Designing and Implementing a Teacher Immediacy Course for EFL Teacher Trainees [*]

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research was, first, to explore in what ways an elective teacher immediacy course incorporated into a teacher training program promoted EFL teacher trainees' immediacy behaviours. Based upon the trainees' background immediacy knowledge, the second purpose was to detect the trainees' learning gains, perceptions, and self-evaluations throughout the course. To this end, a 14-week course was designed and implemented in a way that the trainees worked on the theories and applications of immediacy. The participants were composed of 61 senior teacher trainees majoring in ELT at a public university in Turkey. The data were triangulated through the concurrent employment of immediacy measurements, focus group interviews, session evaluation forms, and the researcher journal. Descriptive statistics of the quantitative data and inductive content analyses of the qualitative data demonstrate that the course was effective in enhancing and expanding the trainees' immediacy behaviours, and provided the trainees to gain various theoretical and practical knowledge of immediacy.

Introduction

Grounded in approach-avoidance theory (Mehrabian, 1971; Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004), the construct of immediacy evolved from the idea that people are drawn toward people and things appealing to them; and they avoid or move away from people and things that do not appeal to them. Mehrabian (1971) also proposed a number of behaviours that signal immediacy such as closer proximity, eye contact, smiling, inclusiveness and voluntarism. Those sorts of behaviours can be grouped under two categories of communication as nonverbal and verbal (Edwards & Edwards, 2001). Both kinds of behaviours have the potential to reduce the perceived physical or psychological distance between communicators who create warmth, positive affect, approachability, and availability for interaction (Velez & Cano, 2008). However, non-immediate behaviours convey unfriendliness, disinterest and maybe hostility (Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2008). In other words, immediate behaviours are associated with the approach tendency whereas non-immediate behaviours are related to the avoidance tendency (Richmond et al., 2008). That is, in human communication, the sender's

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immediate behaviours have an impact on the receiver's perceptions of the closeness during communication. This is most probably because of the reciprocal nature of immediacy, which addresses the fact that liking builds stronger immediacy and immediacy generates more liking (Mehrabian, 1971). That is to say, the concept of immediacy in any kind of communication seems to be influential on the quality of information transfer and information sharing between the sender and the receiver.

The construct of immediacy, which was firstly applied to the educational arena by Andersen (1979), and its impact on teacher effectiveness are commonly revealed. To improve teacher effectiveness which is the capability to produce cognitive, affective, and behavioural student learning, the constituents of teacher immediacy should be mentioned. The components of nonverbal immediacy behaviours are defined as being friendly, using gestures, decreasing physical distance, socially acceptable touch, variation in voice, a good physical look and allocating time for being with students before and after class (Andersen & Andersen, 2005). Moreover, some studies show that nonverbal immediacy behaviours of teachers influence student motivation, compliance, affective learning and academic achievement (e.g. Burroughs, 2007; Kyaruzi, Strijbos, Ufer, & Brown, 2019; Witt et al., 2004). All these nonverbal behaviours can promote the physical and perceived psychological closeness between teachers and students and in turn, this results in positive student outcomes (Nayernia, Taghizadeh, & Farsani, 2020). In addition, verbal immediacy behaviours of teachers contain such speech acts as using personal examples, questions, inclusive pronouns, humour, addressing students by name and more (Hsu, 2006). Regarding the effects of immediacy in the classroom, it is obvious that immediacy behaviours of teachers affect the success of the communication process (Geçer & Deryakulu, 2004) since teachers' nonverbal and verbal communication have strong connections to students' affective, behavioural and cognitive learning and motivation (İnceelli & Candemir, 2016). Overall, teacher effectiveness is enhanced by the effective use of nonverbal behaviours (Özmen, 2011; Paul, Maiti, & Nath, 2019); therefore, tacit actions of teachers should be at the forefront. Further, verbal immediacy has a strong link to student motivation and nonverbal immediacy shows a moderate interplay with student motivation (Velez & Cano, 2008). Herein, teachers should engage in effective nonverbal immediacy so that they can be viewed as being likeable and competent (Furlich, 2016), which can help them guarantee fruitful learning outcomes (Witt & Kerssen-Griep, 2011). Briefly, teachers' constant and supportive communication with students is fundamental to ensure students' academic success (Cocksedge, George, Renwick, & Chew-Graham, 2013). In this regard, teacher educators' role is vital; they should inform teachers of the significance of verbal and nonverbal immediacy for more efficient and appealing instruction (Liu, 2021). In fact, not only informing teachers of the concept of immediacy but also in-class uses of immediacy behaviours should be covered in initial teacher education under the guidance of teacher educators from a critical point of view.

Besides the aforementioned studies illustrating the importance of teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy, the role of teachers' immediacy behaviours in English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language (EFL)/(ESL) classrooms are examined by numerous scholars (e.g. Lee, 2020; Sheybani, 2019; Sutiyatno, 2018; Violanti, Kelly, Garland, & Christen, 2018). To exemplify, Violanti et al. (2018) argue that language teachers' immediate actions have the capacity to direct students toward more desirable learning gains. Similarly, Sheybani (2019) unravels that teacher immediacy can create dramatic improvements in EFL/ESL students' academic achievement and enhance their willingness to participate in classes. In another recent study, certainties have been discovered between teacher immediacy, credibility and EFL students' willingness to communicate in English (Lee, 2020). Some other studies point to the associations among immediacy and several student-related factors including academic engagement, involvement, willingness to participate in classes, cognitive and affective learning, course retention, satisfaction and motivation (e.g. Derakhshan, 2021; Gholamrezaee & Ghanizadeh, 2018; Hussain, Azeem, & Abid, 2021; Kalat, Yazdi, & Ghanizadeh, 2018; Pishghadam, Derakhshan, Zhaleh, & Al-Obaydi, 2021). Considering all these prominent influences of teacher immediacy on a great deal of educational variables, teachers may be asserted to be one of the most crucial stakeholders within EFL contexts where students rely on their teachers for their learning to a great extent. Teachers are the ones who determine the rate and quality of success and

communicative talents of students (Pishghadam et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers must take emotions of students into consideration to boost students' wellbeing (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019), and take their actions depending on their behavioural, psychological and instructional features (Derakhshan, Coombe, Zhaleh, & Tabatabaeian, 2020). It is obvious that teachers' ability to respond to emotions of students effectively plays a significant role in increasing affective outcomes of learning; and immediacy is one of the most crucial means of increasing affective learning outcomes in students by providing interpersonal connection with them.

In addition to various educational variables affected by immediacy behaviours, culture and its relation to immediacy should also be considered so as to better understand the place of teacher immediacy in the international arena, since effective teaching requires teachers to be aware of students' cultural backgrounds and how they perceive things happening around them in the course of learning. At this point, teachers' way of building channels of instructional communication is of great importance for achieving educational objectives. As one of the indispensable components of instructional communication, immediacy behaviours of teachers vary from culture to culture. More clearly, immediacy is a matter of perception; and relatedly, cultural variables have impacts on both teachers' way of using immediacy behaviours and how students perceive those behaviours. Inevitably, the cultural traits manifest themselves in the classroom (Zhang & Zhang, 2006). To exemplify, Far East culture is thought to be mostly collectivist; however, the USA culture is individualistic to a great extent. Between these two poles, Turkey seems to be neither much collectivist nor much individualistic (Özmen, 2011); therefore, we need to examine the concept of immediacy for Turkish teachers and students on the basis of their unique way of communicating. Such an examination should be accompanied by the comparison of the employment of immediacy behaviours by teachers from different cultures. Exploring the alterations between understanding and expectations of teachers' immediacy behaviours across cultures is essential for making consensus on the perception of immediacy through universal lenses.

Learnability of immediacy within the context of teacher education, which is the focal point of the current study, is also referred in the literature. Some high-inference variables related to immediacy, such as clarity and warmth, are shown to be difficult to teach in a constructive way; for this reason, this necessitates specific training and assessment (Gorham, 1988). In the Turkish context, Özmen's (2010) study on nonverbal immediacy behaviours of teacher trainees reveals the learnable nature of immediacy, claiming that teachers trained to display immediacy behaviours with the help of various acting techniques carried out a better identity development process. Indeed, designed as an experimental research, results of this study supported the integration of acting theories into ELT as a way to improve nonverbal immediacy behaviours of teacher trainees and their professional identities. In other words, the trainees in the experimental group were found to significantly improve their nonverbal immediacy behaviours at the end of the acting course. Parallel to this, specific content regarding the development of teacher immediacy for teacher education curricula has been suggested by Hussain et. al. (2021) with the reason that immediacy functions as a means of promoting student motivation. In this specific study, correlational study adopting a quantitative approach revealed a strong relationship among verbal, nonverbal, overall teacher immediacy and student motivation. For this reason, a specific revision in both pre-service and in-service education was recommended with the intent of teaching immediacy so that teachers could enhance student-teacher communication. Based on the results of these two aforementioned studies, it can be asserted that training may serve the purpose of developing new immediacy behaviours and improve teachers' existing immediacy behaviours through the incorporation of affective teaching techniques in teacher education courses. Considering the nature, importance and influences of teacher immediacy; it is an urgent need to design and implement a separate teacher training course focusing on the improvement of immediacy behaviours rather than integrating teacher immediacy into existing teacher training courses. In recognition of the

non-existence of an immediacy course, this study made it possible for teacher trainees to gain awareness of and practice teacher immediacy in a specific teacher training program, which resulted in specific course content in the form of a syllabus; and sought answers for the following research questions:

1. What background knowledge do the EFL teacher trainees possess in relation to teacher immediacy at the beginning of the teacher immediacy course?

2. What new knowledge do the EFL teacher trainees attain throughout the teacher immediacy course?

3. In what aspects is the teacher immediacy course effective in promoting the EFL teacher trainees' immediacy behaviours?

The above research questions pinpoint that this study is an attempt to be a model for designing and implementing a teacher immediacy course by investigating the potential learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the course. Especially in the case of foreign language teaching, which is ELT for this study, teaching philosophy and methodology should comply with the idea of creating positive learning outcomes by teachers' effective use of immediacy behaviours so that communication breakdowns between students and teachers can be avoided. This argument led us to organize a specific course aiming to teach immediacy to EFL teacher trainees, as a result of which teacher educators could have both theoretical and practical inspirations in terms of how to teach immediacy in their own context. In a sense, the present study makes an important contribution to the literature by introducing a teacher immediacy course model.

Method

Research Design

Designed as an action research, this study embraces the ultimate aim of learning and teaching awareness toward a particular topic (Gabryś-Barker, 2011). Basically, it intends to provide an understanding of how teacher immediacy, as one of the crucial components of foreign language teacher behaviours, develops. Through this action research which is extremely situational and context-ground, we intend to improve cooperation between teacher trainees and the teacher educator, apply reflective teaching on the way to professional development (Gabryś-Barker, 2011) and finally bring a change into a specific teacher education program (Burns, 2005). To this end, a particular group of senior Turkish EFL teacher trainees were facilitated to develop immediacy behaviours during a specific teacher training course. This research context was a bounded system as it was limited to specific timeline, space and activity when the study was conducted. The data deriving from multiple sources of evidence were gathered in its natural setting where the trainees received all the other teacher training courses. More specifically, the steps taken in this study was based on the Burns's (2009) phases of action research adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Those steps were planning (identifying and developing plans for the improvement of immediacy behaviours), action (putting teacher immediacy behaviours as an alternative way of behaving into action during one semester), observation (observing and collecting data in relation to each immediacy behaviour week by week), and reflection (reflecting and evaluating the whole process with the purpose of deciding on whether there is a need to implement further actions or not).

Participants

The criterion purposeful sampling method was employed to determine the participants of the study. We gained the necessary background information about the potential participants during the sampling process (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). In this regard, the senior EFL teacher trainees studying at the ELT Department of a public university were ascertained as the participants. In total, the participants consisted of 61 trainees (52 females and 9 males). Their age range was between 21 and 34, and the average age was 22. The main criteria for the sampling were as follows:

1. Completing the core methodology courses and the "Drama" course offered in the department

2. Taking the "School Experience" course in the meanwhile

3. Taking the "Teaching Practice" course in the following term

These criteria were important for the selection of the participants since all the participants were expected to have adequate knowledge of ELT methodologies and drama-related language teaching techniques (at the very beginning of the course) as well as having the chance to conduct observations on immediacy behaviours of the school teachers as their mentors (during the course) and to put into practice their evolving immediacy knowledge (after the course) at practicum schools so that they could gain more fruitful outcomes from the teacher immediacy course. The aim of Criterion 1 was to ensure that the participants had background knowledge on teacher behaviours in both theoretical and practical terms. Criterion 2 aimed to provide opportunities for the participants to observe and make critiques about other teachers' immediacy behaviours. Lastly, Criterion 3 intended to make it possible for the participants to practice their theoretical knowledge on immediacy in real language classrooms right after they completed the course. Thus, the reason behind those criteria for the sampling was to maximize the advantages of the teacher immediacy course as much as possible.

Procedures

The rationale behind the actions taken for the implementation of the course is that the nature of teacher learning is a form of socialization into the community of practice (Richards, 2008) and a dialogic process within the socio-cultural paradigm (Johnson, 2009); teachers should be encouraged to learn from their own practices through certain reflective elements, and teacher education should be regarded as a developmental process. Accordingly, the course was designed in such a way that the trainees were involved in many spontaneous role-plays so that they could gain practical knowledge on immediacy as much as possible. Moreover, the trainees were not only encouraged to evaluate their own behaviours but also behaviours of their peers from a critical point of view during the practices for the sake of involving them into a dialogic process. Besides, reflective conversations in which the trainees participated as a follow-up activity after the role-plays were beneficial for the socialization of the trainees in the community.

Depending on the notion above, the researcher, who was also the first author of this study, was responsible for all the procedures taken during the study. She was both the instructor of the teacher immediacy course and the researcher of the study and at the same time, she was one of the teacher educators in the department where the research was carried out. Throughout the research process, the role of the second author was to supervise the course and all the research phases and provide the first author with relevant feedback. To add more, the researcher designed and implemented the course as a regular elective course in the ELT department where she already worked as a teacher educator. Along with this instructor role, she was also responsible for conducting the research as a data collector and analyst. As both the instructor and researcher, the first author took all her actions in order to foster the trainees' teacher behaviours in general terms and teacher immediacy in specific terms.

At the beginning of the course, the first author introduced the concept of teacher immediacy and its components to the trainees. Afterwards, the trainees learnt four different nonverbal immediacy behaviours and four verbal immediacy behaviours; each of which would be covered in a 2-hour course weekly. Subsequently, they analysed the concept of teacher immediacy as a whole in the last two weeks of the course. The two groups of trainees (Group A and B) took the course on different days, and the first hour of the course was allocated to the reviews of theoretical knowledge whereas the second hour was used for conducting role-plays. After the course sessions, the trainees were invited to focus group interviews each week. Besides, they were requested to fill in the session evaluation forms at the end of each session, and the first author kept a researcher diary on a weekly basis for each session. As for the content of the course, Table 1 shows the syllabus of the Teacher Immediacy course which lasted for 14 weeks:

Table 1. The Syllabus of the Course

Weeks	Topic	Workshop	Experience
1,2,3,4	-	Familiarizing the trainees with the teacher immediacy concept	Observations and evaluations of micro-teachings
5	Body language	Mirroring and imitating activity	Imitating a partner's body language in specified teaching scenarios
6	Facial expressions	Reflective thinking on others' facial expressions	Trying out various facial expressions while giving feedback in various teaching contexts
7	Vocal intonation	Read aloud English poems and analyse them based on certain intonation patterns	Practicing how to give effective instructions considering intonation patterns
8	Kinesics	Act out a teaching scenario by using differing body movements	Trying out certain teacher behaviours by paying special attention to kinesics along with haptics and proxemics
9	Use of collective pronouns	Act out a story with the class and wrap up what is achieved in the class	Cooperating and creating a feeling of togetherness
10	Use of humour	Practice on speaking about a "Pink Panther" video which includes English input and funny scenes	Making students speak about the video in groups while motivating them by means of humour
11	Positive feedback	Imitate both ready-made praising utterances and original self-made ones for different teaching situations	Becoming familiar with how to give verbal and nonverbal positive feedback
12	Negative feedback	Imitate both ready-made criticizing utterances and original self-made ones for different teaching situations	Becoming familiar with how to criticize and to accompany negative feedback with positive feedback
13	ELT approaches and immediacy	Act out a typical language activity as an immediate teacher for the determined language teaching approaches	Building connections between ELT methods and immediacy
14	Immediacy as a whole	Dub the nonverbal immediacy behaviours of two different teachers in the video, act out the worst or best teacher regarding immediacy	Evaluating the concept of teacher immediacy

Instruments
Immediacy Measurements

The Nonverbal and Verbal Immediacy Measurements were adapted from Saechou (2005) by the authors, and were utilized for the purposes of determining the frequency of occurrences of the trainees' immediacy behaviours in their micro-teachings at the beginning of the course. Based on the expert opinions, the adaptation solely included the omission of six items from the Verbal Immediacy Measurement. The omitted items were all about out-of-class immediacy behaviours, which were not a focus of the present study. To this end, each trainee was given scores from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often) for their displayed immediacy behaviours. The adapted measurements contain 15 items for nonverbal dimension and 15 items for verbal dimension. The Nonverbal Immediacy Measurement includes items with regard to body language, facial expressions, use of voice and proxemics. On the other hand, the Verbal Immediacy Measurement composes a list of items pertinent to feedback, collective pronouns and the integration of humour and so forth. All micro-teachings were evaluated in light of these 30 immediacy behaviours.

Session Evaluation Forms

To measure the effectiveness and appropriateness of the course, the trainees filled in the session evaluation forms after each course session weekly. The form was designed considering the necessary evaluation criteria, revised in light of expert opinions, and utilized as a supplementary tool. The purpose of the forms was to understand to what extent the trainees found the course sessions effective depending on the categories of the objectives, the trainer, the content and the resources. The trainees evaluated the course by indicating their level of agreement, which ranged from "Strongly disagree (1)" to "Strongly agree (5)", with the respective items in the form.

Focus Group Interviews

The purpose of focus group interviewing was to establish an environment in which the trainees could discuss their views and build up a view out of the interaction taking place within the group (Bryman, 2012). Each week's focus group interview had a different scope based on what was experienced in the related course sessions. The discussions revolved around such topics as effectiveness of the course, effectiveness of the trainees in the employment of the covered immediacy behaviour, realizations of the trainees about their own way of using the covered immediacy behaviour, improvements in the use of the covered immediacy behaviour, and importance of the covered immediacy behaviour for ELT. As the main data collection tool, another aim in organizing focus group interviews was to handle the large number of the trainees (N:61) and give each one of them a chance to share their views and to help them produce a joint view collaboratively. Each focus group was organized for 10 trainees; and only one of the groups included 11 trainees. Accordingly, there were six focus groups in total. Each group's interview was carried out weekly after the course session at appropriate times and places determined by the trainees themselves. The active or regular participation in the focus group interviews was based on voluntariness. Even so, the attendance rate of the course sessions was calculated as 78.45%; and the attendance rate of the focus group interviews was 78.33%. It is evident that the trainees who attended the sessions attended the subsequent group interviews. On the whole, the first author carried out 84 audio-recorded focus group interviews; each of which lasted for almost 30-35 minutes.

Researcher Journal

To unravel the trainees' learning gains from the course and evaluate the effectiveness of the course, the first author kept the researcher journal on a weekly basis so as to gather relevant data from the researcher's perspective. The content of the researcher journal was composed of observations of the trainees' behaviours and their evolving theoretical and practical knowledge on immediacy as well as the researcher's feelings and opinions about the course and trainees; and notes including the eye-catching points from the informal conversations with the trainees. In order not to overlook any detail or in case of a vague situation about the course or trainees, each session was video-recorded. Those video-recordings served as an aid in the process of journal writing. Kept separately for Group A and B,

the whole journal provided a data set of 64 pages. It is worth clarifying that the video-recordings of the course sessions were solely for maximizing the accuracy, objectivity, quality and criticality of the journal content. That is, the video-recordings were not approached as a main data source; instead, they were all used as aids to minimize researcher bias and paradox.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics in the format of mean and standard deviations were run via SPSS for the quantitative data gathered from the immediacy instruments and session evaluation forms. The qualitative data from the focus group interviews were analysed using computer content analysis through NVivo from an inductive perspective; however, the researcher journal was analysed through manual inductive content analysis technique. The essential action taken in the analyses of focus group interviews was to discover the collective views of the participants about the issues; and the analysis of the researcher journal was based on a weekly basis so that we could see how the immediacy behaviours practiced diversified the trainees' opinions and evaluations. For the analyses of all the qualitative data, we followed Krippendorff's (2004) set of steps: Defining the research questions, the population, the sample, the context of the generation of the document, the unit of analysis, the codes; constructing the categories for the analysis, conducting the data analysis, summarizing and making inferences. In light of these steps, we read all the data over and over again in order to be familiarized with the data in a way that we could find appropriate answers to the research questions. At the same time, we paid attention to the attributes of the population and our own participants as well as the context because all these variables might have influences on the interpretation of the initial and eventual analyses. Thus, we produced the unit of analyses which was followed by determining the codes. In tandem with coding, we constructed the themes and categories. These steps were iteratively taken so that we could delve deeply into the data from a compare and contrast perspective. During this coding process, we took the principles of the Implicit Communication Theory (Mehrabian, 1981) and the Motivational Theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000); both of which are associated with immediacy, into consideration. To be more specific, implicit communication theory was deemed vital since it gave the coder a logical foundation which included the motivational traits of approach and avoidance. These traits might be claimed to be strategies providing closeness between teachers and students with the help of implicit and explicit messages conveyed through behaviours. Besides, the tenets of the motivational theory were a comprehensive guide for us. The tenets mainly covered such motivations as the ability belief in oneself, the expectations from oneself and one's opinions about usefulness of learning. Within the context of this study, the whole analyses revealed the participants' notions in relation to self-evaluations of immediacy behaviours before the course, learning gains and importance of immediacy during the course and expectations of participants from themselves as a result of the course. These two theories were also dominant in the process of summarizing and making inferences from the findings so as to make the raw analyses more sensible and to enrich the quality of the eventual analyses.

To ensure trustworthiness, 25% of the whole qualitative data was coded by two different researchers who had academic studies on EFL teacher education. The inter-coder agreement was found to be 0.8 and 0.87. Additionally, the approval of the ethics committee was taken from the institution; and the informed consents of the trainees were obtained at the beginning of the term. Besides, to enhance the accuracy of the findings, triangulation was considered (Creswell & Miller, 2000) by corroborating evidence from different individuals (the trainer and the trainees), different types of data (interviews, researcher journal, measurements, session evaluation forms) and different methods of data collection (reports, observations and interviewing). To check the accuracy of the account, the trainees were involved in the member-checking process (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and negative case analyses were also shared.

Results

Familiarization with Teacher Immediacy

At the beginning of the course, the frequency of occurrences of each participant's current immediacy behaviours was observed in micro-teachings and analysed through immediacy measurements as presented in the following table:

Table 2. Nonverbal and Verbal Immediacy Behaviours' Total Frequency of Occurrences at the Beginning of the Teacher Immediacy Course

	Mean (X)	SD	Frequency of occurrences
Nonverbal immediacy	3.14	.68	Occasionally
Verbal immediacy	2.13	.33	Rarely

Table 2 indicates that nonverbal immediacy behaviours (X=3.14 out of 5) were exhibited more frequently than the verbal ones (X=3.14 out of 5) by the trainees. Moreover, it is obvious that the standard deviation score for verbal behaviours (SD=.33) was considerably lower; which implies that the trainees' verbal behaviours were more invariant than their nonverbal behaviours. In addition to the trainees' displayed immediacy behaviours, they also verbalized self-evaluations on their effectiveness in the employment of immediacy behaviours. The following table summarizes those self-evaluations elicited in the focus group interviews:

Table 3. Self-Evaluations on the Effectiveness of the Trainees' Immediacy Behaviours

	Perceived weaknesses	f	%	Perceived strengths	f	%
Nonverbal behaviours	Having a smiling face	18	26	Being energetic	18	30
	Having self-confidence	16	23	Having a smiling face	17	28
	Body language	14	20	Body language	15	25
	Vocal intonation	11	16	Vocal intonation	5	8
	Gestures	6	9	Facial expressions	5	8
	Use of space	3	4	-	0	0
	Eye contact	1	1	-	0	0
Verbal behaviours	Feedback	25	36	Feedback	26	70
	Humour	18	26	Addressing learners by their names	7	19
	Taking a position	15	21	Humour	4	11
	Encouragement	12	17	-	0	0

Based on Table 3, it is obvious that certain behaviours were perceived as both strengths and weaknesses by the trainees. To exemplify; having a smiling-face, body language and vocal intonation; all of which are nonverbal behaviours, were grouped under both strengths and weaknesses. However, the number of times when each behaviour was emphasized as either weakness or strength is crucial. As such, the number of times when body language and having a smiling-face were highlighted as both weakness and strength is approximately the same. Yet, vocal intonation seems to be perceived as a weakness (f:11) rather than being a strength (f:5) as evident in the below excerpt:

> *Adjusting the tone of voice is difficult for us because we never worked on it professionally and the use of voice for most of us was dull in previous micro-teachings… (Focus Group 2)*

Other cited weaknesses are associated with self-confidence, gestures, use of space and eye contact. Regarding strengths, the trainees perceived themselves as good at being energetic and employing facial expressions. Specifically for verbal behaviours, feedback was nearly equally perceived as both a strength and weakness whereas humour is found to be a weakness (n:18), rather than a strength (f:4) as emphasized in the following excerpt:

> …I cannot integrate humour into my teaching. This makes the lesson monotonous and boring. (Focus Group 3)

Another perceived verbal strength was addressing learners by their names even though the trainees found themselves less capable of taking a position or encouraging. As well as those self-evaluations, in focus group interviews, all the trainees (N:61) pointed out their need for such a course. Table 4 presents their needs about the content and the procedure of the course:

Table 4. The Trainees' Perceived Needs about the Course

	f	%
Need of practice rather than theory	13	25
Need of such training during practicum	11	21
Need of such training earlier	8	15
Need of flexibility in role-plays	8	15
Need of effective feedback	8	15
Need of more focus on nonverbal immediacy	5	9

As summarized in Table 4, the most highlighted need is associated with focusing on practice instead of theory during the course, which is followed by the need of receiving such a course in tandem with the practicum experience. This shows that the trainees attached special importance to practical work in their last year of study at university as clarified in the excerpt below:

> We have theoretical knowledge on pedagogy but we still do not know how to develop a distinctive teacher attitude… It will be beneficial for us to receive this course in the same term with the practicum experience. (Focus Group 6)

Besides these, the trainees asserted that they were in need of taking this course earlier, having freedom in designing their role-plays, receiving effective feedback and chances to focus on nonverbal behaviours more. The following excerpt indicates all these needs:

> I wish we could focus on immediacy in our previous methodology courses because we have not made any practices on it yet. In our practices, we did not have freedom to create our own way of teaching…. I also do not think that we could receive constructive feedback on our micro-teachings from the instructors… (Focus Group 1)

After a brief introduction to the immediacy concept in theoretical terms at the beginning of the course, the trainees shared their conceptualizations about teacher immediacy in focus group interviews as outlined in Table 5:

Table 5. The Trainees' Conceptualizations of Teacher Immediacy

Teacher identity			Teacher roles			Teacher knowledge		
	f	%		f	%		f	%
High teacher closeness	11	48	Awareness of learner motivation	10	48	Effective classroom management skills	13	65
Positive teacher attitude	9	39	Awareness of learner characteristics	9	43	Effective teaching skills	7	35
High teacher charisma	3	13	Awareness of individual differences	2	9			

As understood from Table 5, the trainees' conceptualizations of teacher immediacy are linked to teacher identity, teacher roles and teacher knowledge. They believed that teacher immediacy entailed high teacher closeness, positive teacher attitude and high teacher charisma. For instance, about high teacher closeness, the trainees came to an agreement as shown in the excerpt:

Teacher immediacy requires being physically and psychosocially close to learners inside and outside the classroom… (Focus Group 2)

The trainees associated teacher immediacy with such teacher roles as being aware of learner motivation, learner characteristics and individual differences. Moreover, they associated teacher immediacy to effective classroom management skills and effective teaching skills, both of which are crucial parts of teacher knowledge. These two predictions about teacher roles and knowledge are evident in the following excerpt:

…It is necessary to be immediate in order to keep learner motivation alive…For fruitful teaching and for managing the classroom efficiently especially when an unexpected situation appears, being immediate is a must... (Focus Group 4)

As well as those conceptualizations, the trainees gave important clues on why they found teacher immediacy crucial. Figure 1 shows the areas which are closely related to teacher immediacy in the minds of the trainees:

Figure 1. The Importance of Immediacy Behaviours

As is obvious in Figure 1, the trainees attached the greatest importance of immediacy to their professional development:

…If a teacher is immediate enough, then he/she could make more professional and conscious decisions about teaching. That is, working on immediacy provides professional development for teacher trainees like us. (Focus Group 4)

On the whole, the perceived importance of immediacy behaviours can be grouped under two dimensions which are learners and teachers. Regarding learners, teacher immediacy was found to be important for building strong communication channels with them and grabbing their attention to the lesson and the teacher. Concerning teachers, teacher immediacy appeared to be vital for gaining self-confidence and providing effective teaching as well as creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere.

Learning Gains

The focus group interviews and the researcher journal revealed learning gains week by week. The relevant data were examined in a way that the top three learning gains for each session were explored as listed in the following tables:

Table 6. Learning Gains from the Nonverbal Immediacy Sessions

		Learning gains
Nonverbal Sessions	Body Language	The effect of body language on teaching
		The negative effect of exaggeration in the use of body language
		The effective use of space
	Facial Expressions	The importance of facial expressions for teaching
		Awareness on facial expressions
		The effect of facial expressions on teaching
	Vocal Intonation	One's own potential in vocal intonation
		The effect of voice on classroom management
		The effect of voice on learning
	Kinesics	The effect of kinesics on teaching
		The effect of kinesics on learning
		The effect of kinesics on classroom management

Table 6 shows the commonalities between the outcomes of the nonverbal immediacy sessions such as the effect of body language, facial expressions, vocal intonation and kinesics on teaching, learning or classroom management; and the importance of working on those immediacy behaviours for teaching along with gaining awareness of and realizing one's own potential in using nonverbal behaviours. For instance, the trainees learnt how body language and kinesics influenced teaching practices as is clear in the following excerpts:

It is highly possible to give clearer instructions if we use our gestures appropriately without exaggeration… (Focus Group 5)

Visualizing the content of the stories via kinesics is important so that learners can learn permanently and become more attentive and motivated for the upcoming activities. (Focus Group 1)

Likewise, for facial expressions, the trainees learnt about the importance of facial expressions for teaching, especially for teacher-student communication. One of the trainees drew attention to this specific learning gain:

It is a must for us to foster our facial expressions because they will open a way to empowering our communication with students. (Focus Group 2)

A parallel finding is also evident in the researcher journal as shown in the following entry:

Today, the trainees realized that contextual factors affected the purpose of using various facial expressions although they were having difficulties in making use of facial expressions…

Besides, the trainees built some links between nonverbal immediacy and classroom management. To clarify, for vocal intonation, they concluded that monotonous use of voice might result in decrease in student motivation; and in turn, teachers could fail in classroom management. This intricate relationship between vocal intonation and classroom management is obvious in following the excerpt:

We gave instructions somehow but our use of voice was so dull that a dramatic decrease in learner motivation was inevitable. Thus, classroom management became harder and failure in classroom management means unfruitful learning experiences. (Focus Group 5)

Similarly, the learning gains from the verbal immediacy sessions were analysed separately and the top three learning gains for each session are shown in Table 7:

Table 7. Learning Gains from the Verbal Immediacy Sessions

		Learning gains
Verbal Sessions	Collective Pronouns	The effect of collective pronouns on teacher closeness
		The use of collective pronouns to encourage group works
		The effect of collective pronouns on giving instructions
	Humour	New ways to use humour
		The relation of humour with learner characteristics
		The importance of humour for effective teaching
	Positive Feedback	Combining positive feedback with nonverbal behaviours
		The effect of positive feedback on motivation
		The need of an original feedback style
	Negative Feedback	The relation of negative feedback with learner feelings
		The relation of negative feedback with learner characteristics
		Combining negative feedback with nonverbal behaviours

Table 7 indicates that the trainees learnt the effects of verbal immediacy on teaching, learner characteristics and learner motivation as well as how to combine verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviours. It is evident that the trainees were capable of creating logical connections between the use of collective pronouns and teacher closeness; and the below entry shed light on this:

Good news is that the trainees were aware of the importance of this verbal behaviour for the psychological distance between students and teachers. They emphasized that language learning was a social phenomenon and an immediate teacher should be able to achieve linguistic goals in collaboration with students through socially attractive tasks.

It is promising that the trainees learnt new ways to integrate humour into their teachings, the relationship between humour and learner characteristics, and the vitality of humour for effective teaching. The following excerpt is an indication of all these:

The effective use of humour depends on awareness of learners' differing personalities and if we cannot be natural while integrating humour into our classes, we cannot teach effectively. What is more, it may a good strategy to share funny anecdotes from our daily life. This leads us to building closer psychological channels with learners. (Focus Group 6)

Regarding positive and negative feedback, the trainees learnt how to combine these verbal behaviours with nonverbal behaviours, and also their relation to motivation, learner feelings and characteristics. The trainees also recognized their need to create an original feedback style without insisting on using the same feedback all the time. The entry and the excerpt below give clues on these findings:

The trainees perceived themselves as successful at giving positive feedback. However, they had difficulty in diversifying their feedback and always used the same limited number of short phrases to give feedback.

When there was an error in student answers, my peer encouraged the student to find the right answer with a smiling face and hugged the student in the role-play. (Focus Group 2)

Apart from those learning gains, it was clarified that the great majority of the trainees (92%) had the belief in their improvement in terms of immediacy behaviours as a result of the course. Even so, as contrary evidence, one of the trainees believed that she made no improvement:

I cannot say that I improved my immediacy behaviours because I still feel hesitant and shy in micro-teachings or in real classrooms at practicum. (Focus Group 1)

As a reference to the opinions of the trainees who believed that they improved themselves as a result of the course, Table 8 illustrates their reported learning gains at the end of the course:

Table 8. Learning Gains Reported at the End of the Course

	f	%
How to become an immediate teacher	17	29
Teacher competences	13	22
Teacher attitude	7	12
How to overcome self-deficiencies	4	7
How to evaluate peers	3	5
How to create a positive classroom atmosphere	3	5
How to build a balance between verbal and nonverbal behaviours	3	5
The relationship of personality with teacher immediacy	3	5
Classroom management skills	3	5
How to be self-confident	3	5

Table 8 demonstrates that the trainees mostly emphasized that they learnt how to become an immediate teacher, and gained teacher competences and attitudes. The excerpt below is an indicator of these findings:

> *This course was the first time for me to realize my own teacher attitudes and new ways for improving those attitudes and competences. Now, I am sure that the attitudes and competences I gained will help me create a unique way of being immediate. (Focus Group 5)*

Following this, the reported learning gains included overcoming self-deficiencies, evaluating peers, creating a positive classroom atmosphere, building a balance between verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviours. Among these, it may be interesting to witness the trainees' statements about the evaluation of peers, which was not a specific focus of the course. This was also noted in the researcher journal:

> *The trainees made progress in observing and evaluating one another critically. Some of them are able to justify their comments professionally and kindly, rather than only describing each other's immediacy behaviours in the role-plays.*

Lastly, the trainees mentioned the relation of personality with teacher immediacy, classroom management skills and self-confidence as their overall learning gains. Besides, another focus of the last focus group interviews was to explore trainees' views toward the effects of the course on their future teaching as outlined in Table 9:

Table 9. Reported Effects of the Course on Future Teaching

	f	%		f	%
Put all immediacy behaviours into practice	28	19	Be a caring teacher	6	4
Use facial expressions more carefully	21	14	Use collective pronouns to increase learner participation	6	4
Use suitable feedback for effective teaching	17	11	Give special importance to instructions	6	4
Establish closeness with learners	12	8	Monitor oneself while using immediacy behaviours	5	3
Use body language for effective teaching	11	7	Make effort to create positive classroom atmosphere	5	3
Create one's own teaching style	10	6	Awareness of continuous improvement	5	3
Use humour to increase learner interest	7	5	Have a good teacher profile	4	2
Use voice to address learners	7	5			

Table 9 presents that there were various perceived effects of the course on the trainees' future teachings. The most frequent effects are putting all immediacy behaviours into their future teaching, using facial expressions more carefully and using suitable feedback for teaching effectively. Overall, it seems that the trainees made inferences related to the course topics (the use of body language, voice, humour, collective pronouns), the psychological dimension of teaching (establish closeness with learners, being a caring teacher, making effort to create a positive classroom atmosphere and having a good teacher profile), the teaching itself (giving special importance to instructions) and professional development (monitor oneself while using immediacy behaviours, awareness of continuous improvement). The following excerpt shows how the trainees would plan to be immediate considering all immediacy behaviours as a whole:

I will use all the immediacy behaviours appropriately and when necessary. If I become able to combine them logically, I believe I can teach more effectively. This will help me communicate with learners better, make the learning environment warmer and increase learner motivation. (Focus Group 3)

Evaluation of the Course

The effectiveness and appropriateness of the course sessions in terms of the objectives, trainer, content and resources were scrutinized. The following figure visualizes the evaluation of the course week by week:
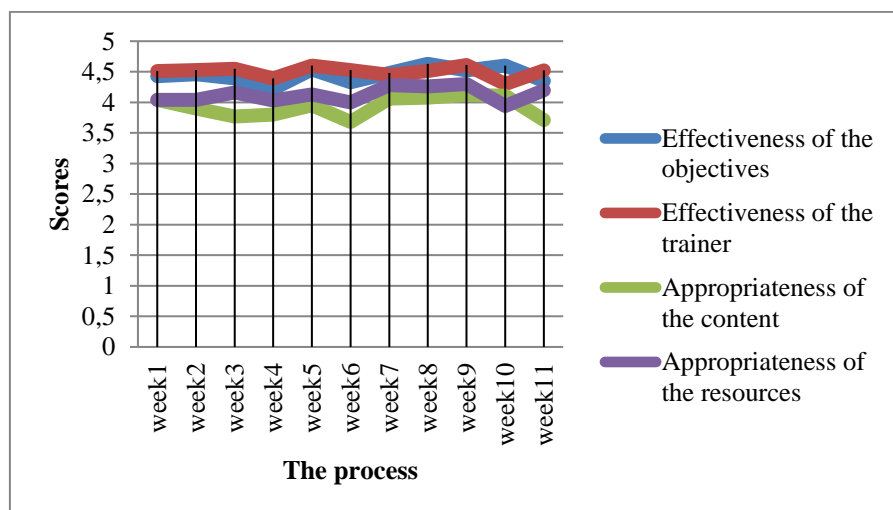

Figure 2. The Evaluation of the Course on a Weekly Basis

As shown in Figure 2, the course was generally perceived as effective and appropriate considering each course session's mean scores, all of which are above 3.5 out of 5. There are no sharp fluctuations for any of the criteria in the figure. Yet, there is a slight decrease for the effectiveness of the objectives, content and resources in the sixth week when the training topic was the use of collective pronouns. It is also obvious that there is an increase for the effectiveness of the trainer and content whereas there is a decrease for the effectiveness of the objectives and resources when Week 10 and 11 are compared. To sum up, the effectiveness and appropriateness of the whole course appears to be positively evaluated by the trainees.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study investigated the experiences of EFL teacher trainees throughout a teacher immediacy course, and several findings were drawn from the data. First, before the course, the trainee's self-evaluations on their immediacy behaviours naturally differed, that is, certain behaviours were perceived both as weaknesses and strengths. This is most probably because of the fact that immediacy is a matter of perception. Second, observations of micro-teachings showed that the trainees' nonverbal immediacy behaviours were more frequent and varied compared to the verbal ones. Even so, they were of the opinion that they needed to focus more on nonverbal immediacy. This could be regarded as interesting since they attached more importance to their improvement in nonverbal immediacy although they could already display more nonverbal behaviours. The reason behind this may be related to the fact that each verbal behaviour is already accompanied by a nonverbal one; hence, they believed that they should be more knowledgeable about nonverbal immediacy. Besides, the top perceived need was found to be practicing. In such a course, not only is theoretical knowledge sufficient for the trainees to work on, but also a great deal of practical work should be predominantly incorporated. Third, the intricate relationships between immediacy and teacher identity, teacher roles and teacher knowledge indicated that the trainees gained awareness of the concept and were capable of making inferences about the interrelated concepts, which were keys to the issue at hand. The trainees also built strong ties between immediacy and their professional development. In other words, through the lenses of the trainees, working on immediacy would substantially contribute to their professional development.

Taking the learning gains into account, it is obvious that the course objectives were attained to a large extent. As well as the influences of nonverbal behaviours on teaching, student learning, classroom management; the trainees raised awareness of tacit actions and realized their own potential in employing immediacy behaviours. This connection between nonverbal immediacy and effective teaching was also highlighted by Özmen (2011) and Paul et al. (2019). Additionally, teachers should engage in effective nonverbal immediacy so that they can be viewed as being likeable and competent (Furlich, 2016). In verbal immediacy sessions, the trainees learnt how to establish affinity with students, how to combine verbal and nonverbal behaviours effectively; and the links among verbal behaviours and student feelings, characteristics and motivation. Regarding reported learning gains, they became familiar with new ways to be immediate, developed teacher competences and attitudes; in addition, they had the chance to minimize their self-deficiencies and be involved in peer evaluations. Moreover, the trainees reported that they would put what they learnt during the course into their future teaching, especially the learning gains about body language, facial expressions and feedback. It is promising to conclude that the trainees would create their own teaching style by using their learning gains from the course as base. Another promising conclusion is that the course was found to be effective and appropriate on several counts.

The detected learning gains imply that the trainees gained awareness of the importance of teacher behaviours, looked from new perspectives on the components of teacher immediacy, and learned the possible relationship between teacher immediacy and student learning, (İnceelli & Candemir, 2016) and motivation (Fallah, 2014; Velez & Cano, 2008), classroom management (Burroughs, 2007), and teacher closeness (Mottet, Frymier, & Beebe, 2006). The course helped the trainees acquire critical and reflective thinking skills through their discussions in focus group interviews in a collaborative way and in the observation of each other's role-plays even though it did not target to do so. Beyond these gains, being involved in the spontaneous role-plays, the trainees became able to differ positive immediacy from negative immediacy and how to combine nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviours appropriately. This can be regarded as a crucial implication, because a combination of constant, positive and supportive verbal and nonverbal communication is vital for teachers to enhance academic success of students (Cocksedge, et al. 2013). Above all, the trainees realized that they needed to create their own teaching style benefitting from their evolving immediacy behaviours as a result of the course. In fact, the course might pave the way for the trainees to pass through a smooth

transformation process in which they began to construct their professional identities as being prospective immediate teachers.

Implications reveal that integrating teacher immediacy into methodology courses to a certain degree or offering it as separate course content (Hussain et al. 2021) could be a logical first step for providing the trainees familiarization with the concept. Such integration might be possible not only for foreign language teacher education, but also for other disciplines at education faculties. Through workshops, seminars or webinars, teacher educators should cultivate in novice teachers' knowledge and implementations of interpersonal communication with a specific focus upon clarity, credibility and immediacy (Zheng, 2021); all of which are intertwined concepts. This could be possible by giving teacher trainees chances to deliver lessons within mixed reality simulations where they can practice teaching strategies and nonverbal behaviours without affecting real students (Rosati-Peterson, Piro, Straub, & O'Callaghan, 2021). Further, teacher immediacy should also be emphasized for in-service teacher education because practicing immediacy in the field could yield more fruitful results in the long run. Apart from these, the study is not without limitations. The first limitation was that merely two hours were allocated to the course; for this reason, each trainee did not have the opportunity to engage in practices in each course session. The second limitation was related to the total number of the trainees (30 for Group A and 31 for Group B) who participated in the course. If we could work with a smaller number of trainees, they would have the opportunity to engage in more practice on the different immediacy behaviours, including those which might help them to be immediate outside the class. Third, it would not be possible to make universal generalizations on the findings; however, the findings can be accepted as verifiable, to a certain extent, for other EFL teacher trainees studying in similar contexts.

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