *immediacy*, but the search did not yield any textbooks. Thus, the dearth prompted more obvious and popular terms, such as *collaboration*, *interaction*, and *engaging*. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) explained Amazon.com's ranking system as follows:

Chevalier and Goolsbee (2003a) reported that Amazon.com claims that for books in the top 10,000 ranks, the rankings are based on the last 24 hours and are updated hourly. For books ranked 10,001–100,000, the ranks are updated once a day. For books ranked greater than 100,000, the sales ranks are updated once a month (Amazon.com 2000). (p. 346)

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Sales ranking affected which books were available for retrieval, the keyword search determines, on the particular day, the search outcome. The Amazon.com search engine provided the most popular books for the key words in the search, typically returning three pages of results, detailing 48 textbooks. However, not all of the textbooks contained *online* or *distance learning* in the titles, not all were independently authored, and not all achieved the highest rankings, which led to their subsequent removal.

If a title did not include other words, such as *collaborating*, *interacting*, *engaging*, *teaching*, *learning*, *instruction*, *learners*, or *facilitation*, the textbook was removed from the population. Moreover, in cases where *learning* appeared in a title, but the title further indicated that the textbook addressed only *assessment* or *evaluation* of online students, such titles were removed. Books arranged as compilations of multiple papers or multiple authors were excluded because the books were not independently authored. Finally, where a similarly authored textbook appeared as another edition, only the latest edition was included, and duplications of textbooks found on Amazon.com were removed. The goal was to make both sample sets equivalent in number. However, based on popularity, the older sample yielded more qualified texts. Selection of the Amazon.com textbook sample occurred during the summer of 2006. After the proposal was accepted in April 2007, the textbooks were purchased from Amazon.com or obtained through interlibrary loans.

While every effort was made to ensure that the textbooks reflected independent authors, 3 textbooks were later found to be edited compilations of authors, not independent authorship. These textbooks could not form part of the study. To maintain as large a sample size as possible, based on sample criteria, either the next most popular book from a 2007 Amazon.com search was acquired, or, in one case, a textbook from 2007 was used because it met the criteria and was the first to appear in relation to the search string.

During the data-gathering stage, three of the textbooks were found to be compilations of multiple authors written by a single editor. These books were disqualified from the sample. In order to broaden the sample to the largest size possible, the decision to replace these textbooks with the next most popular independently authored textbooks was constructed from an Amazon.com search in May 2007 using the search term criteria discussed earlier. The first most popular 2007 textbook meeting the selection criteria resulted in the sample including texts published between 1999 and 2007.

Table 1 illustrates a complete listing of the final sample of textbooks compiled under the 1999 to 2002 set and the more recent 2003 to 2007 set.

Table 1 *Final Text Book Sample Selected*

Popular textbooks 2003 to 2007	Popular textbooks 1999 to 2002
1. <i>How to Teach Online (and Make \$100,000 a Year)</i> by Brown (2007)	10. <i>Teaching &amp; Learning Online</i> by Morris (2002)
2. <i>Student Engagement in Campus-Based and Online Education: University Connections</i> by Coates (2006)	11. <i>E-Activities: The Key to Online Teaching, Training and Learning</i> by Salmon (2002)
3. <i>Learning in Real Time: Synchronous Teaching and Learning Online</i> by Finkelstein (2006)	12. <i>Teaching Online</i> by Draves (2002)
4. <i>500 Tips for Open and Online Learning</i> by Race (2005)	13. <i>Supporting Students in Online, Open and Distance Learning</i> by Simpson (2002)
5. <i>75 E-Learning Activities: Making Online Learning Interactive</i> by Watkins (2005)	14. <i>E-Moderating: The Virtual Student</i> by Salmon (2001)
6. <i>Collaborating Online: Learning Together in Community</i> by Palloff and Pratt (2005)	15. <i>Teaching Online: A Practical Guide</i> by Ko and Rossen (2001)
7. <i>Student Retention in Online, Open, and Distance Learning</i> by Simpson (2003)	16. <i>Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators</i> by Collison, Elbaum, Haavind, and Tinker (2000)
8. <i>The Virtual Student: A Profile &amp; Guide to Working with Online Learners</i> by Palloff and Pratt (2003)	17. <i>147 Practical Tips for Teaching Online Groups: Essentials of Web-Based Education</i> by Hanna, Glowacki-Dudka, and Conceicao-Runlee (2000)
9. <i>Discussion-Based Online Teaching to Enhance Student Learning: Theory, Practice and Assessment</i> by Bender (2003)	18. <i>Online Education: Learning and Teaching in Cyberspace</i> by Kearsley (2000)
	19. <i>Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom</i> by Palloff and Pratt (1999)

## Sampling

A total of 19 independently authored textbooks were included, nine from 2003 to 2007 and 10 from 1999 through 2002. Although several other textbooks were found, they were not independently authored as discussed earlier. Based on the keyword search and Amazon.com's popular ranking method, reproducing the same sample again, may not be

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possible. Therefore, all the most popular independently authored books were included. Based on this sampling approach, the only other possible means to identify the best selling online teaching textbooks would be to survey the publishers. According to Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005), “The value of research using a convenient sample should not be diminished” (p. 102). If the sample, such as the best selling Amazon.com population of online teaching textbooks identified, was small and the content was not homogeneous, bias may be introduced. Riffe et al. maintained that journalistic endeavors typically are not homogeneous by nature.

A cursory review of chapter arrangements was necessary after the 19 textbooks were finalized. No common pattern of terminology or the order of best practices discussed had emerged after examination of chapter headings in 4 of the textbooks. Sampling of the paragraphs was stratified by chapter. Consequently, chapter content complexity was expected to vary significantly (see Appendix H for specific paragraph counts). References from the entire sample were coded and compared to the scholarly peer-reviewed immediacy journal articles.

Griggs et al. (2004) included 24 textbooks in the study of introductory psychology textbooks but produced an in-depth study because of 100 years of psychological scholarly references available for inclusion in the texts. The practice of online education has approximately 1 decade of research from which to draw scholarly studies. Hence, the authors of the online teaching textbooks had more than 40 immediacy studies (see Appendix A) available for inclusion in the texts.

## **Data Collection**

Raw data comprising of scholarly immediacy terminology drawn from the terminology scale discussed earlier were culled from the first four chapters of the 19 independently authored online teaching textbooks. Counting instances of prominent scholarly immediacy in-text and reference page citations were among the most important descriptive statistical variables tracked for the study. Finally, counting the instances of scholarly immediacy terminology drawn from the terminology scale in chapter titles and sub-titles also comprised the raw data.

Each coder used the perfect bound textbooks defined in the sample to gather data about immediacy. For the terminology scale, teacher immediacy terminology was divided into two categories. The first was a broad category that included a number of terms related to immediacy, such as students’ *feelings*, *closeness*, and *emotions* (Mehrabian, 1971; 2007). The second category was a minor category that included associating immediacy with timely

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instructor responses. A Coding Book of Definitions was developed to define each page variable as well as all study definitions and each coder received a tabulation form.

Each of the 19 textbooks received a number, and coders gathered the data based on numerical matches relevant to an assigned numerical value for coding purposes. The data gathering technique is a common practice for content analysis. Unlike other types of statistical or quantitative studies, researchers using content analysis rely heavily on the accuracy of coding. Thus, inter-coder reliability formed an important part of the data collection process.

The data collection process commenced with each textbook receiving a number, 1 through 19. Next was the year of publication. The number 1 indicated textbooks published in 1999, and 9 indicated textbooks published in 2007, for example. In the original dissertation proposal, only texts published between 1999 and 2006 were included.

The chapter headings were used to rank the prominence of immediacy terminology discussed and determined whether the term was specifically used in the first four chapters, for example. Coders compared in-text citations to a list of scholarly immediacy citations, a set of more than 45 peer-reviewed studies since 1990 that contained the word immediacy in the title or abstract. If an author was listed in this study sample, but his or her authorship did not appear in a corresponding scholarly article title, a credit citing a scholar was issued if the first initial and last name matched.

## **Data Analysis**

Raw data from the 19 textbooks were entered into a Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> spreadsheet starting with the textbook assigned a number based upon the year. The second column represented the corresponding code based upon the textbook publication year. Columns C through N represented the raw data for the chapter title and subtitle where immediacy terminology found. Columns O through X accounted for the number of paragraphs where both broad and minor immediacy terminology were found and the total number of paragraphs per chapter in each of the first four textbook chapters. Two grand total columns also accompanied this raw data category.

Columns Y through AU then included the instances of each of the 23 broad and minor immediacy terms found. Columns AV and AW were used to track the raw instances of prominent scholarly immediacy in-text and reference citations. Finally, column AX was used for the total general reference count per textbook.

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To test significance of the hypothesis, samples were selected from two independent populations of textbooks. The samples were examined for evidence of scholarly references. Hypothesis testing was then conducted using a z-test comparing the proportions of the samples with scholarly references from each of the populations. The null hypothesis was that the proportion of scholarly references in the two textbook populations would be equal; the alternate hypothesis was that those textbooks with the more recent publication dates would have a higher proportion of textbooks with scholarly references than the earlier set of textbooks.

Hypothesis testing procedure for testing two population proportions was used to examine if the two samples came from populations with an equal proportion of success. The null and alternate hypothesis were applied as follows:  $H_0$ : proportion 1 (textbooks published from 1999 to 2002) = proportion 2 (textbooks published from 2003 to 2007) and  $H_1$  proportion 1 (textbooks published from 1999 to 2002) < proportion 2 (textbooks published from 2003 to 2007). The level of significance with a margin of error of 0.05 was applied. A z-test to compare two sample proportions was applied with calculations from the data collected from each of the population samples. In order for the hypothesis to be accepted, the proportion of recently published textbooks must be greater than the proportion of earlier published textbooks with scholarly references. The results were tabulated using Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> and MiniTab<sup>®</sup>.

## **Journalistic Prominence**

Budd (1964) conducted one of the first studies to survey a portion of the journalism profession to develop a device, the Budd Index, to measure newspaper reader attention score. Budd developed five criteria, and eight randomly selected editors rated the criteria in terms of importance. The five criteria included (a) multicolumn heads as opposed to one-column heads; (b) a story placed at the top of any page, or above the fold; (c) stories that run three-fourths of a column; (d) stories with an accompanying photograph; and (e) stories prominently published on the front page or principal department page.

Budd (1964) removed the fourth criterion because it was not as relevant as the others, and the editors selected the fifth, second, and first criteria as the most important. The measurement device was an improvement on an earlier version developed by Teh-Chi Yu in 1949 (as cited in Budd, 1964). According to Budd, “The attention score, in its present form, is thought to be well suited for use in comparisons of publications similar in physical size” (p. 260). A cursory examination of 6 of the online teacher textbooks revealed that each was relatively the same 6 x 9 size or slightly larger. Thus, the closer immediacy terminology appeared towards chapter 1 in a textbook, based on Budd’s argument, the more the terminology would be noticed.

## **Inter-coder Reliability**

For purposes of testing the reliability of coders to cull the number of times *immediacy* appeared in a textbook, two test coders were used. Establishing inter-coder reliability included examining the accuracy of coders comparing the peer-reviewed prominent immediacy articles with those appearing in the textbook reference sections. Coders I and II examined the number of citations within the first four chapters (see Appendix A for the complete list of peer-reviewed immediacy articles).

## **Validity**

Because the population and sample of the study did not include people, much control over the accuracy of the information was attainable by devising the Coding Book of Definitions and rewriting materials to allow coders to cull data better during the pilot test. Because the development of the coding book involved great care, external validity did not affect the outcome. Regarding internal validity, the researcher was responsible for proper measurements. Consequently, the quantitative measurements, counting of references and paragraph devoted to immediacy, were tested for inter-coder reliability.

## **RESULTS**

Griggs et al. (2004) conducted a study using a sample of introductory psychology textbooks and found the textbooks to be idiosyncratic, yielding only one scholarly reference. To test whether textbooks in the field of online education are homogeneous or idiosyncratic, identifying a scholarly best practice approach to online education was necessary to determine whether online teaching textbooks included acknowledgment of the approach. Teacher immediacy was identified as a promising best practice.

Research studies have illustrated a correlation between online teacher immediacy and increased student satisfaction and retention (Arbaugh, 2001; Dahl, 2004; Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Rocca, 2004). For the study teacher immediacy in the online classroom has been operationalized as non-verbal teacher communications that foster psychological closeness and acknowledge student feelings and emotions in a timely response. To track online immediacy terminology, *immediacy* and words closely related to the term were arranged on a scale of 1 to 23. Number 1 indicated the term *immediacy*, and number 23 indicated the terms *speedy* and *rapidly* used interchangeably. Numbers 2 through 17 indicated terms related to immediacy, such as *closeness* and *emotions* and synonyms derived of each. Numbers 18 through 23 related to the minor immediacy definition of timely feedback initiated by the instructor.

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The process involved tracking terms, such as *collaboration*, *engagement*, *interaction*, and *rapport*. Selection of words for the tracking scale involved considering how closely the words related to the operational definition of *immediacy* discussed above as opposed to general *collaboration*. However, the tracking scale included synonyms related to both *immediacy* and *collaboration*. The term *collaboration* would receive a low rating compared to *immediacy*, *feelings*, *mindset*, *emotions*, and (student) *thoughts*. The complete scale consisted of 23 words (see Appendix B).

The primary research question formulated for the study was as follows: Does the complete textbook sample offer a homogeneous or idiosyncratic approach to the usage of immediacy based on the number of scholarly immediacy citations referenced? The null and alternate hypotheses of the study appeared as follows:

$H_0$ 1: No difference exists between the two sets of textbooks in the number of references and citations devoted to teacher immediacy regardless of the publication timeframe.

$H_1$ 1: The more recent set of textbooks contains a larger number of scholarly studies related to teacher immediacy because of the publication of more prominent scholarly immediacy studies between 2003 and 2007.

The results of the content analysis and descriptive statistics indicated that the complete 1999 to 2007 textbook sample reflected an idiosyncratic approach to immediacy. The textbooks included no in text citations related to prominent peer-reviewed immediacy scholarly articles defined as articles that contained the word *immediacy* in the title or abstract. Similarly, no immediacy references were found.

Textbook 6 included a citation for Gunawardena and Zittle (1997). The list of prominent scholarly immediacy studies (see Appendix A), defined as studies containing the word immediacy in the title or abstract, did not include Gunawardena and Zittle. However, research conducted by Gunawardena and Zittle was cited in some reference pages of the prominent immediacy studies identified, yet this finding was outside the scope of the study. As noted in the literature review, Gunawardena and Zittle (1997) indicated immediacy is just as important to student success as other electronic classroom techniques. Appendix F contains the number of general references found.

The second research question concerned the number of paragraphs containing immediacy-related terminology: Among a set of recent (2003 to 2007) and a set of older (1999 to 2002) online education textbooks, what percentage of paragraphs in the first four chapters relates to both broad and minor teacher immediacy based on paragraph counts?

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The results of the examination of the percentage of broad and minor immediacy terminology observed in the first four chapters of each of the 19 textbooks reflected that the percentage of immediacy-related terminology had increased from the early set (1999 to 2002) to the more recent set (2003 to 2007) by nearly 6% (see Table 2).

Table 2 *Percentage of Immediacy in Paragraphs of the First Four Chapters*

2003 to 2007			1999 to 2002		
Textbook	Year	Immediacy (%)	Textbook	Year	Immediacy (%)
1	2007	17.95	10	2002	31.82
2	2006	61.17	11	2002	49.36
3	2006	48.70	12	2002	29.61
4	2005	19.26	13	2002	09.38
5	2005	10.75	14	2001	36.26
6	2005	92.86	15	2001	40.81
7	2003	04.88	16	2000	07.34
8	2003	37.82	17	2000	22.22
9	2003	13.45	18	2000	28.68
			19	1999	33.99
Average:		34.09	Average:		28.64

However, more immediacy terms related to *collaboration* and *interaction*, not *closeness* and *emotions*, which are more closely associated with immediacy. A 6% increase in immediacy terminology is low, resulting from an excess of minor immediacy terms, such as *time* and *timely*, spread throughout both textbook sets more often than broad category terms, terms closely related to immediacy, such as *feelings* and *emotions*.

Although the H<sub>01</sub> null hypothesis was accepted relative to the proportion of scholarly immediacy references, immediacy terminology had increased 6 % from the 1999 through 2002 textbook set compared to the 2003 to 2007 set. However, this increase was not significant because not one scholarly immediacy studies was referenced. However, the majority of the immediacy terminology found included terms from the minor category related to timely instructor feedback.

Closer examination of the broad immediacy terms showed that while immediacy terminology had increased over the 8-year period, the terminology related more to general

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online classroom communication terms, such as *collaboration* and *engagement*, rather than terms that were defined as immediacy. While few or no immediacy citations were predicted, Textbook 3 included the term *immediacy* on eight occasions and included a reference to the operational definition of immediacy, as noted in Appendix B. However, the textbook included no scholarly immediacy citations. Again, more of the terms related to collaboration and interaction, not feelings and emotions.

Textbook 6, published in 2005, reflected the highest percentage of combined broad and minor immediacy terminology with a striking 92.86%. Textbook 2, published in 2006, represented the second highest percentage of immediacy terminology found at 61.17%. Textbook 7, published in 2003, and Textbook 16, published in 2000, displayed the lowest percentages of immediacy terminology found at 4.88% and 7.34% respectively. For a breakdown of the number of paragraphs containing immediacy terminology per chapter in each textbook please see Appendix G.

The third research question concerned the specific term *immediacy*: How many instances of the word *immediacy* appear in each of the online teaching textbooks, and which broad or minor immediacy terms feature most prominently in the first four chapters? Based on the Coding Book of Definitions' parameters that included only counting the terms in paragraphs, not sidebars, direct quotes, or paragraph headers, only one textbook, Textbook 3, published in 2006, yielded any instances of the word *immediacy*. Textbook 3 reflected the term on eight occasions.

Assessment of the textbooks for terms closely related to immediacy (e.g., *feelings* and *closeness*) revealed that the highest number of instances *interaction* appeared (59) was six times the highest number of instances *feelings* appeared (9) and four times the highest number of instances *emotions* appeared (15) in a single textbook. Aside from the popularity of the term *interaction* (a low-broad importance term), compared to *immediacy*, for example, the focus of the study, terminology associated with the low-priority minor category, *time* or *timely*, reflected the second highest count of all terms in a single textbook at 58. The cumulative terminology reflected among all textbooks is minor immediacy terms or broad terms of a low priority, such as *interaction* and *collaboration*.

*Mindset*, *closeness*, *intimate*, *proximity*, *rapport*, and *prompt*, were observed at one occurrence each. The term *mindset* was almost non-existent, discovered once as the highest in any of the textbooks. The terms *thoughts* (high-broad importance) and *togetherness* (medium-broad importance), considered more closely related to immediacy, appeared in five instances in a single textbooks. The terms *nearness*, *propinquity*, *affection*, and *punctual* were not found among the first four chapters in any of the 19 independently authored textbooks. (see Table 3).

Table 3 *Most Prominent Immediacy Terms*

Immediacy term	Highest occurrence in one book	Importance of broad or minor term
Interaction	59 n	Low broad
Time	58	Minor
Collaboration	38	Low broad
Emotions	15	High broad
Engagement	14	Low broad
Feelings	9	High broad
Immediacy	8	High broad
Relationships	7	Medium broad
Speedy/rapidly	7	Minor
Thoughts	5	High broad
Togetherness	5	Medium broad
Quick	4	Minor
Fast	4	Minor

The fourth research question appeared as follows: How prominent is teacher immediacy terminology in chapter titles? The study involved comparing the term's usage from the earlier to the more recent textbook set.

While not all of the first four chapter headings/subheadings included *immediacy* or *collaboration* terms in the broad and minor immediacy terminology scale, some textbooks included discussions of collaboration techniques under chapter headings not related to student interaction online. See Appendix I for actual chapter titles and sub-titles. The results indicated that the broad immediacy term, *thoughts*, appeared once in one of the textbook chapter titles in the 2003 to 2007 set. The left-hand column of Table 4 reflects the terminology examined from the highest importance, *immediacy*, to the lowest or minor-importance terminology related to *timely* responses.

The second most frequent terms found in the chapter titles were *interaction* at two counts, *engagement* at three counts, and *collaboration* at nine counts (see Table 4). All of these terms reflect low-broad importance. Results indicated that the textbook titles and subheadings did not include a substantive number of immediacy terms contained in the terminology scale. Moreover, no commonality of similar immediacy terms in chapter title headings existed.

Table 4 Number of Immediacy Terms Found in Chapter Titles

Most prominent terms	1999 to 2002	2003 to 2007	1999 to 2007
Thoughts	0	1	1
Interaction	0	2	2
Engagement	0	3	3
Collaboration	1	9	10
Timely	2	0	2
Total chapters with no accompanying sub-headings	32	15	47
Total Number of chapter titles without immediacy terms	85	78	163

The null hypothesis related to the second research question was accepted even though a foregone conclusion could be noted because more peer-reviewed online immediacy studies had been published during the latter set of online education textbooks published from 2003 to 2007 compared to the earlier set published from 1999 to 2002. The results indicated that the earlier sample set included more paragraphs devoted to immediacy terminology than the later set.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this quantitative content analysis study was to examine whether or not independently authored online education textbooks used scholarly derived immediacy terminology and whether these textbooks shared common immediacy terminology in chapter headings and sub-headings. For this study, teacher immediacy was operationalized into a terminology scale using a total of 23 words most representative of the scholarly immediacy concept such as *feelings* and *closeness* to those words commonly associated with online class involvement such as *collaboration* and *interaction*. The scale was segmented into a broad category of terms and a minor category. The broad category included those discussed above and the minor category was related to timely teacher responses, a secondary operational definition of immediacy.

A total of 19 independently authored online educational textbooks were selected for the study by searching Amazon.com. Nine books were published between 2003 and 2007 and 10 books were published from 1999 through 2002. Traditional textbooks were used to

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count the number of immediacy terms and to identify whether the textbooks referenced prominent peer-reviewed scholarly immediacy studies, ones including the word immediacy in their title and/or abstract. The independent variable was the textbook publication year. The dependent variable was the quantity of references to immediacy the authors may have cited.

Griggs et al. (2004), a seminal study to the current online educational textbook study, asserted that introductory psychology textbooks were almost entirely idiosyncratic, meaning these textbooks contained few or no scholarly citations. Not only were introductory psychology textbooks almost entirely void of scholarly peer-review citations, but also chapter titles and subheadings rarely displayed agreement on classic terminology and the sequence in which topics appeared. While the purpose of the online education textbook study was to examine whether independently authored online education textbooks also acknowledged scholarly peer reviewed studies, the limitation was only devoted to scholarly immediacy studies.

The primary research question formulated for the study appeared as follows: Does the complete textbook sample offer a homogeneous or idiosyncratic approach to the usage of immediacy based on the number of scholarly immediacy citations referenced? The content analysis relative to the primary research question indicated that the sample is reflective of an idiosyncratic editorial approach to immediacy. In addition, none of the textbooks in the sample included reference to any prominent peer-reviewed immediacy studies defined as those with the term *immediacy* in the title and in the abstract. The null hypothesis did not hold true since no scholarly immediacy studies were identified:

$H_0$ 1: No difference exists between the two sets of textbooks in the number of references and citations devoted to teacher immediacy regardless of the publication timeframe.

$H_1$ 1: The more recent set of textbooks contains a larger number of scholarly studies related to teacher immediacy because of the publication of more prominent scholarly immediacy studies between 2003 and 2007.

The second research question of the study concerned the number of paragraphs containing immediacy-related terminology: Among a set of recent (2003 to 2007) and a set of older (1999 to 2002) online education textbooks, what percentage of the first four chapters relates to both broad and minor teacher immediacy based on paragraph counts? The content analysis revealed that approximately 34% of immediacy terminology appears in the sample dated 2003 to 2007; approximately 6% more than the earlier set dated 1999 to 2002. The majority of immediacy terminology discovered comprised terms from the minor category related to timely instructor responses.

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The third research question involved the specific term *immediacy*: How many instances of the word *immediacy* appear in each of the online teaching textbooks, and which broad or minor immediacy terms feature most prominently in the first four chapters? Not a single instance of *immediacy* appears in the textbook sample. The terms *interaction*, *time*, and *collaboration* are the most popular within any single book at 59, 58, and 38 instances respectively. The terms *interaction* and *collaboration* were categorized as low-broad nomenclature, meaning these terms are more closely related to the minor immediacy category, unlike the immediacy terms *feelings* and *closeness* located in the broad terminology scale category.

The fourth research question appeared as follows: How prominent is teacher immediacy terminology in chapter titles? Of the 163 possible first four chapter title headings available, only 10 titles include a low-broad immediacy term, *collaboration*. One chapter title includes a high-broad immediacy categorical term, *thoughts*. Regardless of the location of the terminology in the first four chapter titles, only 18 instances of immediacy nomenclature appear. In sum, only approximately 10% of all terms in chapter headings relate to immediacy; thus, immediacy nomenclature is not prominent or consistent from one textbook to another.

The results appear similar to the results of the study of higher education introductory psychology textbooks by Griggs et al. (2004): Textbooks tend to reflect an idiosyncratic rather than homogeneous approach. However, the test for online education textbooks was only relative to immediacy scholars, not scholarship in general. Similar to the introductory psychology textbook sample, online education textbooks reflect little agreement on terminology in chapter titles or chapter locations.

The results of the study indicate for online instructors textbooks do not necessarily expose practitioners to the best practice of immediacy as scholars defined the term. Authorship scholars claim that textbook content is selected depending on the grounding of the author's school of thought. Three schools of thought have been identified.

First, DeGroot and Marshak (1978) claimed, "textbooks are written, for the most part, by academicians without too much practical experience and are frequently based on rehashes of other texts before them by like professors" (p. 17). Second, Baker (1986) includes describing "the textbook, its authorship, and its evaluation as combining the structural aspects of teaching, research, and publication" (as cited in Arnold, 1993, p. 42). Third, Coppola et al. (2002) maintained, "Instructors tend to get their training on the job" (p. 186). The results of this study were only guided by Arnold's school of textbook development thought--that of a homogeneous approach. The study was not designed to test or examine the personal experience of the authors.

He (2004) described terminology as the chosen words used as a communication vehicle for a field. Immediacy scholars may want to consider using words that signify student behaviors, such as *collaboration* and *interaction*, in study titles and abstracts to alert researchers who might not otherwise be familiar with the term *immediacy*. While immediacy is a teacher initiated behavior, by associating the term immediacy with more commonly used online teaching terms, it may be possible to expose a broader audience to the immediacy term. The results of the study illustrate that *collaboration* and *interaction*, for example, appear to be most popular among independent online education textbook authors.

Yorks (2005) maintained that industry, like the academy, has a responsibility to transfer knowledge. The results of this study indicate that the predominant immediacy terminology was in the minor category, that of timely responses. The disconnect between online education textbook authors and immediacy scholars was more apparent in the broad category of developing teacher to student closeness and acknowledging student feelings. This research indicates that regardless of the textbook authors' positions internal or external to the industry, the online education textbook industry has not acknowledged scholarly studies related to immediacy. Bleiklie and Powell (2005) believed that individuals have a strong role in knowledge creation in industry as well as education. Publishing leaders, authors, and scholars can improve performance in transferring research findings for inclusion in online educational textbooks.

A call by several scholars for on-going research into the efficacy of online education continues (Brown, 2006; Day et al., 2006; Lao, 2002; Moskal et al., 2006; O'Dwyer et al., 2007). Online educational textbook authors can disseminate an understanding of immediacy as scholars intended. Teacher immediacy in the online classroom has been operationalized as non-verbal teacher communications that foster psychological closeness and acknowledge student feelings and emotions in a timely response. Immediacy can result in satisfied students (Arbaugh, 2001) and increased attendance (Rocca, 2004).

## **Limitations**

The study did not include online education textbooks edited and written by multiple authors; therefore, whether these multi-authored books incorporate immediacy terminology or include citations to peer-reviewed immediacy scholarly studies is unknown. Because no online educational textbooks contained the term *immediacy* in the title, those textbooks containing *engagement* or *collaboration* formed part of the study even though the terms are not indicative of immediacy. The focus of the study was not general collaboration or interaction in the online classroom; instead, the focus was determining how authors used immediacy terminology in the textbooks. Immediacy terms counted within the first four

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chapters were not necessarily used in discussion solely related to collaboration or student rapport.

Alred (2006) and Lewis et al. (2006) noted that popular texts do occasionally include acknowledgment of scholarly theories, but the occurrences may be coincidental. The inclusion of scholarly references stems from the authors' networks of colleagues and personal education that allow authors a closer relationship to the research community. For unknown reasons, the 19 independently authored online teaching textbooks did not include examination of the many immediacy studies published.

Another limitation is that the textbooks did not acknowledge the operational definition of immediacy as defined in this study. Immediacy terminology found was likely coincidental. However, the textbooks and the efficacy of the many other online teaching techniques discussed can appeal to a wide-range of online education stakeholders.

Finally, as noted earlier, a limitation exists in Appendix A in that the references are not all inclusive of scholarly immediacy studies. Only the prominent immediacy scholarly studies that had the word *immediacy* in the title or abstract were compared. In addition, more prominent immediacy studies were published from 2003 to 2007 as opposed to those from 1999 to 2003. Scholarly immediacy references dated 2003 to 2007 could not have appeared in the set of online education textbooks dated 1999 to 2002.

Future researchers may want to sample a set 10 years in advance from 2009 through 2017 and examine all textbook chapters. In addition, this research recommends future researchers consider surveying textbook authors to determine why the term *immediacy* was absent. Investigating scholars' opinions on how prominently they might feature immediacy terminology in chapter headings could be used to test author familiarity of immediacy particularly if prominent scholarly immediacy author names were used to prompt responses. This suggestion may in of itself prompt more online education textbook authors to consider including more information on immediacy as intended by immediacy scholars.

The most cogent benefit of the study was found in the first usage of the scholarly derived immediacy terminology scale. For the first time the concept of immediacy was operationalized for key immediacy related terms that scholars deemed important. The scale allowed the ability for immediacy terminology to be counted. For example, as noted earlier, the most prominent immediacy terms found in the first four chapters were those related to student and teacher behaviors such as *interaction* and *collaboration* opposed to teacher initiated behaviors important to immediacy such as acknowledging student *emotions* and *feelings*. The most popular immediacy terminology found in chapter titles or sub titles was

again *collaboration*, a term not readily associated with the scholarly definition of immediacy.

This study provided an operationalized definition of online immediacy based on the immediacy vocabulary scale and the content analysis methodology. Other researchers may want to incorporate this scale and methodology or refine it based on the mediums sampled. Other scholarly concepts that researchers may want to track in the practice of online education may include andragogy itself.

Another aspect of standardization of terminology, the standardization of the principles and methods of terminology is the task of an international organization such as ISO, who makes unified guidelines and principles for work in terminology so as to achieve a coherent approach and to improve communication (as cited in He, 2004, p. 88).

Consequently, higher education leadership as well as educational publishing leadership may want to join forces with the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) to study ways to improve consistency in higher education terminology usage and categorization. Other organizations including the Library of Congress that categorizes books also may need to enter into a dialog with ISO, authors, and publishers.

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