



2017

# I CAN'T BELIEVE MY INSTRUCTOR DID THAT?! MIDDLE EASTERN STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF INSTURCTORS' VERBAL AND NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS

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Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2017.249>

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## Recommended Citation

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MIDDLE EASTERN STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF INSTURCTORS' VERBAL  
AND NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the  
College of Communication and Information  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Mariam Alabdali

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Brandi Frisby, Professor of Communication,

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2017

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### I CAN'T BELIEVE MY INSTRUCTOR DID THAT?! MIDDLE EASTERN STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF INSTRUCTORS' VERBAL AND NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS

This study seeks to explore an understudied population, Middle Eastern students, in the area of instructional communication. Of particular interest, the study seeks to understand how Middle Eastern students' view their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy. The literature review establishes a conceptualization for verbal and nonverbal immediacy and the relationship between immediacy and gender, and immediacy and culture. Expectancy violations theory is used to understand the phenomena from an expectancy violations perspective and Hofstede's dimensions will be used in an instructional context to understand how Middle Eastern students' culture may influence students' expectations. This study uses a mixed method approach to create a holistic views of Middle Eastern students' expectations and expectancy violations. The survey method seeks to understand Middle Eastern students' expectation for instructor verbal and nonverbal immediacy, and email responses seeks to understand expectancy violations and cultural influence on student expectancies. The results of the study show that Middle Eastern students view verbal and nonverbal immediacy as important factors in the student-teacher relationship and cultural factors play a role in students' expectations.

**KEYWORDS:** *Middle Eastern, expectancy violations theory, Hofstede dimensions, verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy*

Mariam Alabdali

June, 22, 2017

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following thesis, although my individual work, was influenced by the guidance and support of several people in my life. First, my advisor, Dr. Brandi Frisby, it was an honor to work with such a renowned and respected scholar in her field. Without her guidance, support, encouragement, I would not have been able to finish my thesis, for that, I owe her my deepest gratitude. She has gone above and beyond as an advisor, teacher, colleague and friend to ensure my success as a student and a professional. I wish to thank my committee members, Dr. Kevin Real and Dr. Kristen Perry, for taking the time to help me through this process and providing me with insight and resources that guided this project.

In addition to the support of the scholars before me, I would like to thank my parents for their endless guidance and sacrifices. To my mom, Anabelle Rojas, who put much time, energy and money to make sure I got an excellent education in one of the best universities in the state. To my dad, Ghazwan Alabdali, who encouraged me to keep going forward in my education and to never stop until I reach my full potential. Finally, I wish to thank my respondents of my study for their comments and insights that made this project an informative and interesting project with opportunities for future work.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In the realm of higher education, there has been an increasing trend of internationalization of the student population as a means to help students prepare for citizenship in a globalized world (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013). Knight (1993) defines internationalization of higher education as “the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” (p. 21). Thus, many institutions are incorporating internationalization in their mission statements and stressing the importance of preparing students on how to better operate effectively in other cultures and comprehend other cultural realities to become better contemporary citizens (Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement, 2012). The increase in internationalization on university campuses is a result of an increased number of international students at universities in the United States (Lieb, 2016), the increased number of students studying abroad (Cadd, 2012), and the attraction of students from overseas to study at American universities (Hendrickson et al., 2013). In fact, the number of international students in the United States has doubled over the past 20 years (Institute of International Education, 2015b) and has contributed more than \$ 24 billion to the United States economy in the 2013/2013 academic year alone (Chappell, 2013).

International students who study abroad are motivated by the fact that the world has become a more competitive and globalized place where employers and organizations look for employees who have the ability to think critically, communicate competently, and engage in innovation (Lieb, 2016). Therefore, many universities have allocated extensive resources and services in creating a more international campuses that focus on

international student satisfaction and effective learning outcomes (Asgari & Borzooei, 2014).

A major component of international students meeting learning outcomes is their experience in the classroom (Lieb, 2016), which includes the student- teacher relationship. The student-teacher relationship as an interpersonal relationship is essential for student learning (Worley, Titsworth, Worley & Cornett-DeVito, 2007). Thus, college instructors are encouraged to build satisfying relationships with students to increase student learning (Ellis, 2004). For the past 20 years, instructional communication literature has studied specific classroom behaviors to help teachers communicate effectively in the classroom, thus promoting student learning outcomes (Houser, 2005). For example, instructional communication researchers have found that nonverbal and verbal immediacy (Andersen, 1979), teacher clarity (Simmonds, 1997), and affinity seeking behaviors that show concern (Frymier, 1994) are some of the effective instructor behaviors that encourage student learning. Consequently, instructors are advised to enact those behaviors.

However, there have been growing concerns and criticisms of instructional communication research as being overwhelmingly limited in the understanding and translation of research findings (Goldman, Bolkan & Goodboy, 2014) and scales (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006) to other cultures. McCroskey and McCroskey (2006) state that, “an overwhelming proportion of instructional communication research has been conducted by U.S. researchers representing the Anglo culture of the United States and has involved participants who were also representing the predominant culture” (p.42). Some scholars have undertaken the challenge of addressing these criticisms, such as Zhang and Huang’s

(2008) study on the effect of teacher clarity on cognitive learning in US, Japanese, German, and Chinese classrooms and Zhang and Oetzel's (2006) study on perceived immediacy behaviors from a Chinese cultural perspective. According to Goldman et al. (2014), early conclusions and assumptions of these studies suggest that many of the instructor behaviors studied in the United States transcend cultures; however, the effectiveness of the behaviors may operate differently depending on the culture of the students and instructors.

Goldman et al. (2014) concluded that international students may perceive instructor behaviors differently than U.S. students. Also, there is some research that suggests that cultural and ethnic backgrounds can determine how students view the teaching and learning process (Collier & Powell, 1990) and international students may have different expectations about different types of instructor communication behavior (Hofstede, 1980). For example, Zhang and Oetzel's (2006) study found that Chinese students' conceptualization of teacher immediacy includes instructional, relational, and personal behaviors, while the Western student perspective mainly focuses on instructional behaviors. Thus, with previous research, we can assume that international students may have different expectations for their instructor's behaviors.

The limited intercultural instructional communication literature has explored the Nigerian (Olaniran & Stewart, 1996), Chinese (Goodboy, Myers, & Bolkan, 2012), German (Zhang, Oetzel, Gao, Wilcox, & Takai, 2007), Japanese (Zhang et al., 2007), South Korean (Mansson & Lee, 2014), Brazilian (Santilli, Miller, & Katt, 2011), and Swedish (Mansson & Myers, 2011) students and classrooms. But one region, the Middle Eastern world, has received little to no attention from instructional communication

scholars. The Middle East and North Africa were the fastest growing regions of origin for international students in the United States, which increased by 20 percent from 2013-2014 (IIE, 2014). Thus, insight into the academic expectations of Middle Eastern students, in terms of their expectations for their instructors and institutions, is becoming more important for communication scholars and higher education administrators. Based on the need for understanding Middle Eastern students and their education abroad, this thesis seeks to understand Middle Eastern students' expectations regarding instructor behaviors in the classroom, especially verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. The study will employ expectancy violations theory (EVT) as the theoretical framework in an attempt to uncover Middle Eastern students' expectations for their instructors' behaviors in the classroom. To create an in-depth holistic understanding of the phenomena at hand, a mixed methods approach will be used with quantitative survey questions and qualitative open-ended questions. The nature of this thesis is an exploratory study and a stepping stone into a region that hasn't been studied within the context of instructional communication. Thus, a mixed methods approach is the best method to understand the "whys" and the "hows" of Middle Eastern students' expectations.

Chapter Two will overview the literature on effective instructor behaviors and their benefits in terms of student learning outcomes, with particular attention to verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors. Chapter Two will then transition to Middle Eastern people's communication behaviors, student expectations, and a review of the education system of the Middle Eastern culture. Finally, the chapter will end with an overview of expectancy violations theory including how the theory has been used and its application to the current study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Communication research since the early 1960s has been studying the process of communication in the classroom setting. In particular, the student-teacher relationship has been regarded as a precondition of successful learning for 'all' students (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Instructional communication research has focused on the relationship between various teacher behaviors and student learning outcomes. For example, some lines of research studied the effects of teacher immediacy (Andersen, 1979; Gorham, 1988), dramatic style behaviors (Javidi, Downs, & Nussbaum, 1988), self-disclosure (Sorensen, 1989), humor (Gorham & Christophel, 1990), affinity seeking behaviors (Frymier, 1994), and compliance gaining (Plax & Kearney, 1992) on student learning. Positive student-teacher relationships not only positively affect students' learning outcomes, but also facilitate factors such as commitment to the university and class (Strauss & Volkwein, 2004), student motivation (Frymier & Houser, 2000), student satisfaction (Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004), and student participation in the classroom (Frisby, & Myers, 2008). Of the many behaviors examined, instructor immediacy has been one of the most researched instructor behaviors in instructional communication and the most examined in different contexts and cultures (Arbaugh, 2001; Sanders & Wisemen, 1990; Zhang & Oetzel, 2006).

### **Nonverbal and Verbal Immediacy**

Immediacy behaviors are communication behaviors that enhance closeness between individuals by reflecting a positive attitude from the sender to the receiver of the behavior (Mehrabian, 1969). Immediacy behaviors communicate warmth and closeness, approachability, and communication availability (Andersen, 1985). Burgoon, Buller, Hale, and deTurck (1984) found that high eye contact, close proximity, forward body

lean, and smiling conveyed greater intimacy, attraction, and trust between communicators. On the other hand, low eye contact, distal position, backward lean, and the absence of smiling conveyed detachment (Burgoon et al., 1984).

In an instructional context, Andersen and Andersen (1987) discussed how teacher immediacy was positively related to effective teaching. Immediate teachers communicate with students at a physically closer distance, use touch in socially appropriate ways, are vocally more expressive, smile more, and use more eye contact. In turn, these immediate behaviors produced high levels of affect for the teacher, course content, and the school. Students in the Andersen and Andersen (1987) study also reported more learning from immediate teachers.

According to Sanders and Wisemen (1990) the extent of the relationship between verbal and nonverbal immediacy and perceived cognitive, affective and behavioral learning outcomes differs when studied cross-culturally. Thus, the next three sections will conceptualize nonverbal and verbal immediacy, review the literature on these instructor behaviors as it relates to this thesis and explore how immediacy behaviors have been studied in other cultures.

**Nonverbal Immediacy.** Research on nonverbal teacher immediacy has focused on nonverbal cues that indicate immediate teachers are more effective teachers (Sanders & Wisemen, 1990). Data and research have consistently reported a positive relationship between teacher nonverbal immediacy and student affective learning (Andersen, 1979; Gorham, 1988; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986; Pogue & AhYun, 2006). Nonverbal cues that are perceived as immediate include: eye contact, gestures, relaxed body position, directing body position towards students, smiling, vocal expressiveness,

movement and proximity (Andersen, 1979). Nonverbal behaviors reduce both the physical and the psychological distance between student and instructor and have resulted in both the students and instructors having more positive feelings toward each other (Mehrabian, 1981). Andersen's (1987) seminal work in nonverbal immediacy found that nonverbal immediacy increased student's perceived affective learning which include: increased affect toward the instructor, the content, and the course in general. Also, nonverbal immediacy played a role in student's likelihood of engaging in similar communication and the likelihood of enrolling in similar courses.

The link, however, between nonverbal immediacy behaviors and cognitive learning has not been clear. Andersen (1979) found that nonverbal immediacy did not predict students' grades and Chaikin et al. (1978) found no difference in student performance with immediate teachers. Conversely, Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey (1987) found a positive association between nonverbal immediacy behaviors and students' perceived cognitive learning, but suggest that the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and cognitive learning may be nonlinear. Andersen (1985) argues that nonverbal immediacy behaviors influence cognitive learning because nonverbal immediacy increases arousal, thus setting the stage for cognitive learning. Kelley and Gorham (1988) support Andersen's (1985) proposition. Other research has found a positive relationship between nonverbal immediacy behaviors such as eye contact and proximity, and short-term cognitive recall (Goodboy, Weber & Bolkan, 2009; Kelley & Gorham, 1988).

Several studies have found that immediacy plays an important role in increasing student motivation (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993). Christophel (1990) and Frymier

(1993) have focused on nonverbal immediacy's link to learning through the mediating variable, motivation. In other words, there is an indirect causal relationship between teacher immediacy and student affective and cognitive learning with student motivation as the mediator between the two. Essentially, teacher immediacy influences students' state motivation which positively impacts learning outcomes (Witt, Wheelless & Allen, 2004).

Some scholars have found links between nonverbal immediacy behaviors by instructors and other academic outcomes. Nonverbal immediacy has shown to increase student information-seeking strategies (Myers & Knox, 2001), increase extra-class communication (Fusani, 1994), decrease student apprehension (Frymier, 1993; Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001) and decrease student resistance (Kearney & Plax, 1991). Other research has found positive correlations between teacher immediacy behaviors and student perceptions of teacher power (Plax et al., 1986), influence (McCroskey & Richmond, 1992), clarity (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), effectiveness (Andersen, 1979), and credibility (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Although nonverbal immediacy has been studied the most within the instructional communication field, verbal immediacy has also been studied within the classroom context.

**Verbal Immediacy.** Immediacy also has a verbal component. The language a teacher uses can signal openness for communication or avoidance (Sanders & Wisemen, 1990). Words such as 'we' used in the classroom increase communicator solidarity and the sender of the message is seen as more immediate. Self-disclosure and humor are also seen as immediacy cues when used appropriately (Gorham, 1988). Verbal immediacy demonstrates perceptions of approach rather than avoidance. Anthony (1978) found that

individuals who used immediate expressions in conversations conveyed openness, liking, and desire for continued interaction with the receiver of the expressions.

This idea can also be translated to the classroom setting. When a teacher uses more immediate verbal expressions with a student, the teacher conveys more liking, openness, and more desire for continued interaction with the student than a non-immediate teacher. However, individuals who used more immediate expressions were found to be less authoritative, but low levels of verbal immediacy reflected communicator's negative attitude toward the receiver (Conville, 1975). Bradac, Bowers and Courtright (1979) found that cognitive stress was related negatively to verbal immediacy, high verbal immediacy is seen as a sign of positive affect, and verbal immediacy is related to perceptions of source competence and character.

While there is little research on teacher verbal immediacy as a stand-alone variable, a variety of related variables suggest that verbal immediacy has a positive effect on teacher effectiveness (Sanders & Wisemen, 1990). For example, Wheelless (1976) found that self-disclosure and solidarity were positively related thus concluding that higher self-disclosure was associated with higher solidarity. Students who perceived their teachers to be verbally immediate were the teachers who demonstrated more interpersonal solidarity in the classroom and a more positive communication style (Andersen, Norton & Nussbaum, 1981). Andersen et al.'s (1981) finding suggests that students' perceived teacher immediacy behaviors and students' perceived teacher communication style are related. Teacher communication style positively influenced students' affective learning and behavioral intent.

Gorham's (1988) study was a pivotal study in teacher verbal immediacy in the field of instructional research. In her study, she found moderate correlations between verbal immediacy and both perceived cognitive and affective learning outcomes. In Gorham's study, she found that verbal immediacy behaviors including humor and teacher's praise of student work, and frequency of actions and comments that convey a willingness to engage in conversations with students before and after class to be very important significant verbal cues. Teacher's self-disclosure, such as use of personal examples or experiences, asking questions to solicit viewpoints, encouraging students to talk, reference to the class as "our", invitations for students to meet or telephone the teacher outside or after class and asking students how they feel about the class or class assignments and due dates were all related to students' self-report of cognitive and affective learning.

The review of the nonverbal and verbal immediacy literature provides an overall view of how these immediacy behaviors have been studied and how these behaviors positively influence student learning outcomes. However, the influence of immediacy behaviors on students with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may differ and has received less scholarly attention.

### **Immediacy and Culture**

The review of the immediacy literature indicates verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors are positively associated with affective learning; and substantial evidence shows that these constructs are positively associated with cognitive learning. Unfortunately, much of the research that has been done has not explored the cultural and ethnic differences in the student-teacher interaction, especially when it comes to

immediacy behaviors. Since immediacy behaviors are highly inferential and vary culturally and contextually (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988), it is important to understand how instructors' immediacy behaviors are perceived by students from different backgrounds.

Some scholars have compared immediacy and learning among different cultural, ethnic and national groups (McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen & Barraclough, 1996a; Roach & Byrne, 2001; Sanders & Wisemen, 1990). They found that immediacy behaviors have a positive influence on affective and cognitive learning, but the difference in magnitude of the effects varied across cultures, where specific behaviors that define verbal and nonverbal immediacy may differ from one culture to another. For example, in Roach and Byrne's study, they found that American students' perceptions of cognitive learning were higher with their more immediate teachers than German students who had less immediate teachers. Some instructional scholars have undertaken this type of instructional/cultural research and have found that teacher immediacy behaviors might transcend cultures but the effect of the immediacy behaviors differ across cultures (Goldman et al., 2014). People from different cultures evaluate communication behaviors differently, thus, it is safe to assume that students from different cultures might view teacher immediacy behaviors differently. For example, McCroskey et al. (1996a) found that highly immediate cultures (e.g., Puerto Ricans) have expectations for teacher immediacy behaviors and violations of those expectancies by non-immediate teachers can be detrimental to cognitive learning. Thus, the expectations for teacher immediacy differs from one culture to another.

Although limited, cultural instructional communication literature lends support to the conclusion that immediacy behaviors might be perceived differently with students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Roach and Byrne (2001) studied the influence of students' perceptions on nonverbal immediacy in American and German classrooms. They found a difference in how students in American classrooms and German classrooms perceive instructor immediacy behaviors, where American students perceived their instructors to have higher power use, affinity-seeking, and nonverbal immediacy than German instructors. Another study by McCroskey et al. (1996a) studied the relationship between teacher nonverbal immediacy and perceived cognitive learning in the cultures of Australia, Finland and Puerto Rico. They found that highly immediate cultures also expect teachers who are highly immediate. On the other hand, Sanders and Wisemen (1990) studied teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy and perceived student cognitive learning, student affect and behavioral intent amongst White, Black, Asian and Hispanic students. They found that immediacy was more highly related to affective learning for Black, Hispanic and Asian students than for white students.

One interesting study by Zhang and Oetzel (2006) tried to construct and validate a scale of perceived teacher immediacy from the Chinese perspective. The researchers suggest that the 14-item Nonverbal Immediacy Measure (Richmond et al., 1987), its revised 10-item Nonverbal Immediacy Measure (McCroskey et al., 1995), and the 20-item Verbal Immediacy Scale (Gorham, 1988), reveal some inherent cultural biases. For example, some of the specific scale items reflect dominant U.S. cultural values which honor small power distances. Thus, the generalizability of the scales in other cultures has been questioned (Neuliep, 1997). For example, Zhang and Oetzel (2006) found cultural

bias in a specific scale item that reflects the dominant U.S. cultural value of honoring small power distance. Power distance is the extent to which people accept the unequal distribution of power in society (Hofstede, 1980). In the U.S. culture, there is small power distance, where instructors address students by their first name and, at times, students are encouraged to refer to their instructors by their first name. While in the Chinese culture, instructors are viewed as authority figures and students are expected to obey them and address them by their surnames with professional titles. So, this immediate practice in the U.S. is not considered appropriate in the large power distance Chinese culture.

Although this thesis will not attempt to construct or validate the nonverbal and verbal immediacy scales for this new instructional context, it is the aim of this thesis to try and understand how Middle Eastern students, which have not been included in immediacy studies, perceive teacher immediacy behaviors. Instructional communication scholars have studied immediacy behaviors in Australia, Finland, and Puerto Rico (McCroskey et al., 1996a), Japan (Hinkle, 1998; Neuliep, 1997; Pribyl, Sakamoto, & Keaten, 2004), China (Myers et al., 1998; Zhang, 2005a, 2005b, 2006), Germany (Roach & Byrne, 2001), Kenya (Johnson & Miller, 2002), and France (Roach, Cornett-DeVito, & DeVito, 2005), yet we still lack a cultural understanding of the Middle Eastern student population. Because immediacy has a cultural component, it is also important to talk about immediacy and gender differences that has been studied in the literature.

### **Immediacy and Gender**

Throughout the study of nonverbal and verbal behaviors in the field of communication, scholars have found sex differences in the way women and men express

themselves, where women are better able to express themselves in emotional and nonverbal communication (Andersen, 1998; Burgoon, Buller, Grandpre, & Kalbfleisch, 1998). Studies show that women smile more than men (Hall, 1998) and use touch as a sign of caring more than men (Coates, 1996). However, for women, impersonal touch may be viewed as violation of personal space and they also tend to avert their initial gaze (Bente, Donaghy, & Suwelack, 1998). On the other hand, men may speak to attempt to gain status, rarely ask questions because it can be viewed as a lack of self-sufficiency, and tend to initiate conflict, while women try to avoid it at all costs (Denton, Burlison, & Sprenkle, 1994; O'Donohue & Crouch, 1996; Tannen, 1990).

These sex differences play a role in the classroom and influence the expectations students have for their instructors and visa-versa. For example, Gorham (1988) found female teachers to be more immediate overall than male teachers by using more nonverbal cues like touching and smiling, more likely to provide feedback, ask students how they felt about an assignment, due date, or discussion topic, and to give praise. Female teachers were more likely show personal interest in students to re-reengage them in learning and see their students more as individuals compared to male teachers who are more likely communicate to enthuse students into engagement (Demetriou, Wilson, & Winterbottom, 2009). Not only do teachers tend to perform immediacy differently, but the same behaviors may be perceived differently by students. Specifically, when students perceive excessive use of immediacy, they are more likely to infer those excessive behaviors as controlling messages from their male teachers, while infer those behaviors as caring messages from their female teachers (Rester & Edwards, 2007).

Basow (1990) found that student evaluations of their instructors are mediated by the students' perceptions of their instructors' gender-linked traits. Menzel and Carrell (1999) found that with immediacy behaviors, male students learn more from male instructors and female students learn more from female instructors. Also, male students' perceptions of learning tend to increase from low to moderate nonverbal immediacy, but not in high instances of nonverbal immediacy. On the other hand, female students' perceptions of learning increased as nonverbal immediacy moved from low to moderate to high levels (Menzel & Carrell, 1999). Female students are more receptive to teaching that values connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate (Centra & Gaubatz, 2000). Also, female students have an overall less favorable impression of their male instructors than their female instructors and perceive their male instructors to provide less support and encouragement (Crombie, Pyke, Silverthorn, Jones, & Piccinin, 2003).

Most of the research on immediacy and gender have been done with university students in the West. Thus, there has been research that supports that female students' perceptions of their instructors based on their gender might differ than their male student counterparts. Thus, gender may be a salient factor of international Middle Eastern students' expectations of their instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy.

### **Middle Eastern Students and Educational Expectations**

The Middle East is a transcontinental region centered on Western Asia and Egypt and consists: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. In the United States, nearly 15 percent of the population is of Middle Eastern and Arab ethnic

origin (Love & Powers, 2002). At the University of Kentucky over the past 8 years, international students from the Middle East have made up about 10% of the international student population and the third largest group of international students (UK International Center, n.d.). With the number of international Middle Eastern student population growing at a fast rate, it has become necessary for communication scholars to form a more accurate and informative portrayal of Middle Eastern peoples' communication behavior, especially in the instructional communication field where there has been an increase Middle Eastern students studying in the United States (Love & Powers, 2002). Middle Eastern students have different communication behaviors and expectations of behaviors than that of U.S. students, and in turn, these behaviors and expectations can manifest itself in the class. Thus, it is important to understand the characterization of the Middle Eastern culture.

**Hofstede's Dimensions.** To understand how culture and its implications play a role in how people behave, act and respond to stimuli in their community, in particular, a culture's implications for organizational performance, Hofstede's (1980, 1991) created a model of national culture that included five dimensions, including collectivism versus individualism. First, the Middle Eastern culture is characterized as a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 2001). Collectivism refers to being concerned with the group rather the individual; interdependence with group members and behaviors are shaped by group norms and values (Hui & Triandis, 1986). Communication behaviors in collectivistic cultures favor harmonious group relations, avoidance of conflict and indirect communication as opposed to confrontational and direct communication (Oetzel et al., 2001).

Second, Hofstede (2001) notes that the Arab culture (which include the Middle Eastern countries of Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) have larger power distance which is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that the power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 98). In the organizational world, inequality is accepted and there is an emphasis on a dependency relationship between managers and subordinates. In the classroom, Middle Eastern students view their instructors as absolute authorities or superiors (Sonleiter & Khelifa, 2010), where there is a large power distance. In turn, this large power distance may influence Middle Eastern students’ expectations of their instructors’ behaviors.

A third dimension Hofstede discusses is the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, which is defined as “intolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity” (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000, p. 401). According to Hofstede (1980), Middle Eastern countries have high preference for avoiding uncertainty, maintain rigid codes of beliefs and behaviors, encourage dependence on government and feel threatened by uncertain and unknown situations. In the classroom, this type of uncertainty avoidance expectation might manifest in the classroom. It might be that Middle Eastern students’ expectations of their instructors are rigid and there are certain expectations of instructor behavior and any violation in those expectations might be detrimental to the student-teacher relationship.

Hofstede (1980,1984, 1991, 2001) also refers to the fourth dimension of masculinity- femininity, which refers to the characteristics of the culture itself. Masculine characteristics include preference for performance and output, while feminine cultures show preference towards processes and aesthetics (Herbig & Dunphy, 1998).

Middle Eastern culture is considered to have both moderate masculine and feminine characteristics, but tend to lean more to the feminine side in that they care about establishing friendly relationships with other people (Bjerke & al-Meer, 1993).

The last of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions is long-term versus short-term orientation. Long-term versus short-term orientation refers to organizations outlook on results. Long-term orientated organizations tend to focus on future results and investment in long-term changes in the firm, while short-term orientated organizations focus on the past and quick results (Waarts & Van Everdingen, 2005). This dimension refers more to organizational characteristics than individual characteristics, thus more of the conversation in this thesis will focus on the other dimensions to create a better understanding of the thesis results.

Much of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions have been studied in the organizational world, thus this thesis will try to fill in the knowledge gap by trying to apply these dimensions in the classroom, especially trying to understand how the student-teacher relationship and student expectations is influenced by these dimensions. Many of these dimension may play a role in the educational system of the Middle East, thus it is important to discuss Middle Eastern educational expectations and environment.

**Middle Eastern Education System.** Education in the Middle East is very different than the United States. Secondary education in the Middle East is more teacher-centered than in the United States, which is more student-centered and students take charge of their own learning (Frambach, Driessen, Beh & van der Vleuten, 2014). Teachers in public Middle Eastern schools are viewed by their students as an absolute authority, where no questions were asked and facts were memorized (Sonleitner &

Khelifa, 2010). Teachers tend to use direct lecturing and reading from the textbooks; and assessments mostly rely on exams (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010). The examinations depend on pure memorization with little application of concepts and critical thinking. This type of learning inhibits freedom of exploration in education and instilled fear and concern in students about making mistakes (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2010). Middle Eastern students are pushed to meet teachers' performance standards and are not encouraged to learn about issues unless they directly affect the curriculum (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010). Also, it is not common practice for teachers to engage students in group learning activities, thus students are usually assigned solo activities rather than team activities.

Because of Middle Eastern students' educational background, they often struggle in United States higher education institutions, which encourage students to take charge of their own learning (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010). Middle Eastern students lack information on global issues, do not have opinions on issues that directly affect them, and do not have experience in expressing what is on their mind (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2010). In higher education in the United States, students are trained in critical thinking, self-motivation and independent problem-solving skills (Cannon & Newble, 2000). Students in the United States are expected to engage in critical discussions about the curriculum and actively participate in classroom discussions, which promote students' collaborative skills, independence, motivation and critical thinking (Schmidt & Moust, 1998). Thus, when Middle Eastern students come into the United States classroom, they often find themselves in serious academic problems (Meleis, 1982). Fambach et al. (2014) found that Middle Eastern students had high uncertainty in the United States higher education classroom, where the learning was student-centered. The feelings of uncertainty inhibited

students from participating in classroom discussion. Middle Eastern students experienced more participation obstacles, the more teacher-centered education they had received.

However, Sonleinter and Khelifa (2010) found that Middle Eastern students were polite and kind and wished to do well in their classes and school. The Middle Eastern culture fosters cordial interpersonal relationships, and the students develop these types of relationships with their teachers and classmates. Close social relationships are important to Middle Eastern students and they are rarely seen alone on campus. They expect their teachers to care for them and their expectations are violated if they are spoken to in a rough way.

**Middle Eastern Student Expectations.** There have been a few studies on Western faculty teaching experiences in the Middle East that have provided some insight on Middle Eastern students' expectations from Western instructors and the obstacles faculty face trying to meet those expectations (Love & Powers, 2002; Sonleinter & Khelifa, 2010). Love and Powers (2002) found that there was a cultural expectation that faculty should do everything possible not to offend their students. The Middle East has a 'culture of negotiation', which extended into the classroom, where students would negotiate their grades or extending deadlines. It was common practice for students to go to the professor's office in groups to discuss a single student's concern about an assignment or grade (Sonleinter & Khelifa, 2010). Love and Powers (2002) describe student communication as collective, where students placed high value on friendships and were rarely seen alone on campus. Students preferred completing assignment in small groups rather than working by themselves. As for physical distance, female students

distanced themselves, at least three feet, from male instructors more than with female instructors.

On the other hand, these Middle Eastern student behaviors and expectations caused Western faculty anxiety and uncertainty in situations where they interacted with those students (Love & Powers, 2002). Some Western faculty expressed frustration during orientation week, where they were told how to interact with students, in particular female students. Other faculty also expressed fear in situations that might offend a student and the repercussions of some type of accidental offensive interaction. The high level of bonding between Middle Eastern students caused anxiety and uncertainty for some faculty. Western faculty who were used to discussing issues with students on a one-on-one basis or privately felt that Middle Eastern students didn't want or expect privacy. As a result of the cultural differences, faculty altered their classroom strategies as a means to minimize the potential of offending a student.

The differences in expected behavioral roles of Western faculty towards Middle Eastern students have the potential to disrupt student learning. McCargar (1993) suggests that cultural differences influences role expectations that manifest in the educational contexts. In the context of this thesis, when Western instructors are not aware of Middle Eastern students' expectations for behaviors, instructors can't effectively adapt to the new classroom environment resulting in the potential to compromise student learning. This thesis seeks to fill the gap for what instructor immediacy behaviors are expected by Middle Eastern students, thus, informing Western faculty about Middle Eastern students' desired faculty behaviors resulting in faculty being able to adjust or at least understand Middle Eastern students' expectations. At the end of this thesis, faculty will then be able

to better adjust their immediacy behaviors in the classroom to maximize Middle Eastern students' academic success. At the same time, instructors will also be able to minimize their own uncertainty and anxiety.

To understand how Middle Eastern students view their instructor's behaviors, in particular their verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, this thesis will look at this phenomena through the lens of expectancy violations theory as a means to explain how Middle Eastern students expect their Western instructors to behave with them in the classroom.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Individuals enter relationships and situations with preconceived notions of how others should communicate and behave and how interactions should take place. According to expectancy violations theory (EVT), these preconceived notions are referred to as expectations (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). An individual's expectations can be met, may be unmet, violated, or may be exceeded. Violations of an individual's communicative expectations can be either positive or negative and lead the individual to experience arousal to evaluate the interaction and respond accordingly (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

Instructional communication has applied EVT in the college classroom from the instructor's perspective about expected student behavior. Other researchers studied expectancy violation in the classroom from the student's perspective (Houser, 2006; McPherson, Kearney & Plax, 2003). Researchers have found when student's expectations are positively violated, they perceive their instructors as more positive, rated them higher on affect, competence, goodwill and trustworthiness (McPherson & Laing, 2007). On the

other hand, when student's expectations were violated negatively, they had more negative perceptions of their instructors and decreased student learning and motivation (Houser, 2006). Hirschy and Braxton (2004) state that when expectations for classroom behaviors are violated the entire learning environment can be disrupted.

Communication expectancies and communication expectancy violations are culturally situated (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2004). Communication expectancies are patterns of anticipated verbal and nonverbal behavior (Burgoon & Walther, 1990). Communication expectancies or expected behaviors comprised of socially normative patterns of behavior and person-specific knowledge (previous knowledge of the individual which one is communicating with) related to another's communication. When intercultural interactions occur, where there is little personalized knowledge of the other's communication patterns, expectancies revert to cultural norms or stereotypes (Hamilton, Sherman & Ruvolo, 1990). The expectancies of each intercultural interaction will be based on factors such as cultural dimensions: collectivism versus individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity versus femininity (FitzGerald, 2003). Thus, different cultures define what the expectancy violations and the manner in which they respond to the violations may differ (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2004).

The focus of this thesis is on one of the primary components of EVT: violation valence (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Violation valence focuses on the response of the receiver of the violation (Burgoon, Newton, Walther, & Baesler, 1989). Depending on the social norms we have developed for a specific behavior, we can perceive an expectancy violation of such behavior to be either positive or negative. For example, students' expectations of instructor behaviors, regardless of cultural backgrounds, have

developed over many years of experience in the classroom. Therefore, when instructors behave in a manner that is not consistent with the expectations they have developed over a lifelong classroom experience, they perceive those behaviors as negative violations of their expectations.

EVT has gained increasing attention in instructional communication, but relatively little attention has been paid to the two different senses of the “expected” (Burgoon, 1995). Staines and Libbey (1986) define two types of expectancies: predictive and prescriptive. Predictive expectations refer to expectations that fall in line with cultural stereotypes. While prescriptive expectations refer to “people’s beliefs about what behaviors should be performed” (Staines & Libby, 1986, p. 212). In the classroom, students’ predictive expectations of instructor behaviors are those expectations that are consistent with their previous experience in the classroom or what they typically see in the classroom. On the other hand, students’ prescriptive expectations of instructor behaviors are what students feel how their instructor “should” behave. When Staines and Libbey (1986) explicated the two expectancies, Burgoon (1995) incorporated them in an intercultural application of EVT. Student’s prescriptive expectancies are their desired behaviors of instructors. In other words, Burgoon (1995) described them as “idealized standards of conduct” (p. 196).

Burgoon (1995) argues that it is important to consider the communicator, the relationship, the context, prior knowledge, and observable communicator information as components of the violation valence. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to understand what Middle Eastern students expect from their Western instructors in terms of instructor verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Middle Eastern students come into the

student-teacher relationship with expectations of how their instructors should behave based on their previous cultural and educational experience in the classroom. The students' expectations of instructor behaviors is imbedded in their own Middle Eastern culture of how their instructors in the past have behaved. The focus of this thesis is to understand Middle Eastern student's prescriptive expectations of their Western instructor's immediacy behaviors. Based on the literature review, I propose the following research questions and hypothesis:

RQ1: What are Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations of their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors?

H1: International Middle Eastern female students will have different expectations for verbal and nonverbal immediacy than male international Middle Eastern students.

RQ2: How do Middle Eastern students perceive immediacy expectancy violations?

RQ3: How, if at all, do Hofstede's dimensions play a role in explaining why Middle Eastern students hold particular expectations of Western instructors?

## **Summary**

Chapter two reviewed the literature leading up to the research question regarding Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations of their Western instructors' immediacy behaviors and responses to perceived expectations for instructor immediacy. Chapter three will explain the mixed method approach that will address the research questions.

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

This chapter will outline the methods employed in this study. Specifically, it will outline the participants, procedures, instruments, and data analysis plan. This study used a mixed methods approach with a quantitative phase and a qualitative data phase administered between Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. The quantitative data came from online surveys and the qualitative data came from open-ended interview questions. This study took an exploratory and descriptive approach.

#### **Phase One: Quantitative Methods**

**Participants and Procedures.** After obtaining IRB approval, Middle Eastern students from the University of Kentucky were recruited using purposive and snowballing sampling through the International Student Center on campus. The International Student Center office was provided with a recruitment email and were asked to send the survey out to students via existing email list-serves. The participants had to be currently attending the University of Kentucky and have international student status. Participants needed to be over the age of 18 and an undergraduate student in order to participate.

During recruitment, potential participants were sent information about the study via email which included a link to a survey hosted on Qualtrics. Participants then completed the survey at a time and place convenient for them. The International Student Center sent two recruitment emails. The first email served as an invitation for students to participate in the survey. Two weeks later, another recruitment email was sent as a reminder for students to fill out the survey.

There are approximately 307 Middle Eastern students at the University of Kentucky (University of Kentucky International Center, n.d.) who received the email.

Only 88 students in the target population responded to the survey for a 28% completion rate. Participants were removed from the data set if a) they filled out less than 50% of the survey ( $n = 11$ ) or b) did not complete the consent form ( $n = 3$ ). Thus, the final total number of participants was 74.

The final sample of participants ( $N = 74$ ) included males ( $n = 46, 73\%$ ) and females ( $n = 17, 27\%$ ) who ranged in age from 18 to 38 ( $M = 26.6, SD = 5.331$ ). Of those who disclosed country of origin, there were 3 students from Egypt, 18 students from Oman, 14 students from Saudi Arabia, 9 students from Iraq, 8 students from Iran, 2 students from Kuwait, 1 student from Jordan, 1 student from Turkey, 1 student from Syria, and 1 student from Libya. Of the students that disclosed their year in school, 12 were freshman, 9 were sophomores, 10 were juniors, and 11 were seniors.

**Phase One Instrumentation.** The study employed a self-report survey which was administered online using Qualtrics. Participants received the link for the survey through an email asking them to participate. Once the participants clicked on the link they were guided to a page which explained that they could opt out of the study at any time during the survey (which took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete). This page also explained the study and asked for electronic consent to participate. Then they completed the survey which was divided into two components: The first component asked for students' demographics. The second component of the survey asked for students' prescriptive expectations of nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors using the modified versions of Nonverbal Immediacy Scale (Richmond, McCroskey & Johnson, 2003) and the Verbal Immediacy Scale (Gorham, 1988). The survey design followed

Houser's (2005) survey method with some minor adjustments for an international student population.

**Demographics.** The demographics portion of the survey was completed prior to the rest of the survey because the information was crucial for determining participant fit for the study. The demographics portion of the survey included 7 items: 1) age, 2) biological sex, 3) country of origin, 4) in what semester of college the participant was currently enrolled 5) what year were they in based on how many credit hours they had 6) major of the participant 7) how long they have studied in the U.S.

**Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Scale.** To understand Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations of instructor nonverbal immediacy, Richmond, McCroskey and Johnson's (2003) scale was used. The Nonverbal Immediacy Scale consists of 26 items with 13 positively worded items and 13 negatively worded items. Positively worded items were where agreement would indicate high immediacy, and negatively worded items were where agreement would indicate low immediacy. For example, positively worded item was "I used my hands and arms to gesture when talking to people". An example of a negatively worded item was "I use monotone or dull voice while talking to people". In the original scale, the items were presented on a 5-point Likert-type response scale: 1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Occasionally; 4= Often; 5= Very Often.

For this study, two changes were made to the scale following Houser's (2005) survey design of expected immediacy behaviors with non-traditional students. First, the scale was adjusted to reflect students' degree of expectation to each item in the scale instead of reporting on actual teacher immediacy behaviors. Second, the scale was adjusted to a 7-point Likert type scale: 1, "never expect (desire, prefer, and need) an

instructor to perform these behaviors in class” to 7, “always expect (desire, prefer, and need) an instructor to perform these behaviors in class.” For instance, the original item “I move closer to people when I talk to them” was adjusted to state “I expect my instructor to move closer to me when he or she talks to me”. Foddy (1994) concludes that a minimum of seven categories in a Likert scale improves scale validity and reliability, thus this study employs a 7-point Likert scale. In this study, the reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .85$  ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 2.67$ ).

***Verbal Immediacy Scale.*** To understand Middle Eastern students’ prescriptive expectations of instructor nonverbal immediacy, Gorham’s (1988) scale was used. The Verbal Immediacy Scale consists of 17- items which focus on specific verbal behaviors that teachers engage in within the instructional context. All of the items but one is worded in the same direction, with more of the behavior presumed to reflect higher immediacy. In the original scale, the items were presented on a 5-point Likert-type response format: 1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Occasionally; 4= Often; 5= Very Often.

In this study, following Houser’s (2005) survey design, students were asked, on a 7-point Likert scale, to report the “extent to which you expect (desire, prefer, and need) a classroom instructor to perform these behaviors in your classes.” Possible scores for each item in the scale ranged from 1, “never expect (desire, prefer, and need) an instructor to perform these behaviors in class” to 7, “always expect (desire, prefer, and need) an instructor to perform these behaviors in class.” For example, in the original item “The instructor asks questions or encourages students to respond” was modified to state “I expect my instructor to ask questions or encourage students to respond.” In this study, the reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .91$  ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 3.16$ ).

**Phase One Data Analysis.** RQ1 asked what were Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations for their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. To understand students' expectations for instructors' nonverbal and verbal immediacy, the survey data was examined using simple descriptive statistics for each of the individual behaviors represented in the scales. Hypothesis 1 asked if there were any gender differences in students' expectations for instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy. Independent samples t-tests was employed to determine if there are any differences based on participant gender.

### **Phase Two: Qualitative Method**

Complementary qualitative methods were congruent with the nature of the research problem and it is one of the best ways to explore areas about which little is known (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Since this is an exploratory study, the need for qualitative feedback on Middle Eastern student's expectations is important to get an in depth understanding of student's expectations. For this thesis, the qualitative portion of the study yielded a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the research problem than a quantitative approach alone. The qualitative data elaborated, clarified, and built on findings from the survey results. The qualitative data provided data on the Middle Eastern students' expectations, where these expectations come from or how they manifested, why they expected their instructors to behave in a certain way, and the consequences of unwanted or unexpected behavior from Western instructors.

**Participants and Procedures.** Participants who completed the quantitative survey from Phase One had the opportunity to indicate interest in participating in a follow up study. Those who indicated interest in a follow-up study ( $n = 9, 12\%$ ) were contacted

individually by the researcher using the email address provided in Phase One. The researcher intended to do focus groups as it was thought to be the best way to get an in-depth look at Middle Eastern students' expectations and expectancy violations. However, due to unanticipated problems with getting enough participants to reach sufficient sample size and scheduling issues with focus groups, the researcher completed an IRB modification to alter the qualitative data collection procedures. Specifically, the researcher requested the option to conduct interviews one-on-one and remotely using either email or video conferencing. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher conducted one on one interviews using open ended questions via email, per participant preference.

Although this method was not the preferred method of the researcher, there is support for email interviews being an effective method. For example, McCoyd and Kerson (2006) found in their study that email interviews tend to be more complete because they include more self-reflection by respondents and respondents seem to be more candid in their responses. Relatedly, Turkle (1995) supports this finding by asserting that people may have a tendency to confide in machines that are viewed as non-judgmental.

Of those participants ( $n = 9$ ) that indicated interest to participate in Phase Two of the study by providing their email in Phase One of the research, only ( $n = 7$ ) responded to the researcher. After emailing the interview questions to the participants, it took approximately two weeks to receive all seven responses from the participants. Most of the responses from the participants were about a paragraph long (6-10 sentences). However, the researcher did not have to follow up or probe further with any of the

respondents as the responses provided enough detail for analysis and demonstrated saturation on the topic. The final sample for Phase 2 included 7 participants ( $N = 7$ ) comprised of males ( $n = 2$ ) and females ( $n = 5$ ). The participants were 1 freshman, 3 sophomores, and 4 seniors. The ages ranged between 18 and 24 ( $M = 20.714$ ,  $SD = 1.967$ ).

**Phase Two Qualitative Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was developed using expectancy violations theory and dimensions of culture as a guide and to complement the quantitative survey results. Open-ended questions were asked to elicit responses from the participants on their experiences and feelings in the classroom in relation to their instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy. Participants were also asked about their experiences in expectancy violations in relation to their professor's immediacy behaviors. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked where they believe these expectations or expectancy violations came from or how they had manifested. See Appendix C for the qualitative questionnaire.

**Phase Two Data Analysis.** In Phase Two, the primary researcher used open coding to identify primary themes related to students' expectations and expectancy violations for instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy. Additionally, the coding was theoretically guided by Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of culture to provide additional explanatory power for students' expectations regarding instructor behaviors. Specifically, Hofstede's (1980) dimensions were broadly used to examine the expectancies of each intercultural interaction, in this case, between the Middle Eastern students and Western teachers. Thus, the coding was based on the following cultural dimensions: collectivism

versus individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity versus femininity (FitzGerald, 2003).

To code the participant responses ( $n = 7$ ), the nonverbal and verbal immediacy items in the scales were used as a codebook to code the participants' responses for RQ2. Then, Hofstede's dimensions were used as a codebook to answer RQ3. After initial coding, the primary investigator trained another graduate student in the primary investigator's department on each of the codes. The second coder coded all responses. The members came together to discuss their findings and reached consensus on the responses.

### **Summary**

To summarize, the Phase One of the study took on a quantitative approach using the verbal and nonverbal immediacy scale to understand Middle Eastern student expectations; while Phase Two of the study took on a qualitative approach using Hofstede's dimensions as an explanatory framework for students' responses as a means to understand Middle Eastern students' expectancy violations.

## Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine international Middle Eastern students' expectations of their instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy. To answer the research questions posed in this thesis: a mixed methods approach was applied. The quantitative results of the survey are outlined in the following sections. See Table 4.1 for nonverbal immediacy items, means, and standard deviations. See Table 4.2 for verbal immediacy items, means, and standard deviations.

### Research Question 1

RQ1 examined international Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations of their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. For nonverbal immediacy, the highest means or most expected behaviors were for Item 22: "I expect my instructor to maintain eye contact with me when I talk to him or her." ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ), followed by Item 17: "I expect my instructor to look directly at me while talking to him or her." ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ), Item 25: "I expect my instructor to smile when I talk to him or her." ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ), and Item 6: "I expect my instructor to have a relaxed body position when I talk to him or her." ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ). The lowest means or the least expected behaviors were for Item 8: "I expect my instructor to avoid eye contact while talking to me." ( $M = 1.48$ ,  $SD = .80$ ), Item 7: "I expect my instructor to frown while talking to me." ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ), Item 9: "I expect my instructor to have a tense body position while talking to me." ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ), and Item 2: "I expect my instructor to touch me on the shoulder or arm while talking to me." ( $M = 2.09$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ). See Table 4.1 for items, means, and standard deviations of all the nonverbal immediacy items.

**Table 4.1: Nonverbal Immediacy Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
I expect my instructor to maintain eye contact with me when I talk to him or her.	5.00 (1.87)
I expect my instructor to look directly at me while talking to him or her.	4.88 (1.78)
I expect my instructor to smile when I talk to him or her.	4.61 (1.94)
I expect my instructor to have a relaxed body position when I talk to him or her.	4.36 (2.20)
I expect my instructor to use his or her hands and arms to gesture while talking to me.	4.02 (1.95)
I expect my instructor to use a variety of vocal expressions when I talk to him or her.	3.95 (1.76)
I expect my instructor to avoid touching me when I talk to him or her.	3.95 (2.19)
I expect my instructor to have a lot of vocal variety when I talk to him or her.	3.78 (1.69)
I expect my instructor to gesture when I talk to him or her.	3.63 (1.61)
I expect my instructor to sit close or stand close to me while talking with him or her.	3.49 (1.66)
I expect my instructor to move closer to me when I talk to him or her.	3.12 (1.41)
I expect my instructor to have a bland facial expression when I talk to him or her.	2.88 (1.72)
I expect my instructor to be animated when I talk to him or her.	2.78 (1.68)
I expect my instructor to try not to sit or stand close to me when I talk with him or her	2.61 (1.57)
I expect my instructor to avoid gesturing while I am talking to him or her.	2.58 (1.59)
I expect my instructor to lean toward people when I talk to him or her.	2.54 (1.18)
I expect myself to move away from my instructor when he or she touches me while we are talking.	2.51 (1.97)
I expect my instructor to lean away from me when I talk to him or her.	2.41 (1.28)
I expect my instructor to be stiff when I talk to him or her.	2.39 (1.66)
I expect my instructor's voice to be monotonous or dull when I talk to him or her.	2.37 (1.47)
I expect my instructor to use a monotone or dull voice while talking to me.	2.12 (1.40)
I expect my instructor to look over or away from me while talking to me.	2.12 (1.43)
I expect my instructor to touch me on the shoulder or arm while talking to me.	2.09 (1.37)
I expect my instructor to have a tense body position while talking to me.	2.08 (1.18)
I expect my instructor to frown while talking to me.	2.07 (1.48)
I expect my instructor to avoid eye contact while talking to me.	1.48 (.80)

For verbal immediacy, the highest means or most expected behaviors were for Item 10: “I expect my instructor to provide feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, discussion...etc.” ( $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 2.03$ ), followed by Item 6: “I expect my instructor to address me by name.” ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ), Item 2: “I expect my instructor to ask questions and encourage the students to respond.” ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ), and Item 9: “I expect my instructor to refer to class as “our” or what “we” are doing.” ( $M = 4.91$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ). The lowest means or least expected behaviors were for Item 16: “I expect my instructor to have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class a whole.” ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ), Item 11: “I expect my instructor to call on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated they want to talk.” ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ), Item 13: “I expect my instructor to invite students to telephone or chat sessions outside the class if they have questions or want to discuss something.” ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ), and Item 17: “I expect my instructor to be addressed by his or her first name by the students.” ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ). See Table 4.2 for items, means, and standard deviations of all the verbal immediacy items.

**Table 4.2 : Verbal Immediacy Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
I expect my instructor to provide feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, discussion...etc.	5.09 (2.035)
I expect my instructor to address me by name.	4.97 (1.992)
I expect my instructor to ask questions and encourage the students to respond.	4.94 (1.926)
I expect my instructor to refer to class as “our” or what “we” are doing.	4.91 (1.782)
I expect my instructor to address students by name.	4.8 (1.907)
I expect my instructor to praise students’ work, actions or comments.	4.68 (1.736)
I expect my instructor to get into conversations with individual students before or after class.	4.57 (1.975)
I expect my instructor to ask questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.	4.43 (1.82)
I expect my instructor to ask how students feel about an assignment, due dates, or discussions topics.	4.4 (1.866)
I expect my instructor to use humor in the course.	4.29 (1.856)
I expect my instructor to get into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn’t seem a part of his or her plan.	4.18 (1.882)
I expect my instructor to use personal examples or talks about experiences outside the classroom he or she had outside the classroom.	3.97 (1.699)
I expect my instructor to initiate conversations with me before, after or outside the class.	3.97 (1.79)
I expect my instructor to be addressed by his or her first name by the students	3.66 (1.83)
I expect my instructor to invite students to telephone or chat sessions outside the class if they have questions or want to discuss something.	3.6 (1.802)
I expect my instructor to call on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated they want to talk.	3.14 (1.785)
I expect my instructor to have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class a whole.	3.14 (1.683)

**Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 predicted differences in prescriptive expectations in nonverbal and verbal immediacy based on the gender of the international Middle Eastern students. A series of independent samples *t*-tests was employed to determine if there were any differences based on gender. There were only three items that demonstrated a significant difference in expectations based on gender. First, there was a significant difference on the item “I expect my instructor to have a relaxed body position when I talk to him or her” with males having lower expectations ( $M = 3.90, SD = 2.26$ ) than females ( $M = 5.64, SD$

= 1.63), ( $t = -2.32, p = .025$ ). Second, there was a significant difference on the item “I expect my instructor to smile when I talk to him or her”, with males having lower expectations ( $M = 4.24, SD = 2.09$ ) than females ( $M = 5.36, SD = 1.120$ ), ( $t = -2.176, p = .037$ ). Third, there were significant differences on the item: “I expect my instructor to avoid touching me when I talk to him or her” with males having lower expectations ( $M = 3.66, SD = 2.28$ ) than females ( $M = 5.00, SD = 1.48$ ), ( $t = -2.18, p = .038$ ). To summarize, male students expected less relaxed positions, less smiling, and more touch than female students. H1 was only partially supported.

## **Research Question 2**

RQ2 asked how Middle Eastern students perceived immediacy expectancy violations. The analysis of the qualitative answers revealed only three major themes of instructor behaviors that were considered expectancy violations. Specifically, students most frequently identified eye contact ( $n = 6$ ) as the most common violation, followed by an unwelcoming body position ( $n = 3$ ), and touch ( $n = 2$ ) to be violations of expectations for instructor behavior. These three themes are also consistent with the most expected nonverbal immediacy behaviors from RQ1.

Regarding eye contact, students demonstrated an awareness of the importance of eye contact in social situations despite cultural differences. For example, one student said, “There was a time where I was speaking to my professor and they would constantly look away during the conversation. I felt somewhat awkward and unsure because eye contact is such a big part of a social situation.” This same level of importance was echoed by other participants. A different student provided an explanation:

I did not like the fact that my instructor did not look me in the eye when I was talking to him outside of class. I perceive the behavior as a negative because it is important to look people in the eye when they are talking to you to let them know they have your full attention and that you are listening to what they have to say.

As for body language, students perceived instructors with unwelcoming body posture as an expectancy violation. Two students described how their instructor was unwelcoming. One student said, "I remember an encounter when I was at my professor's office and his body language was very confined, arms and legs crossed, and there was quite some physical distance between us." While, another student also described his instructor's body posture and facial expression, "My instructor was very stiff, he had a very bland, emotionless face."

The last reported expectancy violation was touch. It is important to note that this expectancy violation was only reported by female students which is consistent with the quantitative results from H1. These two female students regarded the nonverbal immediacy behavior of touch by an instructor, especially a male instructor, inappropriate and uncomfortable. One female student described a time where her instructor touched her shoulder, "I didn't like the fact that my instructor touched my shoulder while talking to me about my questions for the exam because I felt that he pushed personal space boundary." The other female student explained how any type of touch by an instructor would be an inappropriate nonverbal immediacy behavior, "I feel any type of touching from an instructor is not appropriate and will make me feel uncomfortable."

### Research Question 3

RQ3 examined how Hofstede's cultural dimensions may play a role in explaining Middle Eastern students' specific expectations of Western instructors. The analysis of the qualitative answers revealed three of Hofstede's dimensions were prevalent in shaping students' expectations: power distance ( $n = 4$ ), masculinity-femininity ( $n = 3$ ), and individualism-collectivism ( $n = 3$ ). The dimension of uncertainty avoidance did not emerge in the participant responses.

The most prevalent theme that emerged in shaping students' expectations was Hofstede's power distance dimension. Many of the students reported that instructors must be respected in the classroom and are the superior figure in the student-teacher relationship. One male student described how in the Middle East teachers are seen as paternal figures, "In the place I come from we are used to having teachers like our fathers or big brothers..." suggesting that like older male family members, teachers are considered to be higher status and have more power. Two other students focus on describing how the teacher's superiority must garner respect from the students, "Since I was little I was taught I always must respect my teachers because of the important position they have in my life," and that the respect must be shown by giving appropriate titles to their teachers and not calling them by their first name, "I remember my teacher in sociology class asked the students to call her by her first name. I was surprised because in Jordan it wasn't allowed to call our teacher by the first name. It didn't show respect."

The second emergent theme that shaped students' expectations of instructor behaviors was Hofstede's dimension of masculinity versus femininity. One student said, "If my instructor is verbally immediate, that would make me feel comfortable. It shows

that he is friendly especially if they are going to be using terms like “us” and making the classroom look more like a family/friends place.” Similarly, another student mentioned how it is expected of the instructor create a friendly and comfortable environment or all students, “I expect them (instructors) to be friendly and to make the classroom to feel comfortable where all the students are comfortable around each other and trust and care for each other.” A different student also, echoed this sentiment, “I would normally expect my instructors to be very friendly, act like they are not in a classroom, that we know each other.” The student comments exclusively discussed the importance of instructors establishing friendly and comfortable environments for students, which may be considered a more feminine and nurturing instructor approach.

The third emergent theme that shaped students’ expectations was Hofstede’s individualism versus collectivism dimension. Many of the students mentioned how immediacy was an important aspect of their cultures due to the collectivistic nature of the Middle Eastern culture. One student stressed that because she came from a collectivist culture, immediacy was valued and expected, “I come from an interdependent collectivistic society, where immediacy, both verbal and nonverbal, is highly valued and widely used by people.” Another student mentioned how she expected the instructor to create a classroom environment where there are strong group ties:

I had a professor once that never really engaged the students in the class. I think that a professor needs to make the classroom feel like one... like we (students) are all in this together. I really like when professor talk about their own struggles as college students. It makes me feel that we are all the same.

Thus, the collectivistic approach from many Middle Eastern cultural backgrounds were expected to be facilitated in the classroom to create a collectivistic feel between students and peers and between students and instructors.

### **Summary**

To summarize, the quantitative results show that Middle Eastern students expect their Western instructors to maintain eye contact, look directly at, smile and maintain a relaxed body position when spoken to by their instructors. The quantitative results also show a difference in Middle Eastern male and female students' expectations for their instructors' nonverbal immediacy behaviors with male students expected less relaxed positions, less smiling, and more touch than female students. Lastly, the analysis of the qualitative answers revealed three of Hofstede's dimensions were prevalent in shaping students' prescriptive expectations and resulting expectancy violations: power distance, masculinity-femininity, and individualism-collectivism.

Chapter five will discuss the results of this study, practical implications, and conclude with the limitations of the study and future directions.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore an understudied area in the field of instructional communication. In particular, trying to understand Middle Eastern students' expectations for their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. This study took an exploratory approach employing expectancy violations theory and Hofstede's dimensions as an explanatory framework as to why these students may hold specific expectations of their Western instructors. Overall, the results of the study found that regardless of cultural differences, Middle Eastern students perceived their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy to be an important behavior enacted in the classroom just as their Western student counterparts in previous instructional studies (Roach & Bryne, 2001; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). The results of the study support previous research that suggests that regardless of cultural differences and expectations for teacher immediacy, immediacy is perceived as "good" and important for students and will always enhance student learning (Johnson & Miller, 2002; Roach & Bryne, 2001). This study shows that Middle Eastern students might be more similar than different than their Western student counterparts, however, the types of immediacy cues that were important and emphasized in Middle Eastern students' expectations were different due to the cultural differences and cultural expectations.

The following sections outline the results of the study. Each research question and hypothesis is discussed in turn as it relates to the previous literature. Following the discussion of results from each research question and hypothesis, practical implications from this study are presented followed by the limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

## **Middle Eastern Students' Expectations for Nonverbal Immediacy**

The results of the study showed that Middle Eastern students' expectations for their instructors' nonverbal immediacy behaviors were highest in regards to eye contact, facial expressiveness, and body posture. Middle Eastern students expect their instructors to maintain eye contact with them, look directly and smile at them when spoken to, and have a relaxed body position and gesture while they were spoken to. These results of the expectations of Middle Eastern students in the quantitative data is also reflected in the students' responses in the qualitative data, where students' expectations were violated when the instructor had an unwelcoming body posture and didn't maintain eye contact.

The findings of the combined data are not surprising due to the prescriptive expectations Middle Eastern students hold for their Western instructors. Before discussing Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations, a discussion of how Middle Eastern culture influences expectations of body posture and eye contact is will bring the argument full circle of why these students hold these perspective expectations of their Western instructors' nonverbal immediacy behaviors as more important than other types of behaviors. The cultural orientation of these students' norms and expectations carries over into the educational context and have obvious effects in the way the students perceive Western instructors' nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

Middle Eastern students' previous experiences in the classroom, educational background and pertinent cultural factors influence the prescriptive expectations they hold for their Western instructors in the classroom. Culturally, Middle Eastern individuals have a great need for affiliation and that need can manifest itself in the classroom (Meleis, 2016). Extensive social networking is an integral part of their

everyday lives and is demonstrated in many forms in social events and in the case of this study, in the classroom. Because Middle Eastern individuals have a high need for affiliation, they are also highly contextual (Meleis, 2016).

In situations that deal with cognitive matters, like business dealings or the classroom, Middle Eastern individuals want to develop feelings about another person to make an effective assessment of that individual, and prefer to learn about them personally. To acquire this information, Middle Eastern individuals ask questions, read body movement, posture and eye contact. Thus, Middle Eastern individuals try to maintain little separation space when speaking with an individual permitting close surveillance of body language and eye contact. Trust is established through open body language and maintenance of eye contact (Meleis, 2016)

Similar to these findings in interpersonal and business settings, in this study, Middle Eastern students reported that eye contact, welcoming body posture and smiling were the most expected nonverbal immediacy behavior. The explanation above provides extensive reasoning as to why these students hold these expectations. For Middle Eastern students, their prescriptive expectations are developed through the way their culture has socialized them to build trust. Perhaps these behaviors help students to build greater trust with instructors as well. Based on previous interpretations of research associated with immediacy, Burgoon and Hale (1988) mentioned that immediacy communicates greater involvement, interest, affiliation, trust, and caring. Thus, as means for their Western instructors to build trust with Middle Easter students, it is important for these students that their instructors enact these positive nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

**Nonverbal immediacy and gender differences.** It is quite surprising to find that the most expected nonverbal immediacy behaviors of facial expressions (i.e., smile, eye contact) and body position were significantly different between Middle Eastern male students and Middle Eastern female students. Middle Eastern female students expected more frequently that their instructor have a relaxed body position and smile when spoken to than their male counterparts. However, Middle Eastern female students expected their instructor to avoid touching them while their instructor spoke to them. The quantitative findings are supported by the qualitative female student responses in this study and previous literature (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2010). Qualitatively, this difference seems to be especially salient when the instructor is a male.

Middle Eastern female students' expectations for avoidance of touch is influenced by how Middle Eastern females are socialized at a young age in school and home (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2010). In the Middle Eastern culture, social restrictions are placed on male and female social interactions. In elementary school, unrelated males and females are separated by the age of six. Generally, females are not permitted to leave the house without a male escort and they abide by the social and cultural norms of not interacting freely with unrelated males. Because male instructors are unrelated males to Middle Eastern female students, the same social and cultural rules restricting social interactions between males and females apply in this student-teacher relationship setting. Thus, through this cultural socialization, Middle Eastern female students generally view touching as inappropriate behaviors, but especially if enacted by male instructors.

## **Middle Eastern Students' Expectations for Verbal Immediacy**

As for verbal immediacy, the results of the study found that Middle Eastern students expect their instructor to give them verbal feedback on their work, address the student by their first name, ask questions, and encourage students to respond and refer to the class as “our” class. Regardless of cultural differences, Western and Middle Eastern students value feedback from their instructors. However, Middle Eastern students are disappointed if feedback is given briskly (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2010). As discussed earlier, because trust is established through nonverbal behaviors, such as eye contact and body posture, Middle Eastern individuals tend to be more oriented to the verbal message than the written (Meleis, 2016). Thus, Middle Eastern students value written feedback accompanied by verbal messages from the instructor as means to help them understand and appreciate the written content and give them the ability to read the nonverbal behaviors from their instructors.

Middle Eastern students also expect their instructors to call them by their first name. This expectation is influenced by their cultural norm of fostering cordial interpersonal relationships with others and that includes the type of relationships they develop with their instructors (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2010). Therefore, Middle Eastern students want to be called by their first name as a means to establish a personal relationship with their instructors.

However, the most significant finding related to verbal immediacy that differs from their Western counterparts is Middle Eastern students' expectations for their instructor to refer to the class as one whole unit or a collectivist group. Middle Eastern culture is classified as collectivistic culture that is characterized by trust and loyalty as

evidenced by the appearance of strong/close groups (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa'deh & Al-Jarrah, 2012). Thus, it is not surprising that Middle Eastern students' prescriptive expectations of the class is one where the focus is on one's relatedness to the whole group. Middle Eastern students value the group class a whole and expect their instructors to do so as well. Because Middle Eastern culture is characterized by trust and loyalty, students expect that to be reflected in the classroom. When instructors call the class "our" class, it is another way in which instructors can build trust with their Middle Eastern students through verbal immediacy.

### **Hofstede's Three Dimensions**

Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (1980) is one of the most frequently used models to understand the potential differences and effects of national culture on human behavior. In this study, Hofstede's dimensions are used to provide explanatory power to how Middle Eastern culture influences student's prescriptive expectations of their instructors' verbal and nonverbal behavior. Although Hofstede's dimensions are generally used in organizational contexts, the researcher decided to extend this model into the instructional communication realm just as Roach and Bryne (2001) did in a comparative analysis of instructor communication in German and American classrooms.

Not all of Hofstede's dimensions were found in the Middle Eastern student responses, but the three that were found provide some initial insight into how Middle Eastern culture influences student expectancies and expectancy violations from their Western instructors in terms of their verbal and nonverbal immediacy. The most prevalent theme that emerged in shaping students' expectations was Hofstede's power distance dimension. Power distance is a "measure of interpersonal power or influence

between a superior and a subordinate as perceived by the least powerful of the two” (Hofstede, 1984, pp. 70-71). Middle Eastern culture, as mentioned before, is a high power distance culture. This cultural influence can be seen in Middle Eastern students’ expectations of their instructor in terms of authority and power. Many of the students in this study reported that instructors must be respected in the classroom and are the superior figure in the student-teacher relationship. This finding is supported by Derderian- Aghajanian Cong (2012) and Sonleitner and Khelifa (2010) who argue that Middle Eastern students regard their teachers as an absolute authority. Because of the high power distance, Middle Eastern students consider it inappropriate and disrespectful to call an instructor by their first name, but found it appropriate and even expected for the higher power figure (i.e., the instructor) to use students’ first names. Middle Eastern students expect to address their instructors with their respective titles unlike what is sometimes expected in U.S. classrooms where instructors allow students to call them by their first name (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). At the same time, some students regard their instructors as paternal figures. One student mentioned how teachers are regarded as father figures where he comes from and that he tries to build this type of relationship with his Western instructors.

One idea worth-mentioning is that most of students’ qualitative responses described interactions that occurred during out of class communication incidents. When Middle Eastern students were asked to explain and give examples of immediacy incidents with their Western instructors, they discussed out of class communication, such as office hour visits and after class one-one discussions with the instructor. The students’ stress on out of class communication, instead of in-class instances of immediacy, is in conjunction

with what Zhang and Oetzel (2006) found with another type of collectivist culture, the Chinese classroom. As with the Middle Eastern student population, Chinese students embrace instructors' teaching and pastoral roles and expect their instructors to extend their teaching roles beyond the classroom to out of class settings (Biggs & Watkins, 2001). Teachers extending their "teaching" roles outside the classroom is part of teachers embracing the "pastoral" role expected of them by their students because Chinese students expect their teachers to care about their behaviors and problems both inside and outside the school environment (Ho, 2001). Because the Middle Eastern culture and Chinese culture are similar to one another in terms of where they fall on Hofstede's dimensions, we can argue that the explanation of the importance placed on out of class communication in the Chinese classroom can be extended to the Middle Eastern student population.

Another emergent theme that shaped students' expectations of instructor behaviors was Hofstede's dimension of masculinity versus femininity. As mentioned before in the literature review, Middle Eastern culture is considered to be more on the feminine side where Middle Eastern people care more about establishing friendly relationships with others (Hofstede, 2001). Sonleitner and Khelifa (2010) found that Middle Eastern students are rarely seen alone on campus and close social relationships are central to them. Thus, Middle Eastern students are more interested in educational environments that foster comfort, care and trust amongst students and the teacher. Middle Eastern students expect their Western instructors to, again, establish trust amongst the students in the classroom through immediacy behaviors that foster environments that are friendly and most important conducive for learning. This desire for a collaborative and

friendly environment is closely related to the final theme of individualism vs. collectivism.

The last emergent theme that shaped students' expectations of Hofstede's individualism versus collectivism dimension. Students who are from a high collectivist culture like Middle Eastern students, will likely consider it socially unacceptable to claim perusing their own ends without minding others (Hofstede, 1984). This type of expectation is reflected one of the student's response, "I think that a professor needs to make the classroom feel like one... like we (students) are all in this together." This statement emphasizes the expectation that the instructor should try to create strong group ties between the students, where one student's end is intimately in unison with the other students. In collectivistic countries, like the Middle East, people are more dependent on groups as well as on power figures than on individuals (Hofstede, 1994). This type of behavior is translated as an expectancy in the classroom, Middle Eastern students expect their instructors to be the leaders/ superiors in creating such a classroom environment.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of the study have several important practical implications for Western instructors teaching Middle Eastern students. First, instructors and educators must realize the important influence that culture plays in the classroom. Students from different cultural backgrounds hold prescriptive expectations for their instructors that are influenced by culture norms and previous educational experience. Thus, Western instructors should look into cultural norms and pre-college educational background to create a better understanding of what Middle Eastern students need. Ignoring cultural

differences in the classroom poses a powerful threat to students' perceptions, educational experience, and ultimately learning (Roach & Bryne, 2001).

Second, an emergent theme in both quantitative and qualitative data is Middle Eastern students' expectation for relational immediacy. Zhang and Oetzel (2006) found relational immediacy to be an important part of what Chinese students considered to be effective immediacy behaviors. The researchers define relational immediacy as the use of communication behaviors that enhance closeness between students and instructors and focuses on relationship orientation, particularly instructors' treatment of, concern for and caring about students to enhance the closeness between the two. Zhang and Oetzel (2006) argue the essence of relational immediacy deals with the quality and nature of the relationship, in terms of understanding, respect and fair treatment of students. This study has shown that relational immediacy is one of the more important ways Western instructors can build trust with their Middle Eastern students.

For Middle Eastern students, immediacy behaviors, especially nonverbal immediacy, communicates relational closeness. Instructor verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors are gateways to establish trust with Middle Eastern students, which is an important component to the student-teacher relationship. Especially in terms of nonverbal immediacy, Western instructors need to be aware of their nonverbal immediacy behaviors and make a conscious effort to enact these behaviors to show care and respect to their students. Because Middle Eastern students have a high need for affiliation, Western instructors need to communicate closeness through the immediacy behaviors that are important to them.

Third, nonverbal immediacy behaviors, smiling, open and welcoming body language and eye contact are one of the more important immediacy behaviors that Middle Eastern students expect from their instructors and any violations of these expectancies can be detrimental to the student-teacher relationship. Thus, instructors should integrate a relaxed body posture, eye contact, and smiles into their teaching performance. Middle Eastern students use these nonverbal immediacy behaviors enacted by their instructors as a means to create an effective assessment of the type of relationship that will progress between them and their instructor. Conversely, instructors should avoid touch, no matter how harmless they may perceive the touch, with all Middle Eastern students, but especially with female students.

Middle Eastern students usually lack social contact with nationals due to the lack of cultural cues necessary for communication, such as eye contact, body language and body space (Meleis, 1982). Thus, Middle Eastern students might turn to their instructors as a network of support to deal with stressful situations, like culture shock. Middle Eastern students view their instructors as paternal figures and more qualified individuals that should make decisions about their education (Meleis, 1982). Western instructors may need to provide a type of social, emotional and academic support, especially in out of class communication settings, to help these students adjust to this new academic and social life. These out of class communication incidents can serve as a means of social contact, offer support and comfort, share in the students' happiness or simply bask in the pleasure of the instructor's company (Meleis, 1982). However, these out of class situations were often the setting for violated expectations. Instructors should maintain

appropriate power distance and nonverbal behaviors even in supportive situations and out of class communication episodes.

While it is within the instructors' power to make appropriate changes to the types of immediacy behaviors they enact, it is also part of the administrators' job to provide training to instructors in how to deal with students from different backgrounds and also provide Middle Eastern students with orientations to set those students' expectations regarding the Western classroom environment and Western instructor communication behaviors. Although it is the instructors' responsibility to learn and prepare to interaction with students from different cultures, it is also the university's responsibility to provide that type of sensitivity training to instructors and orientations for students to enhance the overall classroom experience and university climate.

Lastly, and as briefly mentioned previously, Western instructors need to understand the cultural expectation of dealing with their Middle Eastern students, especially their female students. In the Middle Eastern culture, women are considered the most valuable asset in Arab society (Al-Darmaki, 1998) and are afforded special care and consideration on college campuses in the Middle East. Thus, it is expected from Western instructors to show respect to the female students. However, not under any circumstance, even of cases of illness and accidents, are male instructors allowed to have physical contact with female students when on campus (Al-Darmaki, 1998). Just as it is a norm in Middle Eastern culture for women to avoid meaningless social interactions with males, female Middle Eastern students expect their male instructors to avoid touching them at all costs in Western university settings as well.

In summary, McCargar (1993) argues that cultural differences in role expectations and norms present themselves in educational contexts. However, if instructors are not aware of these expectations, they can't effectively adapt to the classroom environment allowing for expectancy violations to impede student learning. Thus, this research study is an important stepping stone into Middle Eastern student expectations of their Western instructors' verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Although this research study yields some practical implications, they should be considered in conjunction with some limitations.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The results of this study should be considered with some limitations in mind. From these limitations, future directions for research can be deduced. The first limitation of the study is that it relies on U.S. derived constructs and scales of nonverbal and verbal immediacy. Zhang and Oetzel (2006) wanted to accurately capture Chinese teacher immediacy behaviors, thus they constructed a teacher immediacy scale from an emic native Chinese perspective. They found their new Chinese Teacher Immediacy Scale to be reliable, valid and relevant for teacher immediacy in U.S. and Chinese classrooms. The question that poses itself is whether the nonverbal and verbal immediacy scales used in this study were able to capture Middle Eastern student expectations of Western instructor behaviors? It is possible that some constructs and immediacy behaviors are not reflected in the U.S. derived scales or that some behaviors do not translate well. This research study will open a new door for exploration of new scales that will better capture immediacy behaviors cross-culturally. Hence, future research should continue to examine teacher immediacy behaviors from a non-U.S. perspective. It is important for future

researchers to continue the line of research in non-U.S. classrooms to adequately capture non-U.S. student communication patterns to achieve cross-cultural equivalence in cross-cultural studies (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006).

The second apparent limitation of this study is the sample size and variation in both qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. The quantitative results only represent about 1/3 of the Middle Eastern student population at the University of Kentucky which may threaten the generalizability of the results. Related to sample variation, for the quantitative phase of the study, the sample of participants included 73% males and 27% females, while the qualitative study, sample participants included 71% females and 39% males. Thus, there is a significant difference in the sample demographics of each phase. This variation could have skewed the data. The role of the researcher, being a female, could have contributed to the sample variation in the qualitative data. As mentioned before, in Middle Eastern culture, social interactions are limited and at times have socially restricted barriers based on gender. It could have been that because the researcher was a female it was difficult to recruit Middle Eastern male participants willing to socially interact with a Middle Eastern woman in one-on-one interviews. At the same time, higher proportion of males in the quantitative data reflected the male to female ratio, where Middle Eastern males at the University of Kentucky were higher in numbers than female Middle Eastern students.

The limitation in the sample size and characteristics, especially the qualitative sample, reflected participant recruitment difficulties which limits the results of this study. The researcher was working with such a specific subsample of the entire university population that the recruiting for focus groups was a challenge. For that reason, the

researcher needed to change from creating focus groups to sending the participants questions through email. For these reasons, the findings of these study must be taken into consideration when trying to generalize the results to all Middle Eastern students studying in the United States. Hence, future research should expand this project to Middle Eastern students in different universities to increase generalizability of findings.

Third, although there is some support by McCoyd and Kerson (2006) for the validity of email interviews to be used in research, the emailed responses of this particular sample were quite short. It is possible that without more incentive to participate, the students were unwilling to commit significant time to compose email responses. Additionally, past research indicates high levels of communication and writing anxiety for international students which may have inhibited their level of detail and length in responding to the emails (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). Also, White, Brown and Suddick (1983) found that international students experience language problems that inhibit them from understanding lectures, taking notes effectively, answering questions, participating in class discussion and preparing written and oral reports. These language problems might have been a factor in the short responses by these students. Future research should try to gauge students' grasp of the English language before sending out email surveys. However, a better solution would be to carry out focus groups where the researcher can ask follow-up questions, explain questions and make them as clear as possible for the student to respond to the best of their ability.

Fourth, for both the quantitative and qualitative phase of the research, the primary investigator did not inquire about the nationality of the teacher. While the teacher may be employed by a Western university, there is no guarantee that they are not also an

international instructor who is differentially shaped by his or her national culture. Future research should examine how the nationality of the instructor shapes their immediacy behaviors and whether or not Middle Eastern students' expectations change if the nationality of the instructor is non-Western.

Fifth, although this study was guided by Hofstede's dimensions, students did not complete scales to indicate their level of collectivism, femininity, or power distance. It could be the amount of time Middle Eastern students have lived and studied in the United States has changed their own individual cultural beliefs or they may have assimilated to the American culture. Future research should look at how Middle Eastern students' time of stay in United States as a factor that could influence their expectations of their Western instructors and how their assimilation into the American culture influences their expectations.

Sixth, to understand how student expectations are for immediacy are similar regardless of cultural differences, future research should compare how American students versus Middle Eastern students view different immediacy behaviors, expectations for different immediacy and why different immediacy behaviors are more important than others. This can future study can be done through a comparative framework to reflect findings in this study and other studies that when it comes to immediacy behaviors, student expectations are similar more than different, regardless of cultural differences.

Finally, a main conclusion of this study is related to how immediacy inspires trust in students. However, this study did not examine trust in the quantitative study or ask interview questions specific to trust. Future research should try to conceptualize what

trust means to Middle Eastern students, what behaviors are entailed in building trust, and how trust influences their expectations of their instructors.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In conclusion, the study of immediacy has been a major cornerstone in instructional research, however, there are still concerns about its measurement (Zhang & Oetzel, 2010) and international application. With classrooms becoming more culturally diverse (Sanders & Wisemen, 1990) new methods of measurement for immediacy need to be developed to grasp the concept of immediacy in a more culturally diverse manner. Middle Eastern students have been a neglected population in the instructional research realm. Hopefully, this research will pave the way to more research with this particular student population. As an ending thought, as shown by this study, Middle Eastern students value instructor immediacy just as much as their Western counterparts, but the types of immediacy behaviors that are important to them and the types of behaviors that are expectancy violations differ.

## Appendix A

### Richmond, McCroskey & Johnson (2003) Nonverbal Immediacy Scale

(modified)

Please indicate on the scale of 1-7 of each item the degree to which you believe the statement applies to you.

1. I expect my instructor to use his or her hands and arms to gesture while talking to me.
2. I expect my instructor to touch me on the shoulder or arm while talking to me.
3. I expect my instructor to use a monotone or dull voice while talking to me.
4. I expect my instructor to look over or away from me while talking to me.
5. I expect myself to move away from my instructor when he or she touches me while we are talking.
6. I expect my instructor to have a relaxed body position when I talk to him or her.
7. I expect my instructor to frown while talking to me.
8. I expect my instructor to avoid eye contact while talking to me.
9. I expect my instructor to have a tense body position while talking to me.
10. I expect my instructor to sit close or stand close to me while talking with him or her.
11. I expect my instructor's voice to be monotonous or dull when I talk to him or her.
12. I expect my instructor to use a variety of vocal expressions when I talk to him or her.
13. I expect my instructor to gesture when I talk to him or her.
14. I expect my instructor to be animated when I talk to him or her.

15. I expect my instructor to have a bland facial expression when I talk to him or her.
16. I expect my instructor to move closer to me when I talk to him or her.
17. I expect my instructor to look directly at me while talking to him or her.
18. I expect my instructor to be stiff when I talk to him or her.
19. I expect my instructor to have a lot of vocal variety when I talk to him or her.
20. I expect my instructor to avoid gesturing while I am talking to him or her.
21. I expect my instructor to lean toward people when I talk to him or her.
22. I expect my instructor to maintain eye contact with me when I talk to him or her.
23. I expect my instructor to try not to sit or stand close to me when I talk with him or her.
24. I expect my instructor to lean away from me when I talk to him or her.
25. I expect my instructor to smile when I talk to him or her.
26. I expect my instructor to avoid touching me when I talk to him or her.

## Appendix B

### Gorham's (1988) Verbal Immediacy Scale (modified)

Please indicate on the scale of 1-7 of each item the degree to which you believe the statement applies to you.

1. I expect my instructor to use personal examples or talks about experiences outside the classroom he or she had outside the classroom.
2. I expect my instructor to ask questions and encourage the students to respond.
3. I expect my instructor to get into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem a part of his or her plan.
4. I expect my instructor to use humor in the course.
5. I expect my instructor to address students by name.
6. I expect my instructor to address me by name.
7. I expect my instructor to get into conversations with individual students before or after class.
8. I expect my instructor to initiate conversations with me before, after or outside the class.
9. I expect my instructor to refer to class as "our" or what "we" are doing.
10. I expect my instructor to provide feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, discussion...etc.
11. I expect my instructor to call on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated they want to talk.
12. I expect my instructor to ask how students feel about an assignment, due dates, or discussions topics.

13. I expect my instructor to invite students to telephone or chat sessions outside the class if they have questions or want to discuss something.
14. I expect my instructor to ask questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.
15. I expect my instructor to praise students' work, actions or comments
16. I expect my instructor to have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class a whole.
17. I expect my instructor to be addressed by his or her first name by the students.

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire Model

1. Think about a time when your instructor was verbally immediate. Describe how you felt after the verbally immediate encounter (Probing question: Why did you feel that way? And did you perceive the behavior as positive or negative and why?).
2. Think about a time when your instructor was nonverbally immediate. Describe how you felt after a nonverbally immediate encounter (Probing question: Why did you feel that way? And did you perceive the behavior as positive or negative and why?).
3. Think about a time when their instructor was **NOT** verbally immediate. Describe how you felt after a verbally immediate encounter (Probing question: Why did you feel that way? And did you perceive the behavior as positive or negative and why?).
4. Think about a time when their instructor was **NOT** nonverbally immediate. Describe how you felt after a nonverbally immediate encounter (Probing question: Why did you feel that way? And did you perceive the behavior as positive or negative and why?).
5. Think about a time where their instructor was verbally or nonverbally immediate or **NOT** verbally or nonverbally immediate and whether or not the gender of the instructor in relation to your own gender played a role in the way you perceived the behavior (Probing question: Do you believe your cultural background played a role in the way you perceived such behavior?).

6. Think about the expectations you have for your instructors and whether or not you believe your cultural background plays a role in the expectations you hold (Probing: If yes, how does your cultural background influence your expectations?).

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