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Catch and hold: instructional interventions and their differential impact on student interest, attention, and autonomous motivation

San Bolkan^a and Darrin J. Griffin^b

^aDepartment of Communication Studies, California State University, Long Beach, USA; ^bDepartment of Communication, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, USA

ABSTRACT

In this study, we investigated how various teaching behaviors influence student interest as a situational variable. Specifically, we studied how behaviors related to *catch* interest (i.e., ephemeral aspects of the learning environment such as instructor humor, nonverbal immediacy, intellectual stimulation) and *hold* interest (i.e., features of the environment that empower students to reach their personal goals including content relevance and meaningfulness) predicted students' sustained attention and autonomous motivation. As anticipated, results of a structural regression model indicated that catch interest was linked to students' sustained attention in class. Conversely, hold interest was related to students' autonomous motivation. Our results suggest that if teachers want to ensure they maximize student motivation inside the classroom and beyond, they might consider diversifying their teaching behaviors to target both the catch and hold aspects of students' situational interest.

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KEYWORDS

Student interest; attention;
autonomous motivation;
catch; hold

When it comes to student learning, researchers have documented the importance of students' possessing both the ability and motivation to achieve their goals (Bolkan, Goodboy, & Kelsey, 2016). Regrettably, as it pertains to the latter, students are not always excited about their classes, and they often lack motivation to attend to their various learning opportunities (Kim & Schallert, 2014). A lack of student motivation can be a problem for instructors because when students are bored in class, they pay less attention to their lessons, expend less energy learning course material (Goetz & Hall, 2014), and are more likely to skip class altogether (Mann & Robinson, 2009). Perhaps unsurprisingly, when students lack motivation, they also tend to be less likely to master the material presented in their classes (Pekrun, Goetz, Daniels, & Stupinsky, 2010). Fortunately, instructors can potentially reduce these negative outcomes by influencing student motivation, and one way to achieve this goal is through the manipulation of their interest (Weber, 2003). In fact, interest is a crucial aspect of human motivation because it is central to decisions regarding our preferences and attention (Hidi, 1990).

Defining Diversity: an analysis of student stakeholders' perceptions of a diversity-focused learning outcome

Dani S. Kvam, Jennifer R. Considine and Tony Palmeri

Communication Studies, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Oshkosh, U.S.A.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates stakeholder perceptions of a communication studies department's diversity-focused learning outcome. Drawing from critical communication pedagogy and based on thematic analysis, we argue that the language of our department's diversity-focused learning outcome (similar to two of the National Communication Association's learning outcomes) allows current and former students to privilege some understandings of the skills and knowledge necessary for communicating in a diverse world over others. The corpus of data for this study includes student-authored self-reflective essays about our diversity-focused learning outcome and focus-group interviews with current and former students. Drawing on Eisenberg's concept of strategic ambiguity and Freire's notion of the banking model of education, we suggest that engaging students in dialogues about diversity-focused learning outcomes may help students understand both how and why to accomplish those outcomes. This study offers an entry point for discussing ways in which we present, implement, teach, and assess our learning outcomes about diversity in communication studies.

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I think it is hard because diversity has become a buzz word, especially coming from a four-year college campus, you talk so much about that. It is getting harder. We all know basically, everybody's differences and how they contribute to society and everything like that. Everyone is diverse. It is such a broad term that it is hard to give a solid definition.

This quote from a recent alumna of our communication studies department illustrates how our program made the concept of diversity simultaneously more and less meaningful for her. After talking, "so much" about diversity, this student remains uncertain about how to define this concept and ways to consider its influence on social interaction. This research project demonstrates our attempt to understand and improve our teaching and assessment of our diversity-focused learning outcome, based on students' perceptions of this outcome.

The National Communication Association's (NCA) Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC) project defines what a college graduate with a degree in communication