

SAYING "HELLO" FIRST—A SELFCHANGE EXPERIMENT

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New coming foreign students in the United States seemed to be uneasy to say hello. In order to improve saying hello behavior, a Chinese graduate student conducted a N=1 intensive ABABF design to make self-change. It was found that after 2 sessions of intervention, a cognitive set technique, the rate of saying hello first behavior was significantly raised from .41 to .69. It was concluded that saying hello first behavior is easily-to-be-performed and is resultful.

Saying "Hello" behavior is a starting point of interpersonal encounter. It is often various from culture to culture, and sometimes "people are doing to each other instead of saying hello." (Berne, 1972, p.4). In spite of the variety of this behavior, however, to say Hello rightly is very important, because "to say Hello rightly is to see the other person, to be aware of him as a phenomenon, to happen to him and to be ready for him to happen to you." (Berne, 1972, p. 4-5) In the American culture, a commonly accepted saying Hello behavior is simply saying "Hello" to a target person, an acquaintance in most cases, whether first or secondly. This simple behavior seems not so simple for foreign students who recently arrived in the United States. For example, the new coming Chinese students often fail to say hello first to their American teachers or classmates and are often uneasy to say hello back. This perhaps is because: (1) They are not accustomed to using the new verbal system; (2) Their original saying Hello behavior is less verbalization (nodding is a common style) and is highly discriminative (i.e., it depends on the position of the target person; e.g., saying "Hello" (喂) to the teacher is viewed as a terribly impolite manner, while a bow is acceptable.) (3) They are lower on verbal ability, more inhibited, less socially extroverted, and are more apt to be uncomfortable and anxious than American students (Sue & Kirk, 1972). Consequently, the Chinese students, especially new ones, in the American campus appear to be quieter and more isolated, neither ready to happen to others nor ready to be happened.

The writer, a Chinese graduate student who had been in the United States for one year, felt himself suffered from being uneasy to say hello. According to his introspection, in the past year, if he was not so non-verbal and passive, he would have earned a lot of encounter experience and a lot of fun. He regretted the sorry past and have decided to work out a happy future. Therefore, a self-change experiment was conducted. He urged himself to

* This experiment was conducted while the author was in the U.S.A.

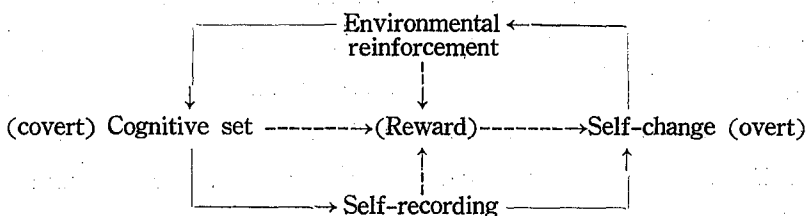
say hello first with focusing on building a cognitive set, and adopted a self-observation procedure. It is the purpose of this study to see the effect of building a cognitive set on saying hello first behavior.

At present, studies concerning the process of self-observation phenomena represent a high priority area for research (Thoresen, 1973). It seems that most of the studies aimed at reducing undesirable behavior, e.g., smoking, overweight, tension, classroom disruptive behavior (cf. Goldfried & Merbaum, 1973; Thoresen, 1973) rather than increasing desirable behavior, e.g., classroom talking (Gottman & McFall, 1972), studying time (Broden, Hall, & Mitts, 1971). While the former study is needed, the latter probably is less threatened to the self; and thus helps to the promotion of self-esteem. It would provide a positive discriminative cue while doing self-observation or self-recording. As a result, the response set for improvement is also strengthened (Thoresen, 1974).

The cognitive set which was employed as an intervention strategy in this study was derived from a two-stage process defined by Marston and Feldman (1972). They define self-control in terms of a two-stage process: (a) the general cognitive set related to the focal response to be controlled and (b) specific self-controlling response. The cognitive set is conceived as a string of possible modifiers—attitudinal, insightful, conscious, motivating, etc. While in this study it is operationally defined as having five aspects:

1. recognizing the object (target person);
2. relating to the object—his name, mutual relations;
3. approaching the object—give up the avoiding tendency;
4. willing to say hello;
5. preparing proper words—hello, hi, good morning, how are you, etc.

It is hypothesized that as soon as the covert response (set) is generated, the overt response—saying hello might be enhanced. And, in turn, the other's saying hello back might reinforce the cognitive set as well as saying hello first behavior.



METHOD

Subject

The subject is Mr. Wu, a 33-year old male married graduate student at the University

of Kentucky who has been in the United States for one year and two weeks. He is a short, slight, dark-haired man. He confessed that he is not the sociable type. As a youngster, he remembers himself being very shy and quite in school. He only has few friends other than those he knew in classroom. He is definitely not a live-wire although he looks friendly. In his first year in the United States, he devoted most of his time in studying. Indeed, he does want to widen his life circle, but due to his language problem and his task-oriented characteristic, he felt he is still a hopeless isolated guy in this society. A thought dominating his present mind is "I am only a passenger, temporarily settled in a foreign land."

Design

An N=1 intensive ABABF design was employed in this study, in which the writer served as a subject as well as an object. Each session lasted three weekdays. Weekend and Sunday were ruled out because of no-class during these days and the encounter opportunity is much less than in weekdays.

The target behavior is saying hello first behavior. The criteria of this behavior were:

1. Target person—people, other than Chinese, who verbally encountered the subject at least once before.
2. Distance—in 50 feet.
3. Verbal used—hello, hi, good morning, how are you, and any other greeting words.
4. Saying hello first.

An cognitive set or intervention mentioned earlier was served as an independent variable. The rate of saying hello first was served as dependent variable. The sample is the frequency of greeting encounter (whether saying hello first or secondly) which obtained from the period getting up to going to bed everyday.

Procedure

A 3" × 4" pocket card was used to record the frequency of greeting encounter, first and second respectively. The ratio of saying hello first was calculated by dividing frequency of saying hello first (F1) by total frequency (F1+F2).

$$R = \frac{F1}{F1+F2}$$

During the first session, A or "base rate", the subject maintains the natural attitude; During the second period (B), an intervention (cognitive set) is implemented. The third phase (A) is a return to the natural base rate condition. The fourth stage (B) reinstates the interventions used in the earlier session (A). Finally a follow-up period (F), without intervention, is used to assess the long range effectiveness of the interventions.

RESULTS

A record of total period of 15 days (Table 1) showed the frequency and rate of saying hello behavior varied day by day.

TABLE 1 A RECORD OF EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Session	Date	N	Hello-First	Hello-Second
A	9-12 Th	7	2 (59%)	5 (71%)
	9-13 F	12	5 (41%)	7 (59%)
	9-16 M	8	4 (50%)	4 (50%)
B	9-17 Tu	11	7 (64%)	4 (36%)
	9-18 W	9	5 (56%)	4 (44%)
	9-19 Th	13	8 (62%)	5 (38%)
A	9-20 F	10	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
	9-23 M	8	5 (63%)	3 (37%)
	9-24 Tu	13	5 (38%)	8 (62%)
B	9-25 W	14	10 (71%)	4 (29%)
	9-26 Th	18	13 (72%)	5 (28%)
	9-27 F	11	8 (73%)	3 (27%)
F	9-30 M	12	8 (67%)	4 (33%)
	10-1 Tu	17	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
	10-2 W	16	10 (63%)	6 (37%)

As combining days into sessions (Table 2), the differences between sessions were clear. The original base rate (A) of saying hello is 41% only. As intervention implemented (B) the rate raised to 61%. The withdrawal of intervention, dropped the rate down to 52%. However, it surpassed original base rate by 10%. Again the second intervention (B) elevated it up to 72%. The final stage (F), although without intervention, with a rate of 69%, showed a strong tendency objecting to "reversing" to pretreatment condition.

TABLE 2 MEAN RATE OF SAYING HELLO FIRST

	A	B	A	B	F
N	27	33	31	43	45
%	41%	61%	52%	72%	69%

Figure 1 showed the variation of day by day as well as session by session. It should be noted that only in the first session and one day of the third reversal period the rate of saying hello first behavior were below the chance (50%). It seems obvious that as soon as the subject began to do self-recording (or self-observation), whether there is an intervention

or not, the whole original picture is changed.

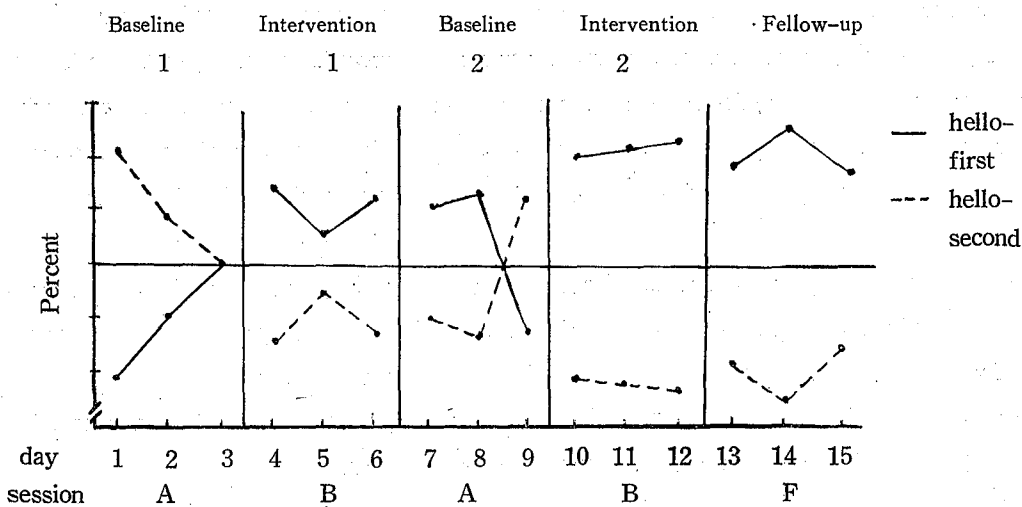


Figure 1 A record of Wu's saying hello-first/second behavior during 5 sessions

In order to see the effect of intervention, a pre- and post-base rate were compared. By using the one-tail z-test (Table 3), it was shown that the post-base rate (F) surpassed the pre-base rate (A) by 28%. The difference is significant at .01 level. Therefore, the hypothesis that the cognitive set enhances the saying hello first behavior is supported.

TABLE 3 EFFECT OF INTERVENTION

	N	Mean	z
F (Base rate 1)	45	.69	2.17**
A (Base rate 2)	27	.41	

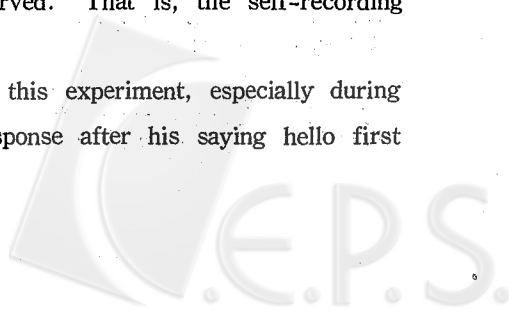
**p<.01

DISCUSSION

The results of this experiment are fairly consistent with earlier empirical case studies with ABABF design (Thoresen, 1974; Rosenthal, Shephard, & Stilwell, 1974). The agreement lies in:

1. The individual may strongly object to "reversing" to pretreatment conditions after they have executed a successful self-change program.
2. The use of a device for self-observation often becomes a discriminative cue that may exercise influence over the behavior being observed. That is, the self-recording itself may lead to a self-change.

The subject felt that he got a lot of fun in doing this experiment, especially during intervention stage. He often earned more enthusiastic response after his saying hello first



behavior. The S-R principle seemed to work well. He also felt that people seemed more friendly than ever. It is interesting to note that not only the ratio of saying hello first is markedly increased, the number of greeting encounter is increased as well (see Table 1 & 2). This means that whether hello-first or second, he and his friends acted passionately with each other more and more with times. This is of no doubt a very healthy interpersonal relationships. It rewarded the subject so much that he enjoyed saying hello first even without intervention any more.

The intervention effect is probably confounded by self-observation effect, because knowledge of results is a strong influencer of behavior. To sort out pure intervention effect probably is still a unsolvable problem in self-observation research studies and needs to be further studied. However, from the clinical and counseling point of view, this kind of self-change plan is highly recommendable, because it is just powerful.

With regard to the target behavior itself, it might have substantial meaning to foreign students in the United States as well as seclusive American students:

1. Saying hello behavior is the initial point of interpersonal encounter.
2. Saying hello first means moving toward the opposite side, which is favorable in many societies.
3. The more you pay (hello-first), the more you probably gain (hello back). The saying hello first behavior is accumulatively reinforced when you decide to work on it.

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先打招呼：一項自我改變的實驗

吳 武 典

摘 要

打招呼是任何文化中人際交往的起點。初踏入美國領土的外國學生，在這項行為上總顯得很不自在而且被動。爲了改進打招呼的行為，一位頗爲內向的中國留學生（作者本人）根據行為自制技術，採用了一項 $N=1$ 的密集A B A B F實驗設計，以本人爲主試兼受試，以促進自我改變。此種改變技術強調認知心向的建立和從自我觀察中獲得回饋。經過兩個時期的實驗處理後，發現受試者先打招呼的比率從.41顯著地增加到.69，互打招呼的絕對次數也大爲增加。由此可見，先打招呼的行為，不難做到；經常爲之，對於人際關係的增進，大有幫助。（註：本實驗進行於作者於民國63年在美留學期間。）

