
**CULTURAL ASPECTS OF IMMEDIACY IN AN ASIAN
CLASSROOM CONTEXT**

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Among the various factors affecting students' learning, immediacy is probably the one that has been most studied over the last four decades. Immediacy, a term coined by Mehrabian (1967), refers to verbal and nonverbal behaviours used by interlocutors to decrease physical and physiological distance between them, thus creating affinity, liking and affect. However, a number of questions arise as to the suitability of the various immediacy scales and their cultural significance in a non U.S. context, such as Hong Kong. Furthermore we were interested in possible differences in teachers' perception based on students' motivation. This paper presents the first part of an immediacy study, based on students of the Department of English of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (looking into mapping patterns of behaviours that increase immediacy). The results indicate that Hong Kong students prefer the holistic approach of the Chinese traditional teacher, a teacher who goes beyond just teaching in class, and that nonverbal actions are not high in their list of preferred behaviours in teachers, such as gestures, walking around the classroom or standing close to students (unlike what has been observed among U.S. students).

Key words: *immediacy, nonverbal behaviour, credibility, classroom, Sino-speakers*

Entre los diversos factores que afectan el aprendizaje de los estudiantes, la inmediatez es probablemente el que más se ha estudiado en las últimas cuatro décadas. La inmediatez, un término acuñado por Mehrabian (1967), se refiere a los comportamientos verbales y no verbales utilizados por los interlocutores para disminuir la distancia física y fisiológica entre ellos, creando así afinidad, y afecto entre ellos. Sin embargo, la literatura plantea una serie de dudas en cuanto a la idoneidad de las distintas escalas de inmediatez y su importancia cultural en un contexto no estadounidense, tal como el de Hong Kong. Este estudio buscaba también investigar las posibles diferencias en la percepción que los estudiantes tienen de los docentes según su motivación. Este trabajo presenta la primera parte de un estudio de inmediatez entre estudiantes del Departamento de Inglés de la Universidad Politécnica de Hong Kong (buscando patrones en el comportamiento de profesores que aumenten inmediatez en el aula). Los resultados indican que los estudiantes de Hong Kong prefieren profesores que van más allá de la enseñanza en el aula, desarrollando un enfoque holístico, típico de profesores del sistema educativo tradicional chino, y que las acciones no verbales, como gestos, pasearse por el aula o acercarse a los estudiantes (importantes para estudiantes de Estados Unidos), no son comportamientos tan importantes para el alumno de Hong Kong.

Palabras clave: *inmediatez, comportamiento no verbal, credibilidad, aula, sinohablantes.*

1. Introduction: Immediacy in the Classroom

Current studies of pedagogical performance accept that teaching is a multimodal activity and its efficiency should be analysed from more than just the linguistic point of view (Jewitt, 2008; Lim, O'Halloran & Podlasov, 2012; O'Halloran, 2015). Coming under the umbrella of multimodality is nonverbal communication (NVC), an area that merits further study as it is often neglected in favour of other pedagogical tools used in the classroom.

NVC has a function valuable to teachers: that of creating immediacy. Immediacy, a term coined by Mehrabian (1967), refers to the perceived degree of physical or psychological distance between two (or more) people. We tend to distance ourselves from people we do not like and get closer to those we do like, or for whom we have positive feelings. We distance ourselves or get closer by a combination of verbal and nonverbal behaviour (McCroskey & McCroskey, 2006).

The relevance of nonverbal acts has been recognized since antiquity, the Greeks and later the Romans studied its use in rhetoric, and it was taught as part of this art. Within the label of NVC Poyatos (1992) lists a number of actions: proxemics (distance between interlocutors), kinesics and kinesthetics, moving around as well as moving parts of the body such as gesture, oculosics (eye movements), prosody (effects impacting the voice such as tone, volume, intonation, pitch), thermal and dermal changes (blushing) as well as chemical changes in the body. There are other nonverbal aspects to consider, such as the context (physical environment), and personal physical appearance (dress, hair).

Over the last four decades much research has been carried out on the topic of teacher immediacy and its effect on student affect, motivation and performance. Immediacy in the classroom has been credited with students' enhanced perception of teacher performance and credibility (Johnson & Miller, 2002); improvements in students' cognitive learning (Christophel, 1990), motivation (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1994), attendance and participation (Myers, Zhong & Guan, 1998); and student affect and affective learning (Gorham, 1988; Pogue & AhYun, 2006).

The first studies in immediacy were carried out in U.S. higher education settings with mostly Caucasian middle-class students, and immediacy building behaviours were identified and assumed to be relevant across cultures. Initially a number of nonverbal behaviours were associated with immediacy (Andersen, 1979), and these were soon followed by verbal ones (Gorham, 1988).

Mehrabian (1972) suggests that immediacy is developed through behaviours such as closer proximity to the listener, more eye gaze, openness of arms and body, positive facial expressions and forward lean. The more of these used, the more powerful the message. Andersen, Andersen and Jensen (1979) also highlight the importance of getting close to students and touching them, establishing visual contact with them, moving the body, hands and head and smiling. More recent research conducted by Lim, O'Halloran and Podlasov confirms that together with language, teachers use "gesture, gaze, image and movement" (2012: 2) in pedagogical contexts to enhance their effectiveness. In U.S.-based studies the main immediacy NV

behavior builders are smiling, gesturing, moving around the classroom and using various vocal expressions (Neuliep, 1997: 431). But we question whether those behaviours would also be as successful in improving affect or learning in Sino-speaking tertiary education Hong Kong students. NV behaviors are difficult to identify and analyse in order to find confirmed patterns associated with students' learning. There are questions as to how to separate verbal from nonverbal actions and when talking about immediacy how to identify other factors affecting it such as students' motivation or expectations. This paper summarises the first part of a study into patterns of teachers' behaviours and their effects in Hong Kong students.

2. Validity of Immediacy Studies

From the mid 1990s, studies began to question the relevance of U.S. based scales of immediacy for different cultures, considering that immediacy is a culturally based phenomenon. Questions were also posed on the validity of students' answers as well as the significance of other factors such as teachers' credibility. In addition it is also known that students' motivation is key in the learning process. All of these issues are to be taken into account when evaluating immediacy and its effects in the classroom.

2.1. Intercultural Issues

Creating immediacy is said to vary by cultural group. Even if the culture the students belong to is one of low immediacy, such as that of China (relatively low use of gestures, facial expressions, contact, eye contact), it has been shown that students respond well to high immediacy, and their cognitive learning skills improve. However the reverse is not true: a low immediacy teacher in a high immediacy culture does not seem to impact cognitive learning negatively due to a lack of nonverbal behaviour (McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond & Barraclough, 1996).

Non-Western scholars argue that one framework cannot encompass all culture-specific acts –this has been argued in the field of politeness, but is relevant to immediacy as well. Culture is often taken as a normative notion when in reality it should be a “micro-level concept, according to which interactants make their own (or their community's) culture relevant

in interaction” (Kádár & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011: 5). Culture should be taken into account, not as a set of fixed rules followed by a group of nationals, but as flexible notions dependent on context and changes in ideology. It cannot be discounted as it is a component of communities sharing ways of living and shaping the psychology of the individual which in turn has an effect on behaviour (Bogdanowska-Jakobowska, 2011).

Immediacy in the classroom is an area of study that has embraced the fixed rules notion of culture, to the extent that different scales have been developed for Chinese students (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). The rationale is that significant differences exist between American (U.S.) and Chinese students. Taking Hofstede’s cultural dimensions comparison of these two cultures –culture being defined as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others” (1980: 5) –it was found that there were differences that could be affecting immediacy, in particular power distance, defined as the “degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, n.d.). Zhang and Oetzel (2006) point out that in China the power distance is considerably larger than in the U.S., society is hierarchical and everyone, depending on age, sex, social and family position will respect authority according to Confucian-based rules applicable to various contexts. In a Chinese classroom the power distance between students and teacher is large, the teacher being a figure of power and authority. Although not mentioned by Zhang and Oetzel another three dimensions describing Americans are those of individualism (decision making is based on what is best for the individual), short-term orientation (rewards are expected in the short term) and indulgence (working hard but also playing hard). On the other hand Chinese are described as being almost at the other end of the continuum in these three dimensions.

However, in addition to Hofstedes’ power distance dimension, Zhang and Oetzel (2006) identified two other fallacies in the immediacy construal when applied to non-Western cultures (in particular Chinese): the first is that immediacy is only built in the classroom, when it is also built through contact out of the classroom; the second that a teacher should only instruct, when Chinese parents send their children to school not to learn literacy but to become more knowledgeable about the world, to function well in social situations and be morally cultivated (Li, 2009). Rao

and Chan (2009) point out that Chinese teachers regard teaching as more holistic than western teachers, believing their role to be that of “moral educators”, suggesting that Western assumptions about teaching and learning do not apply in the Chinese context because of different cultural beliefs and educational systems. They are not alone suggesting that the two educational systems (the Western and Chinese) are incompatible: Jin and Cortazzi (1998) reported that British students describe a good teacher as one who is able to arouse the interest of the student, explain concepts, use effective instructions and organize activities; on the other hand Chinese students describe good teachers as those who have deep knowledge, are able to answer questions and are good moral models.

These behaviours might apply to students in traditional contexts but China has changed culturally and socially, developing an educated, well-travelled and ever-expanding middle class, often more liberal, individualistic, short term oriented and low power distance than the average American (Lin & Ho, 2009). In terms of education, apart from the high number of Chinese being educated abroad—almost 460,000 in 2014 (ICEF, 2015)—already in 2001 educational reforms in Hong Kong and China were being implemented to promote independent learning and thinking, more critical thinking, flexibility and creativity (Marton, 2009).

Very little has been written about immediacy and the impact of nonverbal communication in creating it in different Sino-speaking contexts aside from Chinese in China. Others such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, or diasporas who keep their cultural roots, have by and large not been studied as often. Within the Hong Kong context, for her master thesis, Wang (2008) studied some NVC aspects of Chinese and Western teachers. The results showed that the Western teachers used nonverbal behavior to create immediacy more than their Chinese counterparts, with younger Chinese teachers being more nonverbal than older ones.

2.2. Students’ Introspective Answers

Apart from cultural differences, another consideration of immediacy studies is that they are based on students’ introspections. A study of the validity of students’ evaluations of teachers’ classroom performance showed that introspection is not always a valid measuring tool. Students were asked to

rate teachers nonverbal actions right after a class, the same classes had also been video recorded and a team of researchers codified various nonverbal behaviours. The comparison of students' perception of those behaviours with the actual recorded actions gave very low correspondence rates, students' answers being tainted by affective factors (Smythe & Hess, 2005). The original nonverbal studies in immediacy (Andersen, 1979) corroborated students' answers by having trained observers in the classrooms who made notes on the nonverbal behaviours. However, all observers were to note all nonverbal behaviours, which could be said to be an almost impossible task, as often more than two are used simultaneously. The work by Smythe and Hess poses an important question about the validity of many immediacy studies, one that can only be solved through an empirical mathematical approach that will model and confirm what has been observed so far (through mapping patterns of behaviours and correlating them to students' perceptions, as suggested by Lim, O'Halloran & Podlasov, 2012).

2.3. Immediacy or Credibility?

In a metastudy of immediacy studies, Hess, Smythe and Communication 451 (2001) reported that perhaps too much credit was being given to immediacy in terms of developing students' learning. Teacher credibility, which was found to be enhanced by immediacy (Johnson & Miller, 2002), was studied alongside immediacy as a separate factor (Pogue & AhYun, 2006), linking it to student motivation and affective learning. Pogue and AhYun describe credibility, in the words of Aristotle, as having three dimensions: intelligence, character and goodwill towards the audience –it could be argued that this goodwill could also be translated as politeness. The study summarises behaviours that have been associated with credibility in the classroom, such as positive vocal cues (c.f. Beatty & Behnke, 1980); impression leaving and relaxed attitude (c.f. Rubin & Feezel, 1986), behaviours also included in measures of immediacy. It also highlights all the positive results associated with higher teacher credibility: enhanced affect towards teacher and course (c.f. Andersen, 1973); overall teacher performance (c.f. Scott & Nussbaum, 1981); overall students' rating of the course (c.f. Beatty & Zahn, 1990), again, behaviours also associated with immediacy. On separating credibility from immediacy Pogue and AhYun found that affective learning is positively correlated with credibility, but not with immediacy.

3. The Study

Our postulate is that popular teachers make good use of the NVC elements and create immediacy. This popularity often translates into positive student evaluations of these teachers (Andersen, Norton & Nussbaum, 1981). Finding clear patterns of NV behaviour related to immediacy would be a useful pedagogical tool for new teachers.

Our context is that of an English Department (Applied Linguistics) in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong university system resembles the Western system, where teachers engage students in dialogue and power distance is minimized, rather than the traditional Chinese system. Hong Kongers' view of their cultural identity has changed in the last eight years and it might not be appropriate to refer to them as a culturally Chinese, despite the fact that often they are included under the "Chinese student" classification. In a poll conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong on Identity and National Identification of Hong Kong people the percentage of Hong Kongers identifying themselves as Chinese went down from 32.1% (at its highest in 1997) to 8.8% in 2014 (Centre for Communication and Public Opinion, 2014). Hofstede's dimensions show differences between Chinese (from China) and Hong Kong, these have been corroborated by a number of other studies (Tu, Liu & Ting, n.d.) where indeed Hong Kongers have a more individualistic attitude than Chinese (or Taiwanese). Knowing that there are cultural differences between Hong Kongers and Chinese we wondered what helps create immediacy with our students. Furthermore, differences in motivation might have an effect on immediacy. Taking into account the enhanced notions of culture and the various warnings as to immediacy perception and its measurement we felt it was necessary to go down one level and just find out what it is that students like in a teacher.

3.1. Objective

The objective of this study was to test the preferences of Hong Kong students in terms of teachers' behaviours. Our hypothesis was that Hong Kong students' preferences would be closer to those of Chinese students, in which case actions pertaining to the holistic role of teachers would be

more liked and those related to NV behaviours, which seem to be quite important among U.S. students, would be less so. CTIS scales are used to test the perceived effectiveness of specific teachers in creating immediacy and are linked to students' satisfaction and perceived learning. In this study the objective was just to identify students' most liked (and disliked) behaviours in teachers to be able to manipulate them in the second part of the study (in progress).

The participants were either self-financed or heavily government subsidised, therefore we wondered whether there might be a marked difference in the requirements of the two groups, in particular, whether the self-financed group demanded better prepared and more dedicated teachers.

3.2. Methodology

The study asked 170 students, divided into two groups, to fill in a questionnaire. All were English major undergraduate university students in the English Department of Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The first group was an undergraduate group of 90 full-time students of *English as a Lingua Franca*, who filled in the questionnaire at the end of the semester; these students were subsidized by the government. The second was a group of 80 part-time self-financed students, also participating at the end of the semester taking the subject *Cultural Language and Critical Studies*. Both groups were asked to answer a 36 question survey after a class with the same teacher (a Western female).

Zhang and Oetzel (2006) confirmed that at least two of the scales used to measure immediacy, the Chinese Teacher Immediacy Scale (CTIS) (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006) and the Revised Nonverbal Immediacy Measure (RNIM) (McCroskey, et al., 1996) can travel across cultures, although the RNIM might require some modifications. Studies based on the RNIM on American subjects (McCroskey et al., 1996) describe a number of nonverbal behaviours that have been linked to immediacy: gesturing, walking around the classroom and smiling. This questionnaire was first adapted to Chinese students by Zhang (2005) who identified cultural differences between Americans and Chinese (in China) as significant enough to affect the results, resulting in the CTIS scale. We took this

scale as our starting point, believing it to be culturally closer to the Hong Kong context. The questionnaires were based on the CTIS questionnaire with some lexical changes to address these two groups of students, which included simplifying many of the questions or changing the content for the context, such as “does not speak Chinese” to “does not speak Cantonese”. Two questions which were considered too similar to others were taken out (see Appendix for the results and list of questions). Students were given 15 to 20 minutes to answer it at the end of class.

The questionnaire was based on Likert-type scales. The questions had 5 possible answers, these were Likert-type as the possible answers were spaced out symmetrically in a continuum, however instead of the usual “1. Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree; 5. Strongly agree”, it was decided to take out the “3. Neither agree nor disagree option, forcing respondents to choose between a positive and a negative answer. It has been observed (Gudykunst, 2000) that some Asian cultures (Chinese and Japanese) eschew extreme opinions in surveys, thus tainting the validity of the results. However a fifth option was provided in the form of “0. I have never thought about this/I don’t care”. Although mixing both answers is not ideal it was thought better than separating them and providing yet another option.

The study did not ask students to evaluate the performance of any one teacher (but we chose to carry out the questionnaire with different groups taught by the same teacher to have similar contamination effects related to that particular teacher). Instead it asked students to agree or disagree with statements related to what qualities they liked in a teacher.

3.3. Results

A total of 137 questionnaires were filled in, 78 from group 1 (subsidized students) and 59 from group 2 (self-financed students). In both groups the majority of students were female (58% in the first group –with 24% of the total not disclosing their gender, most of them also females– and 73% in the second group). The average age of the first group was 22 and 25 in the second group.

The scores were all added up for each question (in the first group with 78 participants the maximum score was $78 \times 4 = 312$ and in the second

group, with 59 respondents $59 \times 4 = 236$, 4 being the maximum score for any one question and assuming all questions had been answered). Where participants had answered “0 = I have never thought about this/don’t care” or had not answered, the maximum possible was adjusted, treating all as non-answered questions. Finally the tallies were transformed into percentages to be able to compare the answers from the two groups.

The answers by students in both groups were quite similar showing an obvious preference for teachers who are credible. The most liked behaviours are listed in Table 1 and the qualities students ranked the lowest are listed in Table 2.

To test whether the answers from the two groups were significantly different a chi test with a critical alpha level 0.05 was carried out comparing each question (and the number of respondents for each possible answer). The test confirmed that for almost all questions the differences in the answers from the two groups were not significant therefore we concluded that the answers from both groups were the same, except for the positive attribute “is responsible”, which is important to the first group (92%) but not so much to the second group (84%) and the negative attribute “looks dull and boring” the first group disliking it more than the second (34% versus 46%).

Group 1 (subsidised students)	%	Group 2 (self-financed students)	%
is willing to help	92	is knowledgeable	91
is responsible	92	is willing to help	89
is knowledgeable	91	is patient	88
is patient	91	is both a teacher and a friend to students	87
is passionate about teaching	88	treats students equally	86

Table 1: Most liked qualities in a teacher

Group 1 (subsidised students)	%	Group 2 (self-financed students)	%
cannot express himself/herself clearly	32	cannot express himself/herself clearly	41

does not communicate with students after class	33	does not communicate with students after class	41
looks dull and boring	34	does not have professional qualifications	43
reads from the textbook or from the ppt when teaching	39	has no sense of humour	45
is old-fashioned	40	looks dull and boring	46

Table 2: least liked qualities in a teacher

The behaviours less thought about, those where participants answered “0 = I have never thought about this/don’t care” are listed in Table 3 below.

Group 1 (subsidised students)	%	Group 2 (self-financed students)	%
does not speak Cantonese	44	does not speak Cantonese	25
sits or stands next to students	29	looks dull and boring	22
is old-fashioned	28	stands behind the computer/ desk	22
is good-looking	26	does not communicate with students after class	20
stands behind the computer/ desk	24	is old-fashioned	20
walks around the classroom when teaching	24	has no sense of humour	20

Table 3: qualities students have not thought about or do not care about

Two questions were shown to have been answered differently by the two groups (chi test with a critical alpha level of 0.05): “looks dull and boring”, as mentioned above and “does not speak Cantonese”.

As can be seen from Table 1 there are no NV behaviours listed within the top 5 preferred behaviours. Students do not like dull and boring looking teachers (Table 2) but overall proxemics and kinaesthetics are often not noticed, or cared about (Table 3). Table 4, below, identifies all the NV behaviours in the questionnaire, note that the likeness values fall within the top and lowest five (except “looks dull and boring” which was the only answer significantly different between the two groups, all the others are statistically the same, chi test with an alpha level of 0.05).

Group 1 (subsidised students)	%	Group 2 (self-financed students)	%
looks at students when teaching	82	is expressive	85
is lively when teaching	82	is lively when teaching	83
is expressive	81	looks at students when teaching	82
smiles often	80	is relaxed	79
is relaxed	79	does not put on the airs of a teacher	73
does not put on the airs of a teacher	76	smiles often	71
gestures when talking to the class	70	gestures when talking to the class	68
is informal	69	is informal	68
walks around the classroom when teaching	66	walks around the classroom when teaching	67
has a soft voice	66	sits or stands next to students	59
sits or stands next to students	61	has a soft voice	57
stands behind the computer/desk	51	stands behind the computer/desk	46
looks dull and boring	46	looks dull and boring	34

Table 4: Nonverbal behaviours

4. Discussion

There has been a tendency to categorise all Chinese as sharing one cultural set of rules. This would be akin to expecting all Caucasians to share the same cultural notions, notwithstanding differences of geography or history. Thus we look at the Hong Kong student again, not as a Chinese student but as a Hong Konger. Even then, we are aware that we are trying to force a cultural norm where there might not be one.

The medium of teaching in the university is English, therefore it follows that Cantonese speaking would not be seen as an important quality (Table 3). What is interesting is that the percentage of self-financed students (group 2) not considering it important is much lower, which corroborates the idea of the teacher being a holistic figure who is also a friend, and is available outside the classroom to speak students' mother

tongue. This finding confirms the results in Zhang, 2006, who found that Chinese students prefer more out of classroom contact with teachers than U.S. students. Informal conversations with colleagues confirms that observation, self-financed students (also slightly older than subsidized ones) are keen to establish a relationship with teachers that goes beyond the classroom, including access to the teacher at all times. Although it seems that in the self-financed group (group 2) there is a stronger preference for a holistic teacher role (both as teacher and friend), for the first group this quality was ranked only 13th from the top (82%), but this difference is not statistically significant.

Motivation increases with both credibility and immediacy (Pogue & AhYun, 2006), but we also wondered whether motivation might demand more credible teachers. There was an expectation that self-financed students would be more motivated and would have higher requirements for teachers. The results indicate that both groups seem to rate higher those behaviours with a link to credibility. If students expect to have credible teachers, it is possible that non-credibility would have a more marked effect on the learning process itself (and on motivation), while immediacy is not a quality many students think about or expect as a given and so has a positive motivating effect but there is no disappointment if a teacher turns out not to have immediacy characteristics.

Nonverbal behaviours such as standing behind the computer/desk or walking around the classroom when teaching, are not considered very important (the study does not specify whether students are ambivalent about these or if they have just never thought about them). The most relevant NV behaviours are eye contact and those related to expressivity (not delivering content in a dull manner), being relaxed and smiling. Kinesics, proxemics and kinaesthetics, such as gesturing, standing close to students or moving in class, seem not to be as well liked as in U.S. cultures (or at least not considered as important). These results correspond to those found by Myers, Zhong and Guan (1998) in a study of 140 Chinese students from Peking University in Beijing. Their study looked for correlations between NV immediacy behaviours and student perceptions related to learning, finding few, except tone of voice, smiling and having a relaxed position.

5. Further Research

One of the issues with some multimodal actions is the difficulty in categorising them and providing obvious behaviour patterns. As O'Halloran (2015) has pointed out, it is necessary to discover consistent patterns in data to confirm new theories and consolidate existing ones. Although the link between various NVC actions and students' positive perception is accepted (Andersen, Norton & Nusbaum, 1981), this is seldom taught to new teachers, probably due to perceived subjectivity as often there are no clear patterns of NV actions. Where NVC patterns are known, such as patterns in proxemics (Hall, 1966), and their use in a teacher-student content is understood (Lim, O'Halloran, Podlasov, 2012), their direct link to students' perceptions remains unclear as is the link to verbal communication.

Through this study we looked at identifying specific behaviours that students are aware of and like in teachers, in order to study these behaviours further by mapping their use and correlate them to students' satisfaction with particular teachers (the second part of the study). Mapping out specific patterns will allow to confidently state whether there is a relationship between NV behaviours and students' perceptions. Finding these patterns is not easy, as it requires detailed observation and analysis of events that are often ephemeral. It is necessary to record them, which often interferes with the events themselves, codify them and analyse these events with software based on algorithms that find relationships between key pieces of data (such as *THEME*, *Semiomix* or *Multimodal Analysis*).

6. Conclusions

We conclude then that Hong Kong students share more traits with Chinese students than U.S. counterparts. Teacher credibility seems to be very relevant as is having approachable teachers both in and outside the classroom. Nonverbal behaviour is either not recognised as being important or not as well regarded as in the U.S.

In the Sino-speaking classroom we need to be aware of the cultural differences that might influence immediacy. Proximity and touching could also be seen as signs of a familiarity that goes against the traditional Confucian respect a student ought to show towards teachers (López-Oziebło, 2013).

These results support an observed but as yet unresearched phenomenon among teachers at tertiary institutions in Hong Kong: a requirement for constant teacher availability to the students, be it on *Whatsapp*, *Facebook*, email or even telephone. In this it is postulated that the educational sector is following Hong Kong private sector business practice, where the available technology has facilitated constant availability of service providers and students, as clients, expect it.

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Appendix: Results

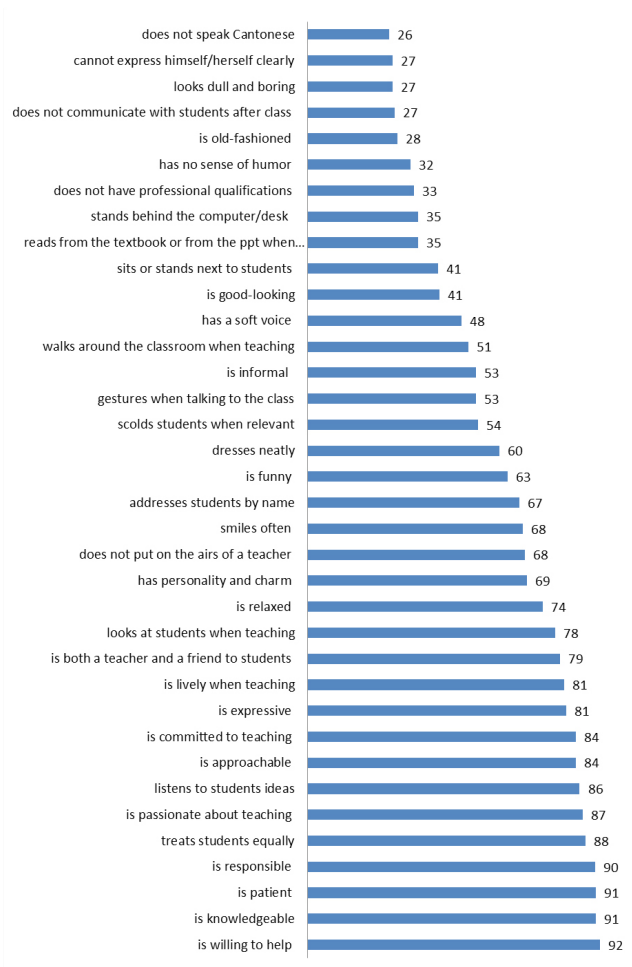


Figure 1: Results from Group 1 (subsidised students)

Note: Values are given as a percentage of the total possible score for each question (considering the total number of respondents for each question).

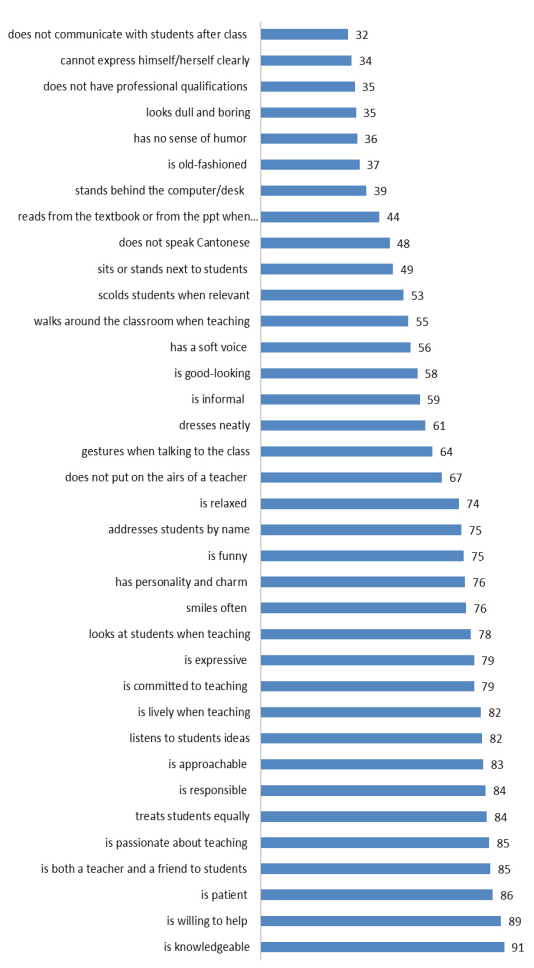


Figure 2: Results from Group 2 (self-financed students)

Note: Values given as a percentage of the total possible score for each question (considering the total number of respondents for each question).

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