EFL TEACHER TRAINEES' REFLECTIVE LENSES ON IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS: LEARNING GAINS, PERCEPTIONS AND SELF-EVALUATIONS [1]

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of EFL teacher trainees' learning gains, perceptions and self-evaluations regarding immediacy behaviors resulting from a 14-week Teacher Immediacy course. Approximately four months later, the trainees were invited to write four successive reflections by re-thinking their experiences throughout the course. In total, 61 trainees attended the course; and out of them, six trainees were selected based on the maximal variation sampling method and wrote individual reflection reports. The ultimate aim of these reflective writings was to gather opinions about the outcomes and influences of the course on the trainees' evolving knowledge of immediacy. Inductive content analysis of the reflections demonstrated that the trainees gained awareness of and expanded theoretical knowledge of teacher immediacy. Besides, they reflectively and critically looked back on the process of their familiarization with the concept of teacher immediacy and looked beyond their future identity as an immediate EFL teacher.

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ YAKINLIK DAVRANIŞLARINA DAİR YANSITICI BAKIŞI: ÖĞRENME KAZANIMLARI, ALGILAR VE ÖZ-DEĞERLENDİRMELER

Makale Bilgisi

ÖZ

Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının almış oldukları 14 haftalık öğretmen yakınlığı temalı bir dersin sonucu olarak yakınlık davranışları ile ilgili öğrenme kazanımlarının, algılarının ve öz-değerlendirmelerinin bir araştırmasıdır. Dersin bitişinden yaklaşık dört ay sonra, öğretmen adaylarından ders süresince edindikleri deneyimleri üzerine tekrar düşünerek dört adet yansıtıcı rapor yazmaları istenmiştir. Dersi tamamlayan 61 öğretmen adayı içerisinden altı tanesi maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiş ve haftalık bireysel yansıtıcı raporlar yazmışlardır. Bu yansıtıcı raporların esas amacı öğretmen adaylarının ders kazanımlarına ve dersin gelişmekte olan yakınlık davranışları üzerindeki etkilerine dair düşüncelerini elde etmektir. Yansıtıcı raporların tümevarımsal içerik analizi öğretmen adaylarının öğretmen yakınlığı ile ilgili farkındalık kazandıklarını ve bilgilerini genişlettiklerini göstermektedir. Ek olarak, öğretmen adayları eleştirel ve yansıtıcı bir bakış açısıyla hem öğretmen yakınlığı kavramına dair farkındalık kazanma süreçleri üzerine hem de öğretmen yakınlığına sahip İngilizce öğretmenleri olarak gelecekteki kimlikleri üzerine düşünebilmişlerdir.

INTRODUCTION

In the instructional communication model of McCroskey, Valencic and Richmond (2004), there are six essential components: instructional environment, students, teachers, and teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors, students' perceptions of teachers and instructional outcomes; all of which may create substantial variability during instructional communication. Among those, students' perceptions of teachers may be the most vital component of instructional communication since students tend to develop perceptions as soon as they are exposed to a new teacher. These initial perceptions are primarily shaped as a result of teachers' verbal and nonverbal messages. As every single teacher behaves in an idiosyncratic manner, individual teachers' communication behaviors are differently perceived by students. Instructional outcomes of those diverse teacher behaviors may be associated with cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning as well as students' evaluation of teachers which leads us to the construct of immediacy.

Immediacy was first introduced as a metaphor by Mehrabian (1971) to explain the universal concept of approach and avoidance, claiming that people approach things appealing to them, and avoid things that do not appeal to them. He also listed a number of behaviors that communicate immediacy to the interlocutors such as closer proximity, eye contact, smiling, inclusiveness and voluntarism. Those behaviors are examined under two categories of communication: Nonverbal and Verbal (Edwards & Edwards, 2001). Nonverbal immediacy is about resorting to closeness-inducing behavioral cues concerned with approachability and availability for communication, and also with interpersonal warmth and closeness (Andersen, 1985). Particularly for educational settings, nonverbal communication consists of being friendly, gesturing, decreasing physical distance, socially acceptable touch, variation in voice, a good physical look or allocating time for being with students before and after class (Frymier, 1993). Such nonverbal immediacy behaviors of teachers have the potential to foster student learning, academic achievement and motivation (Kyaruzi, Strijbos, Ufer& Brown, 2019) if students perceive their teacher's communication behaviors as positively immediate. However, if a teacher is perceived as exhibiting negative immediacy behaviors or not exhibiting any immediacy behaviors, students are inclined to feel avoidance, dislike, coldness and interpersonal distance (Kearney, Plax, Sorenson & Smith, 1988). On the other hand, verbal immediacy behaviors are the speech acts used by teachers such as using personal examples, questions, inclusive pronouns and humor, addressing students by name and more (Hsu, 2006). If teachers display effective verbal immediacy behaviors, it is highly probable to observe that student motivation, perceived cognition, affective learning as well as students' willingness to participate in class discussions increase (Menzel&Carrell, 1999). On the combination of nonverbal and verbal behaviors, Gorham's (1988) study shows that verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors are most efficient when used together rather than separately. This is because, as clarified by Bozkaya and Aydin (2007), both kind of immediacy behaviors help students be a part of the learning community and learn better.

Regarding the impacts of teacher immediacy on students, students are found to feel accepted by means of verbal and nonverbal forms of communication (Frymier & Weser 2001; Li, 2003; Witt & Wheeless, 2001) because teacher immediacy behaviors lead to students' perception of interpersonal closeness, warmth and friendliness (Rodriguez, Plax & Kearney, 1996). Thus, students are more willing to prefer teachers who demonstrate immediacy behaviors (Kearney, et al, 1988). It seems that immediacy behaviors of teachers are one of the most vital elements influencing the quality of the communication process in the classroom (Geçer & Deryakulu, 2004). In this process, teachers' nonverbal and verbal affinity has strong links to students' affective, behavioral and cognitive learning and motivation (İnceelli & Candemir, 2016). In addition, teacher immediacy decreases dropout rates (Allen, Witt &Wheeless, 2006), improves classroom management challenges (Burroughs, 2007), promotes teacher credibility (Schrodt & Witt, 2006; Teven& Hanson, 2004) and creates avenues for greater assimilation of material for students (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Immediacy could also ease apprehensions in student-teacher relationships (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), enhance compliance in students (Burroughs, 2007; Mottet, Frymier & Beebe, 2006; Teven & Hanson, 2004), and increase students' affective learning (Chesebro, 2003; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Mottet, Parker-Raley, Beebe & Cunningham, 2007). It is obvious that immediacy is a leading variable in successful teacher-student relationships, teaching effectiveness and student achievement (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Hence, teachers' responsibility to encourage appropriate interaction in light of the target learning outcomes is essential (Walsh, 2006). By doing so, teachers engaging in effective nonverbal immediacy are generally viewed as being quite likable and competent (Furlich, 2016), which further helps them accomplish fruitful outcomes (Pogue & AhYun, 2007; Witt & Kerssen-Griep, 2011). All these mean that a combination of constant and supportive communication is vital for teachers to foster students' academic success (Cocksedge, George, Renwick & Chew-Graham, 2013).

In terms of language teaching/learning, nonverbal immediacy behaviors are claimed to have positive impacts upon teacher effectiveness (Özmen, 2011; Paul, Maiti & Nath, 2019); therefore, teachers should pay extra attention to their tacit actions. Teacher immediacy is also linked to EFL students' willingness to communicate in English along with teacher credibility (Lee, 2020). Likewise, Sheybani (2019) argues that teacher immediacy can create dramatic improvements in EFL/ESL students' academic achievement and enhance their willingness to attend classes. Besides, immediate acts of language teachers have the potential to help students attain more desirable learning gains (Violanti, Kelly, Garland, & Christen, 2018). Some other student-related factors associated with immediacy include academic engagement, involvement, willingness to participate in classes, cognitive and affective learning, course retention, satisfaction and motivation (e.g. Gholamrezaee & Ghanizadeh, 2018; Kalat, Yazdi & Ghanizadeh, 2018; Pishghadam, Derakhshan, Zhaleh & Al-Obaydi, 2019; Hussain, Azeem & Abid, 2020; Derakhshan, 2021). All these prominent influences of teacher immediacy on numerous educational variables show that teachers are the ones who determine the rate and quality of achievement and communicative abilities of students (Pishghadam et al., 2021). For this reason, teachers should take the emotions of students into account to ensure students' wellbeing (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2019). In light of this review of literature, this study intends to answer the following research question:

- What are the follow-up reflections of EFL teacher trainees on their experiences in a Teacher Immediacy course in terms of learning gains, perceptions, and self-evaluations?
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METHOD

Research Design

A phenomenological design was employed with the purpose of analyzing perceived or experienced phenomena (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018), which was the immediacy behaviors of teacher trainees for this study. The rationale of phenomenological research, which was originally developed by von Bertalanffy in 1928, is that all phenomena contain patterns that create a specific system and those common patterns shed greater light on the phenomenon (Drack, 2009). Designed as a phenomenological study, this qualitative research deals with the reflective writings of EFL teacher trainees on their learning gains, perceptions and self-evaluations regarding experiences in a teacher immediacy course. In fact, this study was as a post-course study that followed the pre- and during-course phases when the participants received immediacy training in a regular elective course. The aforementioned immediacy course was offered for two intact classes in the English Language Teaching Department of a state university in Turkey. The first author was the instructor of both classes and was one of the instructors at the department. She gained teaching experiences on the theories and practices of teacher immediacy in a mini version of the teacher immediacy course. This mini version of the course was a pilot study performed three months before the actual course. She taught the actual course for one semester (14 weeks). The first three weeks of the course were allocated to the pre-course phase. In this phase, the frequency of the trainees' current immediacy behaviors in spontaneous micro-teachings and their views toward teacher immediacy were investigated. Afterwards, the during-course phase began. It included specific and intensive training on the theoretical and practical aspects of both verbal (the use of collective pronouns, humor, positive feedback, negative feedback) and nonverbal immediacy (the use of body language, facial expressions, vocal intonation, kinesics). More specifically, each week, the participants were informed about certain theoretical information concerning a different immediacy behavior and volunteer trainees put their theoretical knowledge into practice during spontaneous micro-teachings. While the volunteer trainees conducted micro-teachings, the other trainees were observers and evaluators of the immediacy behaviors displayed since each course session ended with critical evaluations of the volunteer trainees' immediacy behaviors as a whole class under the guidance of the instructor. In the last week of the during-course phase, the concept of teacher immediacy was covered as a whole, concentrating on the ways of how to combine nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors in an effective way. Four months after the course ended, in the post-course phase, the trainees selected based on the maximal variation sampling method were required to write four different reflection reports on the basis of certain guiding questions introduced by the instructor. Based on the notion of personal epistemology referring to how individuals' subjective theories about the nature of knowledge and processes of knowledge influence their learning, decision-making and action taking (Pintrich, 2002), the ultimate purpose was to explore the selected trainees' reflections on their sustained learning gains, perceptions and self-evaluations resulting from the course. To collect the relevant data, the trainees wrote their reflection reports over the course of four successive weeks. The focus of each reflection report was determined in a way that more detailed and organized data were collected. The only requirement in writing the reports was to be reflective, critical, honest and realistic as much as

possible. All in all, the scope of the present study was the examination of the post-course phase of a teacher immediacy course.

Participants

61 EFL teacher trainees (30 in one class and 31 in another class) participated in the teacher immediacy course. They took this course as an official requirement that was necessary to be completed in the fall semester of their final year at the department. None of them had theoretical knowledge or experiences in relation to teacher immediacy beforehand. All the trainees completed the previous methodology coursessuch as Teaching Language Skills, Teaching English to Young Learners or Language Teaching Approaches and so forth. That is, they all had sufficient knowledge and experience about language teaching methods and how to conduct micro-teachings. In the pre-course phase when the trainees conducted their micro-teachings, each trainee was evaluated based on the criteria included in the Immediacy Measurements adapted from Saechou (2005). Accordingly, each one of them was given a total score for their employment of both nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors in terms of frequency. Depending on those frequency scores, the trainees were categorized under three groups which were the ones with "a low, medium and high level of immediacy". That is, the maximal variation sampling method, as one of the purposeful sampling methods, was utilized with the aim of exploring multiple perspectives of the individuals and representing the complexity of the issue at hand (Creswell, 2012, p. 207). After the 14-week course was completed (during the course phase), for the groups of low, medium and high levels of immediacy, the two volunteer trainees were selected for the post-course phase. Thereby, the six volunteer trainees were identified as the participants of the post-course phase in which they were invited to write reflections on their experiences in the course. All the participants were females and at the age of either 22 or 23.

Instruments

The relevant data was derived from the written reflection reports in which the participants were invited to recall and reflect on their experiences during the teacher immediacy course. In the first reflection report, the participants revealed their thoughts about the effectiveness of their immediacy behaviors in the micro-teachings before the course as well as their descriptions of an effective EFL teacher before they learned about the theories and applications of teacher immediacy. The second reflection report focused on the learning gains from the course sessions related to such nonverbal immediacy behaviors as body language, facial expressions, vocal intonation and kinesics. In a similar vein, in the third reflection report, the participants wrote about learning gains from the verbal immediacy sessions including the use of collective pronouns, humor, positive and negative feedback. Specifically, for both the second and third reports, the participants were asked to tell experienced examples or moments from the course sessions and their perceptions toward the importance of immediacy behaviors for an EFL teacher. Lastly, for the fourth reflection report, the participants were given certain guiding questions to reflect on their overall interpretations of teacher immediacy and their future-self as an immediate EFL teacher. In the end, 24 individual reflection reports were gathered for the analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The reflection reports were analyzed separately for the three groups of participants who had low, medium and high levels of immediacy through NVivo. Throughout the analyses, we followed the coding steps shown in the coding model in Figure 1:

A Visual Model of the Coding Process in Qualitative Research

Initially read through text data	Divide the text into segments of information	Label the segments of information with codes	Reduce overlap and redundancy of codes	Collapse codes into themes
Many pages of text	Many segments of text	30–40 codes	Codes reduced to 20	Codes reduced to 5–7 themes
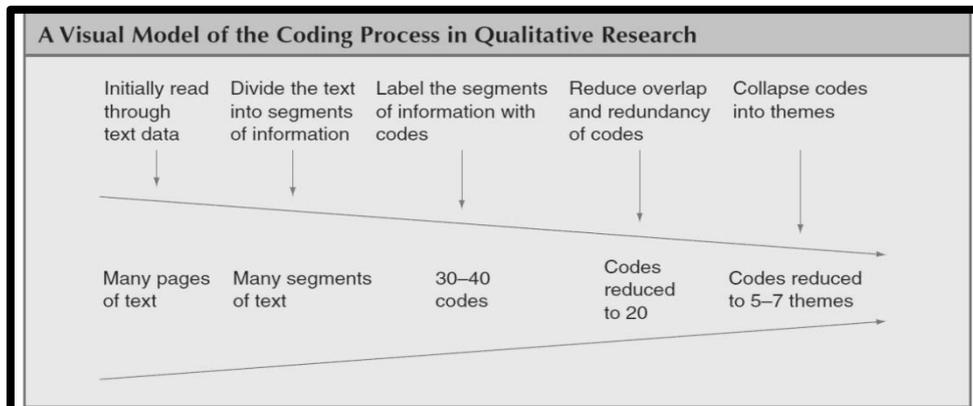
Figure 1. The Steps Taken in the Analysis of the Qualitative Data (Creswell, 2012, p. 244)

Figure 1 pictures the coding steps taken in the qualitative data analysis which started with an initial rigorous reading through the textual data. To achieve this, all the textual data were arranged and divided into segments of information. At this stage, we reached out to various segments and labeled those segments of information with appropriate codes so that we could have more organized units of analysisfor the sake of data reduction. Following this, the number of the total codes was reduced in order to cope with the overlapping codes. Finally, the determined codes were narrowed down into themes. To determine the common themes across the reports of different participants, the interpretative phenomenological analysis was implemented. Throughout the analysis process, an inductive orientation was prioritized to establish logical links between the research objectives and the findings derived precisely from the raw data gathered. Moreover, special attention was directed to the associations among each data source in the analysis process in order to prevent the danger of treating the data sources as separate units while reporting the findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, validity was ensured by giving chances for the participants to provide feedback about the transcriptions of their own reports. This was to check for accuracy and minimize bias and predetermined conclusions. In order to increase the reliability, a certain amount of data (20% of the whole data) was coded by two inter-coders. For the sake of ethical considerations, informed consents of the trainees and ethical committee approval of the relevant institution were suitably obtained.

FINDINGS

In this study with its focus on the learning gains of the teacher trainees from the course, findings from the nonverbal immediacy course sessions and the verbal immediacy course sessions have been evaluated and presented separately as follows. Table 1 summarizes what the trainees recalled in terms of the connection between certain immediacy behaviors and learning/teaching.

Table 1. The Learning Gains from the Immediacy Course (Nonverbal Dimension)

	Trainees with a low level of immediacy	Trainees with amedium level of immediacy	Trainees with a high level of immediacy
Body language	●Body language helps teachers gain self-confidence; show interest in learners; enhance learning, participation, and closeness; create a comfortable learning environment; grasp learners' moods; and inspire imagination.	●Body language helps teachers build rapport with learners and make them feel secure and supported. It also increases learners' self-confidence and participation.	●Body language supports cognitive learning if teachers use it to show appreciation forlearner work.
Facial expressions	●Facial expressions increase learners' motivation to learn, participation and interest in the lesson; and being honest in one's emotions increases teacher-learner closeness.	●The correct uses of facial expressions provide teachers to show concern for learners by detecting their mood andmaking teaching more effective.	●Facial expressions are useful to give feedback if teachers use them sincerely.
Vocal intonation	●Setting the right tone of voice is crucial to keep learners' attention, interest and mood; and to encourage them to learn through sincere communication.	●The use of voice is crucial for effective teaching in the sense that the lesson becomes more understandable, learners' desire to learn increases; and the teacher keeps learners alive and prepares them to learn.	●Teachers can grab the attention of learners with the effective use of vocal intonation.
Kinesics	●Kinesics is vital for teacher effectiveness, showing interest in learners' participation and attracting their attention.	●With kinesics, the content of the lesson becomes more understandable, which leads to effective teaching.	●Kinesics enhances the dramatization activities in young learner classrooms.

Table 1demonstrates that all the trainees emphasized the influences of body language on learners such as learner mood or work. Different from this, the trainees with a low level of immediacywere inclined to relate the effective body language use to teacher confidence, comfortable learning environment and enhancement of learning itself. Besides, the trainees with a high level of immediacy realized the association betweenteachers' use of body language andlearners' cognitive learning. Regarding facial expressions, the trainees built connections between teachers'efficient use of facial expressions and learner feelings along with teaching. For instance, the trainees with a medium level of immediacy concluded that the correct uses of facial expressions helped them understand the learner'smood and teach more effectively. Likewise, the trainees with a high level of immediacy learned that the sincere use of facial expressions provided their feedback to be more useful. Concerning vocal intonation, all the

trainees highlighted how the use of voice and learner attention was interrelated. Especially for the trainees with low and high levels of immediacy, it was necessary for teachers to set the right tone of voice so that they could grab the attention of learners. Moreover, the trainees with a medium level of immediacy attracted attention to the importance of vocal intonation for optimizing the understandability of content. Lastly, for kinesics, it is obvious that the trainees with medium and high levels of immediacy learned that the appropriate use of kinesics had the power to maximize the effectiveness of teaching. On this matter, the trainees with a high level of immediacy inferred that dramatization activities in young learner classrooms could be fostered by the use of kinesics. Apart from this, the trainees with a low level of immediacy asserted that kinesics increased learner attention and participation. In addition, the trainees' learning gains from the verbal immediacy course sessions have also been analyzed and outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. The Learning Gains from the Immediacy Course (Verbal Dimension)

	Trainees with a low level of immediacy	Trainees with a medium level of immediacy	Trainees with a high level of immediacy
Collective pronouns	●The use of collective pronouns makes learners feel solidarity, comfort, closeness and belonging in their learning group with the elimination of the negative teacher authority.	●Creating a sense of togetherness serves the aim of making learners feel successful members of the group and making the group communication stronger. Besides, the psychological proximity between learners and teachers increases.	●To increase learners' motivation along with their willingness to participate and to decrease anxiety, teachers should benefit from collective pronouns.
Humor	●Creating enjoyment via humor promotes learners' learning, participation, interest in and attention to the lesson. It provides teachers with a socially and emotionally positive learning environment thanks to the decrease in anxiety.	●Humor lowers the possible anxiety aroused by the challenging tasks and increases the motivation of learners in a relaxed learning environment, which in turn builds stronger bonds between learners and teachers.	●The effective use of humor depends on numerous variables such as teachers' personalities, classroom atmosphere, and learners' ages.
Positive feedback	●Positive feedback is useful to create a positive classroom climate and increase academic success, participation and interest of learners into the lesson. It may be a good way for encouragement and triggering learners' desire to learn.	●Positive feedback is important because learners need to hear what they achieve. It is also crucial to promote the motivation, participation, confidence and pride of learners.	●Positive feedback with exaggerated nonverbal appreciation can boost the motivation of learners.
Negative feedback	●Teachers should criticize the behavior not the learners themselves by being constructive and without hurting their feelings.	●Negative feedback should encourage learners to try harder. Therefore, we should provide justifications for our criticisms and be constructive without making them feel unworthy or unsuccessful.	●Encouraging learners to think and giving them a second chance to respond are important for effective negative feedback.

Table 2 clearly shows that all the trainees pointed out that the integration of collective pronouns into teachers' verbal behaviors influenced learner feelings by some means or other. To exemplify, the trainees with a medium level of immediacy comprehended that teachers' use of collective pronouns helped learners feel a successful member of the group, which in turn made the group communication stronger. Further, the trainees with low and medium levels of immediacy drew attention to the fact that humor had impacts on the learning environment, learner interest or the communication bonds between learners and teachers. On the other hand, the trainees with a high level of immediacy emphasized that they became familiar with some variables affecting the use of humor. In regard to positive feedback, the trainees with low and medium levels of immediacy noticed that effective positive feedback was crucial for the positive learning environment, learner encouragement, and learner success or learner motivation. On the issue, the trainees with a high level of immediacy came to know that it was crucial to combine positive feedback with appropriate nonverbal behaviors in order to boost learner motivation. In relation to negative feedback, the trainees with low and medium levels of immediacy believed that negative feedback should be constructive so as not to hurt learners' feelings whereas the trainees with a high level of immediacy emphasized that negative feedback should be accompanied by encouraging verbal behaviors of teachers. In addition to those learning gains, the trainees' perceptions toward the importance and role of immediacy are described in Table 3.

Table 3. The Perceived Importance of Immediacy after the Course

	Trainees with a low level of immediacy	Trainees with a medium level of immediacy	Trainees with a high level of immediacy
The biggest role of immediacy for EFL teachers	●To manage the classroom	●To be a hero who shapes learners' lives	●To give appropriate feedback
	●To prepare learners psychologically to learn	●To teach based on learners' learning styles	●To achieve learning goals
	●To maximize the motivation of learners		
Comparison of the importance of verbal and nonverbal immediacy	●Nonverbal behaviors are more important.	●Both are important.	●Nonverbal behaviors are more important.
	●Verbal behaviors are more important.	●Verbal behaviors are more important.	

Table 3 sheds light on the fact that the biggest roles of immediacy behaviors for EFL teachers identified by the trainees were diverse. To exemplify, the trainees with a low level of immediacy were of the opinion that immediacy was vital for classroom management, readiness of learners to learn and learner motivation. The trainees with a medium level of immediacy attached much more importance to immediacy by asserting that immediacy provided teachers to be a hero who shaped the learners'lives. This is evident in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1:

Teachers are unsung heroes who have amazing qualities to shape their learners' lives… Teachers do not only shape our learning but also our life with their positive attitudes…

From the perspectives of the trainees with a high level of immediacy, immediacy behaviors played an important role in giving appropriate feedback and achieving learning goals. Besides, the trainees shared their ideas by comparing nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors. In relation to that, the trainees with low and medium levels of immediacy held similar ideas by mentioning the importance of both nonverbal and nonverbal behaviors. However, the trainees with a high level of immediacy acknowledged that nonverbal behaviors were more essential as is clear in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2:

I believe actions speak louder than words. Our behaviors mean a lot. Nonverbal and verbal behaviors make teaching and learning perfect when combined. Yet, nonverbal behaviors are much more important because our verbal behaviors are highly likely to fail in the absence of proper nonverbal behaviors.

As well as the trainees' experiences and learning gains, they were also asked to make reflections on what qualifications an immediate EFL teacher should have as clarified in Table 4:

Table 4. The Trainees' Conceptualizations of an Immediate EFL Teacher after the Course

Trainees with a low level of immediacy	Trainees with a medium level of immediacy	Trainees with a high level of immediacy
●Know how to teach	●Know how to teach	●Know how to teach
●Be helpful	●Respond to learner needs	●Respond to learner needs
●Be open-minded	●Be enthusiastic	●Be enjoyable
●Have positive attitudes	●Have positive attitudes	●Have strong bonds with learners
●Be supportive	●Have a sense of humor	●Care about learners in and out of the classroom
●Be an effective communicator	●Be tolerant and flexible	●Be reflective
●Be patient	●Be a motivator	●Be a motivator
	●Be passionate	●Know one's own strengths and weaknesses

Table 4 proves that the trainees assigned numerous qualifications to an immediate EFL teacher in their minds. For the three groups of trainees, there are common conceptualizations such as knowing how to teach, responding to learner needs, having positive attitudes and being a motivator. Moreover, the prominent conceptualizations seem to belong to the trainees with a high level of immediacy. The two of those conceptualizations are caring about learners in and out of the classroom and being reflective. Excerpts 3 and 4 give clues on those prominent conceptualizations.

Excerpt 3:

An immediate EFL teacher takes care of learners both in and out of the classroom. For example, he/she should become closer to the learners by showing interest in their hobbies.

Excerpt 4:

As teachers, we should be reflective onour actions and should be able to realize the impacts of those actions upon our learners.

In addition to examining the trainees' reflections on the immediacy behaviors of an ideal EFL teacher, they also imagined their future-self in terms of their potential in employing effective immediacy behaviors. The related results are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5. The Trainees' Beliefs in Their Future-self as an EFL Teacher

Trainees with a low level of immediacy	Trainees with a medium level of immediacy	Trainees with a high level of immediacy
●Belief in oneself about becoming an immediate teacher in the future	●Belief in oneself about becoming an immediate teacher in the future	●Belief in oneself about becoming an immediate teacher in the future
		●Unsure about how much immediate one can be in the future

As understood from Table 5, the trainees irrespective of their level of immediacy gained self-belief and imagined themselves as immediate EFL teachers in their future careers. Interestingly, only one of the trainees had doubts about to what extent she could be immediate even though she had a high level of immediacy. She expressed her thoughts in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5:

I am not quite sure about that. I sometimes become my dream teacher but sometimes I fail. I do not feel I am ready for this now….However, I will do my best.

DISCUSSION

Within this study, sustained learning gains, perceptions and self-evaluations in relation to the experiences gained as a result of the immediacy course were examined through the reflections of the trainees. The reflections indicated that the trainees recalled certain theoretical information on immediacy (e.g.creating a sense of togetherness serves the aim of making learners feel a successful member of the group and making the group communication stronger). In this sense, Bozkaya and Aydin (2007) similarly claim that immediacy behaviors positively influence students' social presence in the learning community and in return, students learn better. The trainees were also capable of building cause-and-effect relationships between teacher immediacy and foreign language teaching/learning (e.g.kinesics enhanced the dramatization activities in young learner classrooms). It was also detected that they could make inferences and justifications as a result of their learning gains from the course. This is evident in some of the interpretations of the reflections. As an example, it was discovered that the trainees inferred that positive feedback with exaggerated nonverbal appreciation could boost the motivation of students. In a similar vein, Kyaruzi et al. (2019) argue that the nonverbal immediacy behaviors of teachers have the potential to foster student motivation along with student learning and academic achievement. Moreover, the reflections clarified that the trainees made critics about their overall learning gains (e.g.the biggest role of immediacy behaviors is to psychologically prepare students for learning). All in all, they were found to think reflectively on the components of teacher immediacy (e.g. nonverbal behaviors are much more important because, without nonverbal behaviors, our verbal behaviors are possible to fail), its role for teaching (e.g. the biggest role of immediacy behaviors is to be a hero who shapes students' lives), and their own immediacy behaviors (e.g. I believe I was already using different and effective strategies while giving positive feedback. In my previous micro-teachings, my peers evaluated my feedback as successful).

Another promising conclusion drawn from the reflections is that all the trainees believed in themselves with regard to becoming an immediate teacher in the future; except for only one trainee who was doubtful about how immediate she would be in her future teaching career. Besides, how the trainees conceptualized an immediate teacher after they received the course was investigated through the reflections. The top conceptualization of each trainee was that an immediate teacher was the one who knew how to teach. Following this, an immediate teacher was conceptualized as one who could exhibit positive attitudes toward students (Andersen, 1979), has such traits as being helpful, open-minded, enthusiastic, enjoyable, responsive to student needs; and builds strong bonds with students. Taking the necessity to build bonds with students into account, Spilt,Koomen and Thijs (2011) highlight that teachers are human above all; they are human, need positive interpersonal relationships, and areready to develop social bonds in a caring environment, just like students. Besides, for teachers, the proximity of students probably triggers a sense of unity and togetherness with them, which in turn leads to the motivation of teachers to

engage in personal interactions with their students (Spilt et al, 2011). In fact, it is obvious that social bonds and interactions are not only significant for students but also for teachers themselves. Based on the evolving immediacy knowledge of the trainees, all these imply that an immediate teacher should possess many qualifications and attributes.

In a nutshell, the trainees became familiar with the concept of teacher immediacy at least in theoretical terms; and they developed points of view toward its components throughout the course. It appears that, during the course phase, they discussed and experienced teacher immediacy through various teacher training activities (e.g. readings, theoretical discussions, observations of peersand role-plays); which provided awareness-raising of teacher immediacy on the part of the trainees. On the whole, the immediacy course yielded a certain number of positivelearning gains, perceptions and self-evaluations for the trainees. Particularly, sustained learning gains showed that the trainees could be reflective and critical about their experiences and conceptualizations of teacher immediacy in virtue of the course even though they were all on the bottom rung of the ladder at the time of the study.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, it is obvious that the trainees could effectively reflect on their skills in immediacy behaviors after the course. The overall reflections on the learning gains from the course proved that the trainees recalled certain knowledge, observations and experiences they gained in terms of immediacy. Depending on the trainees' perceptions toward the importance of immediacy behaviors and their conceptualizations of immediate EFL teachers, it is revealed that they were able to make unique and critical reflections even four months after the course. Such fruitful outcomes of this immediacy course should lead teacher educators to cultivate novice teachers' knowledge and implementations of interpersonal communication with a specific focus upon clarity, credibility and immediacy; all of which are intertwined concepts, (Zheng, 2021) through workshops, seminars or webinars. This could also be possible by giving teacher trainees chances to deliver lessons within mixed reality simulations where they can practice teaching strategies and nonverbal behaviors without affecting real students (Rosati-Peterson, Piro, Straub & O'Callaghan, 2021). The study is not without its limitations. Most especially, it should have been a priority to investigate how the trainees put their theoretical knowledge of immediacy into practice in real language classrooms. Yet, such research was not possible in the scope of this paper. Therefore, future research can be organized in a way that the trainee teachers' practical knowledge of immediacy is explored both during the immediacy course and a certain period of time after the course. Thus, the long-term effects of the immediacy course on trainee teachers' unique way of using immediacy behaviors could be extensively scrutinized. Last but not least, we suggest that teacher trainees from any field of study should receive an immediacy course because language teachers have the potential to help students attain more desirable learning gains if they learn how to employ immediate acts (Violanti et al., 2018) through such courses.

Note. This study is a modified version of a doctoral dissertation of the first author.

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