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Perceptions of Basic Communication Texts: Factors in Student Learning and Textbook Adoption Decisions

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Textbook selection is considered one of the most important pedagogical decisions that an instructor makes (Griffin, 1984). Mastery of a subject is believed to be guided, in part, by the texts used in the classroom. Traditionally, textbooks have been relied upon as instructional material with which to achieve learning and teaching goals (Berthul, 1978; Hess & Pearson, 1992). Lofty advice even suggests that "texts can be powerful servants" (Conners, 1986, p. 192). Course objectives, assignments, activities, and tests are developed in tandem with the adopted textbook. Yet, the selection and use of textbooks in basic communication courses are frequently based on untested pedagogical assumptions. One tacit assumption is that the textbook is instrumental in achieving student learning when, in fact, few studies exist to confirm that textbooks are actually helpful to student learning.

Communication instructors and textbook publishers operate with little empirical evidence to support the decisions made about the pedagogical soundness and marketability of textbooks. Surprisingly little research has assessed and evaluated the usefulness of textbooks and instructional materials. Instead, emphasis has been on specific classroom behaviors,

primarily those of instructors (Andersen, 1979; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993, 1994a; 1994b; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; Gorham, 1988; Gorham, Kelley, & McCroskey, 1989; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986; Powell & Harville, 1990; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

Communication education researchers investigate a variety of topics and classroom behaviors that affect student learning. For instance, researchers have studied communication competencies (Ford & Wolvin, 1993; Muchmore & Galvin, 1983; Sorensen & Pearson, 1981); student motivation (Keller, 1979; 1983), teacher immediacy (Andersen, 1979); Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993, 1994b; Gorham, 1988; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Powell & Harville, 1990; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990), teacher affinity-seeking (Frymier, 1994a; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; Gorham, Kelley, & McCroskey, 1989; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986), question asking (Pearson & West, 1991a; West & Pearson, 1994), and assessment of student performances (Rubin, Welch, & Buerkel, 1995). Researchers have investigated the power relationships that exist in classroom settings as they relate to motivation (Richmond, 1990), and learning (McCroskey, Richmond, Plax & Kearney, 1985; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987). However, the majority of pedagogical and instructional studies focus on specific teacher and student behaviors. The textbook, the fundamental component of virtually every course, has been largely ignored (Schneider, 1991).

Communication scholars challenge this research perspective by asserting that communication educators develop a "politics of teaching" (Hart, 1993, p. 97) that endorses theoretical frameworks that move away from generic education models and become more highly discipline specific to communication education. Hart suggests that communication scholars should "think harder" (p. 105) to understand

why people communicate as they do and why they find it so difficult to communicate effectively. Training in communication is vital to survival in late 20th century society. The politics of communication instruction and the accompanying practices that develop should be a concern for communication educators. Sprague (1993) echoes this point of view by seeking "a renewed and reinvigorated study of the teaching of communication" (p. 106). Her challenge invites an assessment of underlying assumptions that communication educators already believe to be true.

Some studies have attempted to assess the content of basic communication textbooks. Doolittle (1977) concluded that the coverage of conflict in basic texts is not consistent with the most current research or thinking among scholars. Allen and Preiss (1990) found that current texts misrepresent the research on basic persuasion strategies. Other studies have compared the topics covered by competing texts (Hess & Pearson, 1992; Pilias, 1989). Pearson and Nelson (1990) and Trank (1976) suggest that teachers are undiscriminating in selecting texts that are well grounded in current research.

Other studies have investigated the writing style and approach of texts. Studies of sexism and androgyny in writing style (Dorris, 1981; Randall, 1985), use of humor (Bryant, Gula, & Zillmann, 1980) and readability levels of hybrid, public speaking, and interpersonal communication courses (Schneider, 1991, 1992) have focused on how texts are written and the rhetorical strategies used by basic textbook authors. Hubbard (1983) investigated the use of programmed texts in the basic course.

Most articles concerning methods and reasons for adopting textbooks (Patterson, 1969; Trank, 1976) are advisory and anecdotal rather than empirical. Some advice concerns the ethics of choosing texts (Miller & Wiethoff, 1980; Ochs, 1990) or the procedures for faculty involvement in the selection process (Griffin, 1984; Trank & Shepard, 1989). Much advice concerns choosing texts that have attractive layout and design

(Rousseau, 1968), are activity based (Patterson, 1969), and are well illustrated with pictures, charts, line drawings, and cartoons (Rickey, 1972). Schneider (1992) suggests that outlines, learning goals, chapter summaries, and glossaries may impact readability levels to increase learning. He further suggests that active voice, subheadings, illustrations and examples "may be just as important as the readability estimates when it comes to maintaining student interest and comprehension" (p. 403). The advice, however, has not been empirically justified.

Two assumptions arise from these studies and discussions. First, textbooks are believed to help students understand and remember information. Learning tradition dictates that students acquire and retain understanding of course material through repetition, examples, and highlighting to clarify and reinforce key information (Teague, 1961). Textbooks adhere to conventions of cognitive learning through chapter outlines, chapter headings, examples, summaries, glossaries, and activities (Patterson, 1969; Pearson & West, 1991b). Textbooks are also accompanied by ancillary teaching materials, including classroom exercises, chapter objectives, chapter outlines, test questions, transparencies, sample syllabi, and advice on instructional methods.

Textbooks must also entice the student to read the material. Textbooks attempt to create interest through the aesthetic appeal of full color layout, photographs, and a personal, simplified writing style (Schneider, 1992). For instance, several years ago cartoons were frequently used in textbooks to create and sustain reader interest. Cartoon use is now considered passé. This practice is not based on empirical research findings but solely on current preference and aesthetic appeal. In their study of types of humor in textbooks, Bryant, et. al., (1980) concluded that "whether such judicious use of humor in texts has educational benefits is the greater question which has to be addressed" (p. 134).

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Second, textbooks include a number of activities and assignments that assume students will complete additional work that is not required. End-of-chapter exercises (e.g., watching CSPAN, talking to friends about the definition of communication, and interviewing a business person about communication skills needed on the job) and suggestions for additional readings are examples of such features. Reviewers criticize textbooks if these additional activities and exercises are not included in the book (Trank, 1976; Rousseau, 1968). However, no empirical evidence has tested whether these textbook features are actually used by teachers or students or whether they are helpful or necessary in learning the course material.

Although virtually all basic communication textbooks and instructors' manuals contain the above mentioned standard features, no research has specifically examined the utility of features for aiding student learning. Teachers may adopt textbooks assuming that the students are using particular pedagogical features to achieve learning goals. A gap in the research exists between the perceptions, assumptions, and expectations of the usefulness of textbooks and the actual achievement of learning. No research has confirmed that textbook features assist either teachers or students in their respective instructional or learning objectives.

The purpose of this study is to assess existing pedagogical assumptions about textbook features in public speaking, interpersonal communication, and hybrid basic communication textbooks. In particular, students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the helpfulness of textbook features for learning will be investigated. To this end, the review of literature on basic communication course textbooks leads to the following research questions:

RQ1: Which textbook pedagogical features do students and teachers perceive as helpful in learning the material in basic communication courses?

RQ2: Which textbook aesthetic features do students prefer in basic communication textbooks?

RQ3: How do students' perceptions of communication textbooks compare to their perceptions of textbooks for introductory courses in other disciplines?

RQ4: Which ancillary materials do teachers find useful in teaching the basic communication course?

RQ5: What textbook and instructors' manual features are important in teachers' decisions to adopt a textbook?

METHOD

To answer the research questions, a survey was administered to students (N = 1379) and instructors (N = 118) in traditional basic communication courses at 15 universities in the Midwest. Two different forms of the survey were given. Students in public speaking (n=590), interpersonal (n=287), and hybrid (n=462) basic communication courses in both public and state universities completed the Student Survey concerning their perceptions of the pedagogical and aesthetic features of basic communication textbooks (total n = 1318). Males (n = 627) and females (n = 733) were equally represented in each course.

The instructor sample included Basic Course instructors from the same schools as the students as well as a convenience sample of basic course instructors and directors attending a regional conference. Full-time (n=33), part-time and adjunct (n = 12), and graduate assistant instructors (n = 68) completed the Teacher Survey to ascertain their perceptions of the textbook features, their perceptions of ancillary pedagogical materials, and the basis for textbook selection. Female instructors accounted for 78% of the respondents. Textbooks used by the courses surveyed included

8 of the top ten most frequently used textbooks cited in previous research (Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, 1990; Troester & McGukin, 1993).

Items for the Student Survey were generated by examining features of basic communication textbooks and discussions with faculty and students. A pilot study was conducted with six universities and 600 students to refine the questionnaire (Yoder & Davilla, 1993). Fifteen of the items concerned the perceived utility of textbook features for studying and learning the course material (1 = not at all useful; 4 = very useful). Ten items asked students which aesthetic features they prefer in a textbook (1 = not at all prefer; 4 = strongly prefer). In addition, seven four-interval semantic differential scales were used to compare student perceptions of basic communication texts with textbooks from introductory courses in other disciplines.

To allow for direct comparison of teacher and student responses, the Teacher Survey contained the same fifteen items concerning usefulness of textbook features for studying and learning the course material as the Student Survey. In addition, 14 questions asked about the usefulness of features found in ancillaries and teachers' manuals. Teachers were also asked to rate 24 features of texts and ancillaries as to their importance for adoption decisions (1 = not at all important; 4 = very important). Finally, teachers were asked to rank the three most important textbook features in their adoption decision. Items for the Instructor Survey were generated through examination of textbooks and ancillary materials commonly available.

All subjects completed the surveys after taking at least one exam. This ensured that subjects' perceptions were based on actual use of pedagogical features (or a conscious decision not to use the feature) and that students had an indication of their usefulness in learning the material. Respondents were instructed to rate the potential usefulness of any pedagogical feature not found in their specific texts.

RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 were analyzed through descriptive statistics and a one-way ANOVA among types of courses. RQ1 was also analyzed through a one-way ANOVA between student and teacher responses. RQ4 and RQ5 were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Because of the number of statistical comparisons and the large sample size, significance for all statistical tests was set a *priori* at p < .01 to minimize Type I error.

RESULTS

The analysis of RQ 1 indicates that students perceive boxed or highlighted material, chapter summaries, chapter outlines, margin comments/explanations, sample speeches/dialogues, and glossaries of key terms/vocabulary as the most useful textbook features (mean > 2.75) when studying and learning the course material (See Table 1). Students indicated that they find suggestions for further readings, author index, footnotes or endnotes, chapter exercises, and the text preface/introduction to be least useful (mean < 2.25).

Students' responses among public speaking, interpersonal, and hybrid basic courses were compared. The ANOVA indicated that students in the hybrid course found exercises more useful than students in the other courses but found sample speeches and dialogues less useful for learning the material. Students in the interpersonal course rated discussion questions and exercises less useful than did students in the other types of courses, but found sample speeches and dialogues more helpful. Students in public speaking classes found chapter outlines, preface, and discussion questions more helpful than did students in other classes.

To ascertain whether student demographic variables were confounding the results, several post hoc comparisons were performed. Student's year in school affected their perceptions

Table 1
Student Perceptions of Textbook Pedagogical Features
Total and Comparison by Type of Course

Text Feature	Total Population	Hybrid	Course Interpers.	Pub. Spch.
Pedagogical Aids				
Preface	1.97	1.96	1.90	2.07*
Unit Introductions	2.47	2.39	2.44	2.55
Chapter Objectives	2.71	2.69	2.68	2.76
Chapter Outlines	2.90	2.90	2.82	3.00*
Marginalia	2.92	2.92	2.94	2.91
Boxed Material	3.11	3.03	3.15	3.13
Discussion Questions	2.48	2.51	2.30	2.71**
Chapter Summaries	3.27	3.19	3.24	3.36
Glossary	3.10	3.05	3.08	3.17
Footnotes	2.06	2.12	2.18	2.08
Exercises	2.10	2.24	2.00	2.14*
Further Reading	1.71	1.77	1.66	1.73
Index Subjects	2.58	2.49	2.67	2.52
Index Authors	2.02	2.06	1.99	2.03
Sample Speeches	2.97	2.68	3.13	2.93**
Case Studies	2.66	2.72	2.61	2.68
Aesthetic Features				
Writing Style	3.23	3.21	3.25	3.23
Examples/Professionals	2.98	2.99	2.94	3.02
Examples/Students	3.10	3.06	3.09	3.12
Photographs	2.65	2.86	2.48	2.72**
Cartoons	2.66	2.74	2.51	2.79**
Headings/Bold Words	3.39	3.37	3.33	3.48**
Hardback Cover	2.35	2.50	2.48	2.09**
Short Chapters	3.39	3.42	3.42	3.34
Stories/Quotes	2.74	2.66	2.75	2.80

*p < .01;   F = 4.60,   df (2, 1367)
**p < .001;   F = 7.12,   df (2,1367)
Note: The higher the number, the more favorable the perception.

of three items with seniors being less positive about discussion questions, footnotes, and exercises than other classes of students. Females were significantly more positive about margin comments, boxed material, chapter summaries, and sample speeches and dialogues than were males. Student GPA made a difference only on the perceived helpfulness of footnotes and further readings; students with high GPA (3.0-4.0) found these features less useful than students with GPAs less then 3.0. Students expecting an A in the class differed from other students only by finding glossaries significantly more helpful.

RQ1 was also examined by asking teachers in the basic course to rate the usefulness of textbook pedagogy for student learning. Teachers agreed with students that the glossary, boxed material, chapter summaries, margin notes, sample speeches/dialogues, and chapter outlines were useful. In addition, teachers also perceived unit introductions, chapter objectives, discussion questions, subject indexes, and case studies to be useful learning aids for students. Teachers agreed that the preface, further readings and footnotes were least helpful of the pedagogical aids (See Table 2).

Interestingly, ANOVAs on each item indicated the teachers perceived most textbook features to be significantly more helpful in aiding student learning than did the students. Especially noticeable was the discrepancy between student and teacher ratings of exercises at the ends of chapters, case studies, author index, subject index, discussion questions, chapter objectives, and unit introductions. Students and teachers were equally favorable toward margin comments, boxed material, chapter summaries, and glossaries and equally unfavorable toward footnotes. No interaction among teacher, student and type of course was found for any of the items (See Table 2).

For RQ2, students rated their preference for the aesthetic features of textbooks. Students indicated the strongest preference for short chapters (fewer than 15 pages), frequent head-

Table 2
Teacher Perceptions of the Usefulness Textbook Pedagogical Features for Students' Learning

Text Feature	Teachers	Students
Preface	2.21	1.97**
Unit Introductions	2.84	2.47**
Objectives	3.17	2.71**
Chapter Outlines	3.17	2.90**
Marginalia	3.02	2.92
Boxed Material	3.22	3.11
Discussion Questions	2.78	2.48**
Chapter Summaries	3.30	3.27
Glossary	3.30	3.10**
Footnotes	2.18	2.06
Exercises	2.55	2.10**
Further Feading	2.10	1.71**
Index Subjects	3.07	2.58**
Index Authors	2.50	2.02**
Sample Speeches	3.25	2.97**
Case Studies	3.12	2.66**

** p < .02
(responses ranged from 1 = not useful to 4 = very useful

ings and bold face words, simplified, personable writing style and stories/examples about professionals and students (see Table 1). The only item that received an unfavorable rating was the use of a hardback cover, most likely because of the added cost.

A comparison of different types of courses indicated that students in the interpersonal course rated photographs, cartoons, and headings as less preferable than students in hybrid and public speaking courses. Students in public speak-

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ing classes were significantly less favorable about hardback covers than other students.

A post hoc analysis of student demographic variables found that seniors and first year students preferred hardback covers significantly less than other students. Females preferred simplified/personal writing style, student examples, headings, and short chapters significantly more than males. Students with GPAs over 3.0 and students expecting an "A" in the course preferred simplified/personal writing style significantly less than those with GPAs under 3. and those expecting lower than an "A" in the course.

For RQ3, students compared basic communication texts with their texts in other introductory courses (See Table 3). Students indicated that they perceived communication texts to be more practical, enjoyable, interesting and relevant. However, other introductory texts were perceived as more difficult, more scholarly, and more theoretical than communication texts.

When comparing texts for specific types of communication courses with texts in other introductory classes, the results indicated that hybrid texts were perceived as more interesting and enjoyable (compared to other introductory texts) than texts in public speaking or interpersonal classes. Among the three types of communication courses, interpersonal texts were perceived as the least interesting, scholarly, and theoretical compared to other introductory texts (see Table 3).

Analysis of RQ3 in terms of student demographic variables indicated that overall GPA made no difference in comparisons of basic course texts with those in other introductory courses. Students expecting an "A" in the basic communication course found the text less difficult compared to other texts than did students expecting less than an "A." Females perceived basic course texts as less difficult, more interesting, more relevant, more practical, and more enjoyable (compared to other textbooks) than did males. Seniors found the course less difficult than did other classes of students.

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Table 3
Perceptions of BC Textbooks Compared to Textbooks in Introductory Courses in Other Fields
Total and Comparison by Type of Course

Comparison	Total	Hybrid	Inter-personal	Public Speaking
difficult	3.06	3.11	3.08	3.02
scholarly	2.71	2.67	2.77	2.68*
interesting	2.43	2.18	2.58	2.40**
relevant	2.21	2.16	2.23	2.21
theoretical	2.74	2.71	2.82	2.66**
practical	2.12	2.06	2.15	2.14
enjoyable	2.35	2.10	2.51	2.31***

* $p < .05$;   F = 2.99;   df (2, 1367)
** $p < .01$;   F = 4.60;   df (2, 1367)
*** $p < .001$;   F - 7.12,   df (2. 1367)

Note: The lower the number (1 is the lowest) the more that characteristic was associated with BC textbooks; the higher the number (4 is the highest), the more that characteristic was associated with textbooks in other introductory courses.

To answer RQ4, teachers were asked to rate the perceived usefulness for teaching the basic course of 14 types of ancillary materials which are typically available with the adoption of textbooks (See Table 4). Teachers rated multiple choice questions, class exercises, chapter outlines, chapter objectives, and overhead transparencies as the most useful materials. They perceived additional readings, true/false questions, essay questions, instructional material on pedagogy, sample syllabi, additional readings, media guides/ resources, assignment evaluation forms, and computerized testbanks to be moderately useful. GTAs found instructional materials on pedagogy and sample syllabi more useful than

did full-time faculty and part-time faculty. Females found instructional material on pedagogy, sample syllabi, and assignment descriptions more useful than did males. Since most GTAs were female, post hoc analysis indicated an interaction effect between the variables.

Table 4
Teachers' Perceptions of the Perceived Usefulness
of Ancillary Materials for Teaching the Basic Course

Teachers' Manual/Ancillary Material	Rating
Multiple Choice Questions	3.07
T/F Questions	2.52
Essay Questions	2.74
Class Exercises	3.31
Chapter Outlines	2.87
Overhead Transparencies	2.80
Instructional Materials on Pedagogical Practices	2.65
Sample Syllabi	2.52
Additional Readings	2.31
Media Guides/Resources	2.56
Chapter Objectives	2.90
Evaluation Forms for Assignments	2.68
Computerized Testbank	2.55

1 = not at all useful
4 = very useful

To answer RQ5, teachers were asked to rate textbook and pedagogical features concerning their importance in the decision to adopt a textbook (See Table 5). Highly rated features included simplified readability and personable writing style, the theoretical approach and definition of communication, the

text's consistency with the current course design, stories/
examples about professionals, examples from/about students,
frequent headings and boldfaced words, student enjoyment,

Table 5
Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Text Features
and Ancillary Material on Decisions to Adopt a Text

Text/Ancillary Material	Rating
Theoretical Approach/definition of Communication	3.18
Models of Communication	2.83
Consistency with Current Course Design	3.33
Stories/Examples about Professionals	3.01
Examples from/about Students	3.13
Simplified Readability and Personable Writing Style	3.26
Frequent Headings and Bold-Faced Words	3.00
Type of Cover (hardback, cloth, etc)	1.99
Student Enjoyment	3.00
Index of Authors and/or Subjects	2.76
Activities/Exercises at end of Chapters	2.86
Length	2.52
Cost	2.81
Sample Speeches/Dialogues/Interviews	3.22
Layout and Design (e.g., multi-color)	2.86
Photographs	2.52
Case Studies	2.82
Cartoons	2.33
Pedagogical Aids (e.g., glossaries)	3.06
Intercultural Examples	3.13
Teacher's Manual	3.20
Videotapes	2.88
Computerized Testbank	2.61

1 = not at all useful
4 = very useful

Table 6
Most Important Features
in Teachers' Decision to Adopt a Textbook

Text Feature	1	2	3	Total
Theoretical Approach/Definition of Communication	22	11	6	39
Models of Communication	4	7	0	11
Consistency with Current Course Design	21	10	7	38
Stories/Examples about Professionals	3	5	3	11
Examples from/about Students	3	6	6	15
Simplified readability, Personable Writing Style	22	12	12	46
Frequent Headings and Bold-Faced Words	1	2	7	10
Type of Cover (hardback, cloth, paper)	0	1	3	4
Student Enjoyment	2	6	6	14
Index of Authors and/or Subjects	1	3	5	9
Activities or Exercises at End of Chapters	5	6	3	14
Length	0	0	0	0
Cost	1	2	7	10
Sample Speeches/Dialogues/Interviews etc.	9	11	9	29
Layout, Design (e.g., multi-color printing)	0	2	4	6
Photographs	0	0	0	0
Case Studies	0	2	4	6
Cartoons	0	0	2	2
Pedagogical Aids (e.g., glossaries)	1	5	7	13
Intercultural Examples	2	8	7	17
Coverage of Specific Topics in text	7	4	6	18
Teacher's Manual	0	3	2	5
Videotapes	3	1	1	5
Computerized Testbanks	1	0	1	2
Other Ancillary Material	1	2	1	4

Teachers (N=115) were asked to rank order the three most important features in their decisions to adopt a text. Frequency of responses are given for each feature indicating how many teachers considered it the most important, second most important, and third most important in their adoption decision. The Total number of responses indicate the number of teachers who considered the feature as one of their top three criteria.

sample speeches/dialogues/interviews, pedagogical aids, inter-cultural examples, and a teacher's manual. The type of cover (hardback or cloth) and the use of cartoons were of little importance in text selection.

When asked to rank the three most important features considered in adopting a text, teachers indicated that read-ability and writing style was the most important considera-tion (See Table 6). The text's theoretical approach and its consistency with the current course design were the next most frequently used criteria. The number of chapters, type of cover, indices, length of the text, layout and design, use of photographs and cartoons, case studies, teacher's manual, videotapes, computerized testbanks or other ancillary material were seldom listed as the three most important con-siderations in adopting the text. Indeed, cognitive learning aids and aesthetic features of texts were seldom mentioned as one of the top three criteria in selecting a text.

DISCUSSION

The major implications of the study are twofold. First, students and teachers have different perceptions of the use-fulness of textbook pedagogical features. While some parallel perceptions exist, teachers tend to think the text is much more helpful for learning the course material than do stu-dents. Specifically, teachers rated the usefulness of chapter exercises, chapter objectives, chapter outlines, indices, and case studies more highly than did students.

The results suggest that texts are written and used under assumptions that are not necessarily valid. Inclusion of peda-gogical material that is not perceived as useful by the stu-dents seems a costly and futile practice. Since students perceive little utility of most pedagogical aids, they are unlikely to use them on their own. Perhaps teachers need to increase their emphasis on textbook pedagogy with in-class

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assignments, exercises, and discussions. Spending class time to show students how to use the pedagogical aids may increase their perceived usefulness.

Similarly, while teachers rate many pedagogical features as important to cognitive learning, they select textbooks on other bases. The consistency of the text with their current course design, the theoretical approach to the course material, and the writing style and readability of the text are mentioned by most teachers as the top three criteria for text selection. A teacher's manual, case studies, sample speeches or dialogues, pedagogical aids, intercultural examples, and examples from students and professionals were rated as important to text adoption but only as secondary considerations. This may suggest that teachers are more concerned with finding texts that students will read and that require little change from their current course structure than they are about the effectiveness of the text in helping students learn the material.

Second, students perceive basic course texts to be less difficult and less theoretical, though more interesting, enjoyable, relevant, and practical, than other introductory course texts. This result suggests that the often heard comment about communication is "common sense" may be unchanged by exposure to communication textbooks. While communication topics are perceived as directly impacting students' lives, basic course textbooks may be perceived as giving practical advice that is not grounded in rigorous scholarship. Students' comparison of communication texts with other texts may create erroneous impressions of the academic quality and rigor of our basic courses. While the simplified reading level and personable writing style are valued criteria by both teachers and students, they may also contribute to the perception of the texts being less difficult and less scholarly. For example, best selling texts are practically devoid of footnotes referencing the scholarship that is supposed to inform them, perhaps because students don't like them or find them useful for learning

(Pearson & Nelson, 1990). Increasing the scholarly appearance, rigor, writing level, and content of the text may improve students' perceptions of communication texts as they relate to other introductory texts.

Textbook design, content, and pedagogy might better reflect student preferences and use of the text. Neither teachers nor students find suggestions for further reading helpful, yet many texts continue to include this material. Why spend time, money, and textbook pages incorporating student exercises, further reading suggestions, author indices, and other aids that students don't find useful? Adoption decisions may need to refocus attention on criteria related to textbook features that are useful to students rather than useful to teachers.

This study is a preliminary attempt to identify student and teacher perceptions of basic course textbooks. With a non-random sample, it is difficult to generalize to all teachers, courses, and texts. Unavoidably, the specific textbook used by the respondents in their particular course may have influenced their perceptions of the value of a particular pedagogical or aesthetic feature. However, post hoc analysis indicated few significant differences among textbooks in each course, indicating that the specific textbook had little impact on student and teacher perceptions.

While no direct measure of actual learning was used in this study, subjects judged the helpfulness of the pedagogical features based on the results of at least one exam. However, to more directly study the impact of pedagogical features on student learning, controlled experimentation should be conducted to determine benefits of pedagogical features on actual, rather than perceived, learning outcomes. Even then, teachers might consider pedagogical features necessary even if only a few students find them beneficial.

Replication and extension of this study is necessary to discover additional factors affecting perceptions and use of textbooks and how teachers in a variety of courses and insti-

tutions make adoption decisions. When making publication and text selection decisions, these data should inform authors and teachers as to how to best choose and use the text material.

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