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## **Fostering Nonverbal Immediacy and Teacher Identity through an Acting Course in English Teacher Education**

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*Abstract: This research study focuses on integrating acting theories in pre-service English teacher education so as to improve nonverbal immediacy behavior and to contribute to the development process of teacher identity. Studies on incorporation of acting literature into teacher education provide educators with some significant findings clearly indicating that certain teacher competences can be fostered effectively by benefiting from acting theories and practices. While focusing on different aspects and competences of the teaching profession, these studies are in a general accord with the idea that teacher education programs should give more attention to actor preparation theories and techniques so as to promote effective teaching at all levels of instruction. The results indicate that the nonverbal immediacy behavior of pre-service teacher trainees improved significantly via an acting course for teachers. Also, prospective teachers displayed a remarkable development in constructing their professional identities.*

### **Introduction**

Incorporation of acting theories into teacher education has always been an interesting area in teacher education studies. Despite the lack of attention to this area, some critical findings indicate that using acting methods in teacher education contributes to the development process of teacher identity (Griggs, 2001; Hart, 2007; Sarason, 1999) and to awareness of nonverbal communication (Vandivere, 2008). Apart from these research studies, the discussions on “teaching as a performing art” have produced certain theoretical proposals. Among these pioneer studies, Sarason (1999) discusses the critical identification of teacher trainees who have interpersonal skills that are similar to those of actors.

Certain similar aspects of acting and teaching have been the central discussion in this literature. Various analogies and metaphors were constructed to point out how these two professions are related in practice. To give some examples, both teachers and performing artists realize their work by utilizing their personal resources to communicate with a group of people (Burns, 1999; Dennis, 1995; Hanning, 1984; Jarudi, 2000; Lessinger & Gillis, 1976; Rives Jr., 1979). Also, effective teachers and artists are believed to capture and hold the attention of their audiences (DeLozier, 1979; Hanning, 1984). They are also claimed to follow and perform a

script, which is the play script for the actor and the lesson plan for the teacher (Rives Jr., 1979). Both of the professions have a setting as a primary performance area: Mostly the stage for the actor and the classroom for the teacher (Rives Jr., 1979; Van Tartwick, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 1998). Finally, both teachers and actors must achieve a communication which should result in an interactional process to fulfill the outcomes of the play script or the lesson plan (Burns, 1999; Rives Jr., 1979; Rose & Linney, 1992). Accordingly, the commentaries on the incorporation of acting into teaching were generally based on these analogies and metaphors (Smith, 1979).

These metaphors might be helpful to identify certain areas of actor-preparation to be embedded in teacher education; however, I believe that these analogies and metaphors have not provided a research context in which researchers can focus on specific areas of inquiry. Specifically, studying the uncharted territory of teaching as a performing art may provide innovative theories and approaches for those educating teachers. Even the practice-based books and studies providing acting lessons for teachers do not cater for the needs of the teacher trainers. Ironically, a veteran trainer may read all the literature on teaching as a performing art and still not find an answer to the specific question: “So what am I going to do in my training courses?”

Therefore, “teaching as a performing art studies” should focus on classroom based research findings that provide insights into whether, and to what extent, we can benefit from acting in teacher education. For instance, the question of whether incorporating acting theories into teacher education is a burden or a necessity can be answered by the findings of certain classroom research studies that focus on nonverbal communication skills of the teacher. Experts estimate that at least 65% of the meaning in any social context is conveyed nonverbally (Burgoon, Buller & Woodwall, 1989, as cited in Allen, 1985). As for classroom setting, Kellogg and Lawson (1993) claim that 82% of teachers’ communication is nonverbal. Also, Brown (2000) rightly states that “Most of the nonverbal communication is subconscious” (p. 212). Thus, the communication in the classroom is mostly facilitated unconsciously while it has an influential impact on the nature and dynamics of the interactional process. From this point of view, learning from acting literature in teacher education is neither an extreme proposal nor a luxury. In this respect, the aims of this research are to measure the development process of nonverbal immediacy of teacher trainees and to shape their teacher identities by implementing an acting course for English pre-service teacher education. These objectives are quite critical for the field of teacher education in that this study may give us an idea of whether the professional identity can be rehearsed and constructed in a teacher training course based on acting theories.

## Teaching as a Performing Art

For several decades, many educational researchers have acknowledged and examined the common ground of the performing artist and the teacher (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1979; Freidman, 1988). Artistic aspects of teaching have been repeatedly articulated by prominent educators, who are widely known and recognized as influential *scientists*. To name some, Barzun (1945) believes that teaching is artistic because effective teaching performance can produce aesthetic pleasure. Taylor (1954) states that teaching is an art to the extent that it is done imaginatively and stimulates “the young to explore the world of the imagination” (p. 55). James (1958) asserts that “Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves” (p. 23). Some years later, Taylor (1960) lamented that the artistic aspect of education is neglected in both theory and practice. With the same concern, Sanford (1967) points out that the art of teaching has been ignored in education, claiming that “Effective teaching is an art, one

of the highest and most important arts we have” (p. 167). Taking this claim and discussion some steps further, Shamos (1970) observes that teaching is mostly a form of art. Other scholars in the field have discussed teaching as an artistic profession by giving various reasons, such as its performance-based nature, improvisational aspects, its dynamic domains in terms of classroom interaction and aesthetic aspects in terms of verbal and nonverbal communication (Dawe, 1984; Eble, 1977; Eisner, 1992; Freidman, 1988; Griggs, 2001; Nisbet, 1977; Travers, 1979; Tauber & Mester, 2007). Among all these supporters of idea of teaching as an artistic performance, Eisner (1979) made the strongest case by underlining that teaching is artistic, since the results of the teaching are often created in a process, and since it can be described with aesthetic norms when performed effectively.

Many studies have been carried out on revealing the nature of the effective teaching (Baughman, 1979; Duck, 1981; Javidi, Downs & Nussbaum, 1988; Penner, 1984; Timpson & Tobin, 1982). Also, some of these studies focus on the dynamics of effective teaching that resemble those of performing artists (Burns, 1999; Jarudi, 2000; Javidi et al., 1988; Justen, 1984; Tauber, Mester & Buckwald, 1993; Travers, 1979). In this respect, training teachers to be effective teaching performers requires doing the work of the performing artist (Tauber & Mester, 2007).

The researchers mention the strong connections of acting skills in teaching by identifying certain aspects that relate to the impact of using dramatic devices on an effective performance in the classroom. These connections pinpoint various areas of effectiveness, such as securing the attention of the students (Bruner, 1960; Tauber & Mester, 2007), using body language and the voice effectively (Freidman, 1988; Hart, 2007), creating and manipulating the atmosphere of the classroom (Burns, 1999, Clark, 2005, Perry 1985) and developing teacher identity (Hart, 2007). Javidi et al. (1988) carried out research on the utilization of dramatic devices by award-winning teachers working at college and secondary levels and found that award-winning teachers frequently utilize dramatic devices in their teaching.

## **Nonverbal Immediacy**

A teacher equipped with acting skills will be able to make effective choices of classroom behaviors and roles which have a positive contribution to the learning process of the students. At this point, immediacy may be seen as an important teacher behavior that has a strong impact on various aspects of learning and motivation. Defining immediacy as behaviors that increase psychological and psychical closeness between communicators, Mehrabian (1969, 1971) advanced the concept of immediacy and introduced it to the literature. “People are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer” (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 1). Therefore, immediacy is characterized in part by reduced physical and psychological distances in student-teacher interaction. Andersen (1978) was the first scholar to introduce immediacy studies into educational sciences. Referring to the studies of Mehrabian, Andersen (1978, 1979; Andersen & Andersen, 1982) synthesized some relevant studies from the fields of education and communication to prove the positive impact of teacher nonverbal immediacy in classroom learning.

Richmond and McCroskey (2004) discuss the components of nonverbal immediacy as physical proximity, body orientation, touch, eye contact, smiling, body movement, gestures and body posture. Hesler (1972) found that proxemic positioning of teachers had an impact on the

perception of students of the teachers' effectiveness and friendliness, claiming that teachers who sit around or behind a desk were rated by students as low in affection while teachers who moved in front of the desk to teach among the students were likely to be considered as warm, friendly and effective. McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond and Barraclough (1996) proved that vocal variety, eye contact, and smiling were generally the nonverbal immediacy highly related to affective learning. Mehrabian (1981) notes that "Considerable evidence has been accumulated showing that more eye contact is associated with greater liking and more positive feelings among communicators" (p. 23). The findings also indicate that smiling (Kraut & Johnston, 1979; Mehrabian, 1981), body movement or being physically active (Andersen, Andersen and Jensen, 1979; Beebe, 1980), frequent use of gestures (Mehrabian, 1971; Roth, 2001; Smith, 1979), a relaxed body position (McGinley, LeFevre and McGinley, 1975; Andersen, 1979) and the vocalic variables or the impact of use of voice in accord with other immediacy elements (Mehrabian, 1981; Johnson, 1986; Hinkle, 2001) foster learning significantly.

The reason why educators are involved in nonverbal immediacy studies is that it stands at a critical point in terms of certain aspects of learning and learners, such as affective learning (Allen, Witt & Wheelless; 2006; Burroughs, 2007; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, 1990; Thomas, 1994), cognitive learning (McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer & Barraclough, 1995; Myers, Zhong, & Guan, 1998; Rodriguez, Plax & Kearney, 1996; Roach, Cornett-Devito & Devito, 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2006) and motivation (Allen et al., 2006; Frymier, 1993; Pogue & AhYun, 2006; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney & Plax, 1987; Witt, Wheelless & Allen, 2004). In addition, much of the research has clearly demonstrated that the nonverbal behavior of the teachers can be improved through training (Bradley, 1979; Grant & Hennings, 1971; Nier, 1979; Nussbaum, 1984; Plax et al., 1986). The question is; what sort of training may help teachers to make right choices of nonverbal devices in a conscious way so that they can possibly promote nonverbal immediacy behavior in the classroom? Here it is important to mention that the essence of acting is to be aware of emotional and physical resources and utilize them deliberately in a given context. In this sense, nonverbal immediacy may be improved in an acting course for teachers. However, the attempts to improve nonverbal immediacy of teachers have not focused on acting literature so far.

## **Teacher Identity and Acting**

Nonverbal immediacy behavior is one of the critical aspects of teacher identity. In this regard, analyzing the development process of teacher identity may shed light on how teachers acquire behaviors that contribute to immediacy. The literature of teacher identity presents a great number of persuasive research reports pointing out the importance of shaping the identities of teachers (Rots, Aelterman, Vlerick & Katrien, 2007; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Olsen, 2008; Ottesen, 2007). While the theoretical frames or the terms used by the researchers vary, the consensus is that development of the teacher identity is a continuous and ongoing process starting in pre-service years. Teacher trainees entering undergraduate programs may encounter various difficulties owing to the role they have been given and the expectations of the trainers. According to Travers (1979), these difficulties or role confusion can be a great obstacle in one's learning. In the broadest sense, the "teaching as a performing art" literature may provide teacher education programs with a new understanding of teacher trainees with regard to their roles and needs as a teacher candidate. "Teaching as a performing art requires that teacher training give emphasis to the training of the prospective teacher's personality, though the emphasis should not exclude

other learning” (Travers, 1979, p. 15). Three decades ago, Travers lamented that this view of teacher education was criticized by some scholars in that the personality was believed to be rigid and stable, which makes it hard to change or shape. However, the current literature on the issue suggests a nature of teacher identity which is dynamic and open to internal and external influences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Travers (1979) also emphasizes that teacher education programs neglect the development of a “classroom personality” for the teacher due to the fact that it is quite a challenging task, or that these programs do not consider it as an important mission. While the last three decades have witnessed remarkable improvement in teacher education, the idea of focusing on the identity development of teachers in pre-service is still under discussion (Meijer, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009). This discussion concentrates on the distinction between teacher competences versus personal growth. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) point out that the identity development of the teachers should ideally start in teacher education programs and “further identity development will take place in actual practice later on” (p. 186). Merseth, Sommer, and Dickstein (2008) suggest that “Teacher educators must help pre-service teachers make visible that which may be invisible, make obvious that which seems subtle and thereby help integrate beginning teachers into a professional role” (p. 91). In order to develop awareness of their professional identities, prospective teachers may benefit from acting tasks through which they will be able to identify critical personal resources and to discover ways of constructing themselves as teachers.

Development of the professional identity is a natural output of any teacher education program. However, the quality and the effectiveness of this output depends on how we approach and define prospective teachers and to what extent we can provide them certain contexts in which they can ponder over their professional identities. In this respect, developing “Classroom personalities” that Travers (1979) discusses may be achieved in a training context in which prospective teachers are able to rehearse their professional identities. In order to investigate the process and possible consequences of such a pursuit, this study focuses on the development of teacher identity and nonverbal immediacy in an acting course for teachers (please see appendix for course content). Based upon the consensus of the previous research reviewed above, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H1: An acting course designed for English language teaching pre-service programs contributes to the development process of nonverbal immediacy behavior of teacher trainees.

H2: An acting course designed for English language teaching pre-service programs contributes to the development process of the professional identities of teacher trainees.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants consisted of 44 teacher trainees at an English language teaching (ELT) department in Turkey. Participants were enrolled in Creative Drama course during the 2009 fall semester. Students ranged in age from 21-24 ( $M = 22.6$ ;  $SD = 0.65$ ); and the average of GPA was 3.02 ( $SD = .58$ ). Participants consisted of 10 male and 34 female students. They had completed the course offered in the first and second years of the program. These courses include advanced English skills, contextual English grammar, some courses on educational sciences, English and

American literature, various theoretical and practical methodology courses, linguistics and first language acquisition.

### **Procedures**

This study is based on a mixed-method research. Initial studies include creation and design of the acting course, including the syllabus and materials. The quantitative aspect of the study was an experimental design in which trainees on the acting course (N=23) and the control group (N=21) were administered a pre-test at the beginning of the course, and a post-test at the end. The purpose of the experimental design was to measure the impact of the acting course on their nonverbal immediacy behavior. During the 14 weeks of the acting course, qualitative data about the development process of teacher identity were collected via various data collection tools, such as trainee reflections, observations and some sets of interviews with trainees, teacher trainers and the administrator of the program.

The participants and the trainers were introduced about the aim and the content of this research study in a meeting at the beginning of the fall semester in 2009. They were provided with a consent form in which they are informed about their rights. This process was monitored and approved by head of the department.

### **Instruments**

#### ***Quantitative Instrument***

Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Self Report (Richmond, McCroskey & Johnson, 2003) is a norm-based scale including 26 items and measuring eight nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Thirteen of these items are positively worded and the remaining thirteen are worded negatively. The objective in using NIS-S was to measure the possible improvements of teacher trainees in their nonverbal immediacy. The developers of the scale (Richmond et al., 2003) note that there are some norms to be taken into account during the process of interpreting the data. These norms indicate a statistically significant difference between males (M = 102.0 SD = 10.9 High > 112 Low < 92) and females (M = 93.8 SD = 10.8 High > 104 Low < 83).

#### ***Qualitative Instruments***

Two interviews were conducted with the experimental group. The first was completed at the beginning of the course (September 2009), and the second was conducted at the end of the semester (December 2009). An interview was also conducted with four teacher trainers and an administrator. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

The students also wrote 14 session journals, 5 reflections and 2 essays during the course. They were asked to write about various aspects of their experiences throughout the course. While session journals were written each week to report their ideas and feelings in the course, reflections and essays were prepared on more specific issues regarding their studies, rehearsals, expectations, ideals, and so on.

## Data Analysis

In the experimental study, non-parametric tests were utilized for data collection as the number of participants in experimental and control groups were less than thirty. Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the scale. The Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to measure the change in independent variables such as gender; a Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre-test and post-test results of the individuals in both the experimental and control groups, and finally a General Linear Model was used to show comparison of the pre-test and post-test of the control and experimental groups in terms of the development.

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the constant-comparison method of analysis was utilized to discover themes and categorizations in data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The coding process was carried out with an independent researcher who materialized two steps during the qualitative data analysis. The first step was the coding of the data while the second step was the categorization of the data. Both of these studies were carried out by the coder independent from the researcher. The coding process revealed a reliability of over 94% in coding and categorization. The initial studies regarding analysis of qualitative data were mostly based on categorizing the data collected immediately. Observation notes, interview sessions and essays were among these data which were categorized as they were obtained. This process was fulfilled mostly by reading the data many times until the discovery of some underlying themes.

## Findings

### Hypothesis one: Analysis of the findings on nonverbal immediacy

Table 1 below features the major findings of the research on hypothesis one: the impact of the acting course on nonverbal immediacy in terms of different variables that are listed under “Analyzed Data” in the table below.



STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES AND FINDINGS		
ANALYZED DATA	STATISTICAL TEST	FINDINGS * Shows Significant findings
Reliability of NIS-S	Cronbach's Alpha	<b>.89. 6*</b>
Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test of the <i>Control Group</i>	The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Rank Test	z = -1.607 p = .214 r = 0.387
Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test of the <i>Experimental Group</i>	The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Rank Test	z = -4.199 p = <b>.000*</b> r = <b>0.875*</b>
Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test of the <i>Control group</i> in terms of <i>Gender</i> variable	Mann-Whitney U Test	z = -1.311 p = .190 r = 0.221
Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test of the <i>Experimental group</i> in terms of <i>Gender</i> variable	Mann-Whitney U Test	z = -3.747 p = <b>.000*</b> r = <b>0.781*</b>
Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test of the <i>Control and Experimental groups</i>	Mann-Whitney U Test	z = -5.678 p = <b>.000*</b> Exp r = <b>0.856*</b> Cont r = 0.004
Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test of the <i>Control and Experimental groups</i> .	General Linear Model	f = 201.07 p = <b>.000*</b>

**Table 1. List of statistical techniques and findings**

The results of the experimental study indicated that the experimental group displayed a high degree of immediacy ( $z = -5.678$ ,  $p = .000$ ) according to the findings of the Mann-Whitney U Test. Derived from the Mann-Whitney U value, also the effect size measured for the experimental group was quite large ( $r = 0.856$ ). The scores of the experimental group in the pre-test ranged between 60 and 91 ( $M = 78.04$ ,  $SD = 7.888$ ). However, in the post-test, the experimental group displayed a significant increase, with a score range between 101 and 119 ( $M = 109.78$ ,  $SD = 5.274$ ). Finally, the results of the General Linear Model (Figure 1) indicated that the experimental group displayed a significant improvement ( $f = 201.07$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

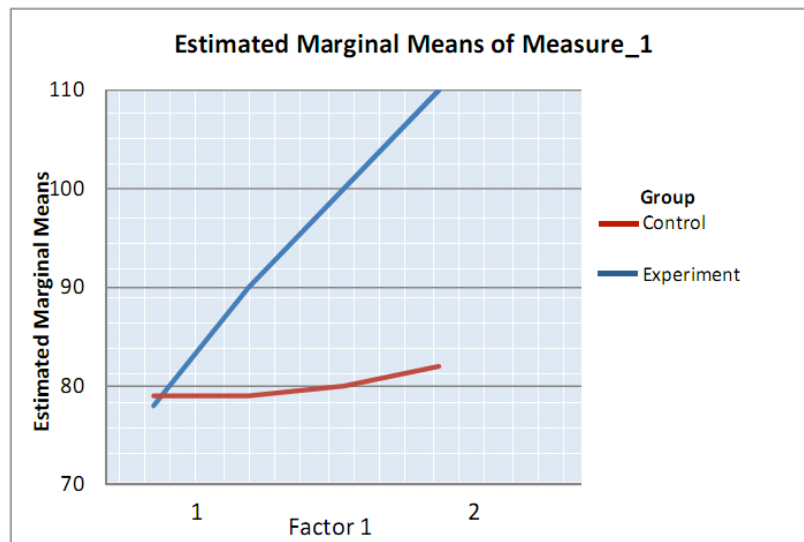


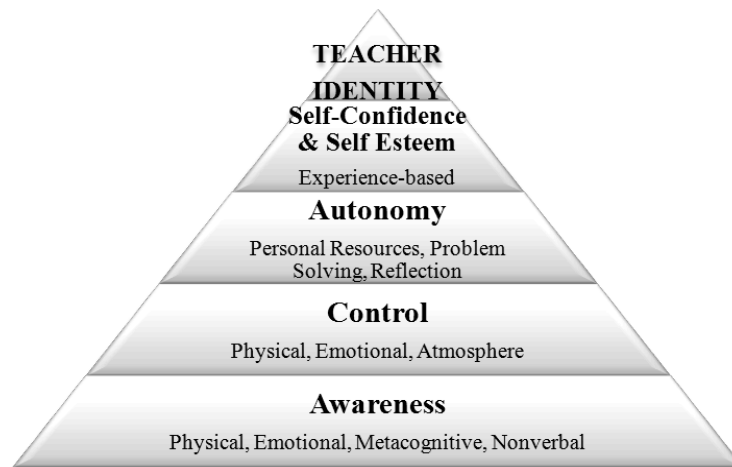
Figure 1: General linear model

On the other hand, the control group did not display a significant improvement ( $z = -1.607$ ,  $p = .214$ ) with a weak effect size ( $r = 0.387$ ) and clearly with an unacceptable score range between 60 and 91 ( $M = 78.86$ ,  $SD = 8.326$ ) in the pre-test, 68 and 92 ( $M = 82.95$ ,  $SD = 6.989$ ) in the post-test. The comparison of the pre-test and post-tests of the control and experimental groups clearly showed that the increase in the control group is not a significant one ( $z = -.294$ ,  $p = .769$ ) with a quite small effect size ( $r = 0.004$ ).

#### Hypothesis two: Analysis of the findings on teacher identity

The initial findings showed that the course started with confusion for the trainees. The first week session journals reflect this occasion clearly. One trainee stated that while they were excited to have an acting course, they were a bit concerned about whether they would be able to meet the requirements of the course or not. Another trainee presented her concern by claiming that “We do not know what acting is. We don’t have any talent in it. I hope I can do it and pass the course”. These concerns are not unexpected in a discipline area that is generally perceived to require experience and talent.

Despite this, the research clearly indicated that incorporation of acting techniques into pre-service English teacher education contributes to the development of identity in teacher trainees. The specific areas of these contributions were categorized as (1) awareness in certain skills and attitudes, (2) control of communication process, (3) autonomy on use of personal resources (4) self-confidence and self-esteem and (5) teacher identity. The findings also indicate that these categories are not separate or developed independently from each other. Figure 2 illustrates the hierarchical relationship of acquisitions of teacher trainees, and what possible stages of development teacher trainees go through so as to construct their teacher identities. As the pyramid features, the first four acquisitions were found to contribute to the teacher identity.



**Figure 2: Pyramid of teacher identity development**

Insisting on a universal or a strict hierarchical nature of relationship among these notions would be misleading. However, the research findings indicated that the development of teacher identity goes through these stages. The first stage is awareness. Before learning to control various physical and emotional elements that have a role in classroom communication, the trainees were observed to discover their skills, talents and resources. This is what I understand by awareness in the purest sense. The subcategories of the awareness stage were identified as physical, emotional, metacognitive and nonverbal awareness, all of which were identified as the aspects of awareness that trainees displayed in this period.

The second stage is control. An intensive period of acting exercises has provided most of the trainees with the ability to control their body language, voice and nonverbal messages, which was evidence that they were beginning to develop control over their emotions as performers. Subcategories are physical control, which, emerges via various acting practices, emotional control, mostly based on emotional preparation activities, and control of the classroom atmosphere, which is achieved thanks to previous control skills acquired throughout the acting course. The evidence of the trainees' ability to control physical and emotional choices was that they were able to observe and manipulate the classroom atmosphere.

When synthesizing these two initial acquisitions, namely awareness and control, we can infer that these notions inevitably lead us to another stage, in which trainees were able to invest in their skills and knowledge independently, as well as approaching problems and unexpected occasions in the classroom more confidently and professionally. Therefore, the evidence of independence, problem solving and decision-making skills was interpreted as the stage of autonomy. The stage of autonomy is the indicator of the fact that trainees had reached a level in which they were able to make conscious choices between verbal and nonverbal elements in their classroom communication.

Another important stage which is claimed to follow the previous three stages is the 'Self-confidence and Self-esteem'. Deciding on whom to become and developing awareness, control and accordingly autonomy were found to have significant contributions to the self-confidence and self-esteem of the teacher trainees. When it comes to suggesting a set of stages through which young individuals develop a sense of professional identity, it is wise to be cautious. It is really difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to set strict stages and hierarchies of development of behavioral patterns in that certain individuals possessing different origins, backgrounds and motivations may possibly display various behaviors that are not in parallel with these stages or

hierarchies. In this respect, development of self-confidence and self-esteem was a perfect example of this situation. While the first three stages were observed to be quite common among all the participants, development process of self-confidence and self-esteem presented various differences among some participants. First of all, it is important to mention that awareness, control and autonomy were unanimously observed as transitional stages in the development process of teacher identities. However, self-confidence and self-esteem were observed to be realized throughout these stages and reached their peak when autonomy was secured by the teacher trainees. Therefore, we can say that self-confidence and self-esteem may be a by-product of each stage, increasing significantly and gradually as the trainees go through these aforementioned stages to reach the summit of the pyramid: Teacher identity.

The qualitative data presented the evidences of developing teacher identities in teacher trainees. As a matter of fact, the previous categories discussed so far can be regarded as the first-hand evidences. Being aware of the personal and professional skills and resources (Awareness), the competence of controlling and manipulating these skills and resources (Control), observing the thinking process that went through various developments (Metacognition), being able to work independently on the content of the acting course (Autonomy) and acquiring confidence in acting techniques as a teacher candidate (Self-confidence and Self-esteem) can be regarded as the footprints of a developing teacher identity. "What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires an engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 3). As Danielewicz (2001) states the development of the teacher identity is a significant indicator of investing in successful teachers. One trainee wrote in her essay:

*I was quite amazed to see how rapidly I was changing. The films, soup operas and theatre plays that I watched after the course were not the same...I can see some details of the acting techniques that I have learned in my course. It is interesting to hear the voice of a new persona in your mind. Thinking as a teacher, observing as a teacher and even behaving as a teacher...This is my greatest learning in this course. I now have an approach, an argument...or a perspective as a teacher (from a trainee essay).*

## Discussion

The results indicated that an acting course in pre-service teacher education has a significant impact on the development of the nonverbal immediacy and professional identities of the teacher trainees. This research also proved that nonverbal immediacy can be taught in pre-service teacher education by utilizing various acting techniques that relate to effective communication. In other words, one of the impacts of practicing acting activities in pre-service teacher education was found to be a significant contribution to development of the nonverbal immediacy of teacher trainees. The results also indicated that gender is an influential variable in that females developed and displayed nonverbal immediacy more effectively than males. This finding is in parallel with the previous research on gender differences in nonverbal immediacy (see Richmond et al., 2003). Therefore, we can conclude that hypotheses were measured accurately and proven in this study.

Taking the human experience to the center of this discussion, the findings always constitute more than the researcher can ever recognize, analyze and interpret. However, in this jungle of knowledge, we had two simple research questions which helped us find our way through the complexity of the data. Incorporation of acting techniques, activities and tasks into

teacher education was certainly a relatively unexplored area, not only for the field of pre-service ELT teacher education, but also for us as teacher trainers and researchers. The following statements are the products and major findings of this study:

- ∞ A syllabus based on acting theories and practice, and offering acting activities, leads teacher trainees to develop their nonverbal immediacy behavior.
- ∞ A syllabus based on acting theories and practice, and offering acting activities, contributes to the development process of teacher identity in pre-service teacher trainees.
- ∞ Acting activities and techniques can be adapted to pre-service teacher education and suggested for use by teacher trainers without a background in acting or performing arts.
- ∞ Considering teaching as a role to be rehearsed and practised in the pre-service years contributes to the development process of teacher identity and to a professional perspective towards the occupation in pre-service teacher trainees.
- ∞ Teacher identity can be studied, rehearsed, developed and supported in pre-service teacher education via a syllabus based on acting theories and practice, and offering acting activities.
- ∞ The process of the development of the teacher identity can be identified in certain hierarchical stages as awareness, control, autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- ∞ While awareness, control and autonomy were found to be hierarchical, self-confidence and self-esteem were observed as an increasing variable during these initial stages. However, self-confidence and self-esteem were also observed to be a stage of identity development.
- ∞ These five stages of identity development may be utilized as a theoretical guide for the manipulation of the suggested syllabus to adapt it to local or institutional needs, and to adjust the content in parallel with the needs and readiness level of the student teachers.

One point is clear about the implications of the findings of this study for teacher education: More research should be carried out specifically on the impact of an acting course on developing stronger teacher identities, as the findings related to teacher identity in this research were based on mostly qualitative findings derived from a limited number of participants. Therefore, a universal generalization would be unwise. However, there are research studies (Hart, 2007) and many theoretical propositions (Sarason, 1999; Griggs, 2001) pointing out that approaching the teaching profession as a performing art will contribute to a better identity development of teachers.

## Conclusion

As teachers, we know that becoming a teacher is very different from becoming an accountant or an economist. We need to develop a new self, which is defined as professional identity or teacher identity (Hanning, 1984). The relevant literature has already proven the fact that effective teaching requires effective teacher identities (Danielevicz, 2001). Therefore, the first step may be to change our beliefs and values about what it is to train teachers and what it takes to become a language teacher. The findings indicate that the answers can be found in actor preparation literature.

A theoretical contribution of this research study may be the idea of teaching as a performing art. We have reviewed the limited but rich literature persuasively accentuating that teacher education can learn a lot from the actor preparation. Apart from these theoretical

proposals, some key applications and practices were provided in this study to illustrate how these theoretical studies were put into practice in the last three decades. Therefore, a positive change in any trainer's perspective on what it is to become a teacher can be considered as a contribution of this study. This study indicates this research study has implicitly shown that we leave a lot of blind-spots in our trainees' identities. To give an example by referring to a metaphor, the trainees are given the bricks and are expected to build the blocks and buildings without any construction plan and opportunity. However, most of the time teachers have many difficulties in constructing the building, or simply spend a lot of time to achieve it. Many are frustrated by failure in the first years. In this respect, the literature of "teaching as a performing art" remains as an uncharted territory, study of which may improve our beliefs and values of educating and becoming teachers. The first question to ponder over and answer is that "Can we rehearse and construct teacher identities by grounding our practice on actor preparation?" Our answer will lead us to better practices of teacher education.

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## NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY SCALE-SELF REPORT (NIS-S)

**DIRECTIONS:** The following statements describe the ways some teachers behave while talking with or to their students. Please indicate in the space at the left of each item the degree which you believe the statement applies TO YOU as a teacher trainee by referring to your teaching experience in your methodology course. Please use the following 5-point scale: **1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Occasionally; 4 = Often; 5 = Very Often**

WHEN I TEACH IN THE CLASSROOM,

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I use my hands and arms to gesture while talking to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I touch my students on the shoulder or arm while talking to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I use a monotone or dull voice while talking to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I look over or away from my students while talking to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I move away from my students when they touch me while we are talking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I have a relaxed body position when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I look tense while talking to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I avoid eye contact while talking to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I have a tense body position while talking to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I sit close or stand close to my students while talking with them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. My voice is monotonous or dull when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I use a variety of vocal expressions when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I gesture when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I am cheerful when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I have a cold facial expression when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I move closer to my students when I talk to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I look directly at my students while talking to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I am tough when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I have a lot of vocal variety when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I avoid gesturing while I am talking to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I walk toward my students when I talk to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I maintain eye contact with my students when I talk to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I try not to sit or stand close to my students when I talk with them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I walk away from my students when I talk to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I smile when I talk to my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I avoid touching my students when I talk to them.

### First Interview Questions

1. What do you expect from this course?
2. What areas of the syllabus were most interesting for you?
3. What will be the contributions of this course to you as a teacher trainee?
4. Is there anything that worries you or your friends about the course?
5. Were you given a syllabus?

6. Were you explicitly told about portfolio assessment and other components of the course?
7. Do you know what your responsibilities are?
8. Do you see this course as a burden or as a journey?
9. Do you have any suggestions about the course?

### **Second Interview Questions**

1. Did you benefit from the course?
2. Have your expectations met?
3. What skills have you developed in this course?
4. Are you able to control your nonverbal communication more effectively?
5. Do you think that you have improved your use of voice and body language?
6. Do you think that you have become a better observer? If yes, in what ways?
7. What contributions did the course make to your teacher identity?
8. Are you able to control your attitudes to teaching more effectively?
9. Do you see any change in your beliefs on teaching and learning?
10. What possibilities do you think this course provided you as a teacher candidate?
11. Can you see any improvement in your peers? If so, in what ways?
12. Did the course make any contributions to your other methodology classes?
13. Are you able to practise acting activities on your own after the course?
14. Will you practise acting activities on your own after the course? If so, what skills and techniques?
15. Do you believe that all teacher trainees should take this course?
16. What was most enjoyable in this course?
17. What was most difficult in this course?
18. What was challenging in this course?
19. What aspects of the course should be modified or improved?
20. Do you need more acting activities in your training?

### **Acting for Teachers - The Course Design and Syllabus Objectives:**

This course is designed to provide pre-service teacher trainees with a 14-week and 3-hour course on acting. Developing main acting skills enables teacher trainees to use their body language and voice more effectively and to construct their professional identities in a context in which this identity is analyzed and rehearsed as a role. The major components of the course are: effective communication skills (body language, use of voice and nonverbal communication), sensory awareness which is necessary for managing nonverbal communication and performing the target professional identity, emotional preparation necessary for realizing an effective teacher identity, nonverbal immediacy and finally a rehearsal process of your teacher identity by blending these abovementioned all. These objectives will be fulfilled by practicing some actor-preparation activities, learning some major acting techniques and some various rehearsals on the teacher that you are aspired to become.

### **Assignments:**

The participants need to do some readings weekly to be discussed, prepare some acting tasks individually or in pairs/groups and design and prepare some lesson plans and demonstrations. 24 different activities and tasks will be covered during the course. While 20 of these activities aim at practicing acting skills and techniques, the remainder 4 are basically rehearsals which will be performed after acting practices are completed. Each trainee has to take an active part in these activities both in and outside the classroom and each are required to keep a portfolio during the course.

### **Assessment:**

Also each trainee will keep a portfolio in which a session journal, all writing tasks, peer and trainer feedbacks, and lesson plans are presented. As this course does not offer a final exam, macro teaching demonstrations and portfolio will be the main criteria for the successful completion.

### **Readings of the Course:**

Two books and three articles will be covered during the course.

#### **Books**

**A** - Peter Brook – Empty Space

**B** - Eric Morris – No acting please

#### **Articles**

**C** - Travers, R. M. W. (1979). Training the teacher as a performing artist. *Contemporary Education*, 51(1), 14-18.

**D**- DeLozier, M. W. (1979). The teacher as performer: the art of selling students on learning. *Contemporary Education*, 51(1), 19-25.

**E**- Rives Jr., F. C. (1979). The teacher as performing artist. *Contemporary Education*, 51(1), 7- 9.

\*Letters in front of the readings are the codes for the syllabus

### **Acting Themes and Skills with Activity Numbers:**

The table below shows the content and purpose of the activities. One activity may serve more than one theme and skill. First four steps should be completed before the activities of the rehearsals on teacher identity are performed. The first four themes and skills will be integrated during the course. Abbreviations of the themes and skills will be used in the syllabus.

The list of skills and activity numbers

**Voice (V):** 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20  
**Body Language(BL):** 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19  
**Sensory Awareness(SA):** 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 18, 19  
**Emotional Preparation(EP):** 1, 10, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20  
**Rehearsals on Teacher Identity(RTI):** 21, 22, 23, 24

THE SYLLABUS				
Week	Theme & Skills	Subject and Activities	Readings	Assignments
1	EP, SA	<b>Subject:</b> Presenting the idea of teacher as a performing arts <b>Activity:</b> 1 and 2	-	
2	BL, SA	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing body language and sensory awareness <b>Activity:</b> 3 and 4	C	Activity 6 is assigned to groups for 3 <sup>rd</sup> week
3	BL, SA	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing body language and sensory awareness <b>Activity:</b> 5 and 6	D	Reading A is assigned for 7 <sup>th</sup> Week
4	BL, SA, EP	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing body language and getting ready emotionally. <b>Activity:</b> 7, 10 and 14 (requires definition)	E	Activity 14 is assigned for 5 <sup>th</sup> week
5	BL, SA, EP	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing body language and getting ready emotionally. <b>Activity:</b> 14, 8 and 9	B Intro & Chapter 1	Reading B, chapters 4 & 5 are assigned for 8 <sup>th</sup> Week
6	V	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing Voice. Discussions on Reading A <b>Activity:</b> 12 and 13	B Chapter 2 & 3	Activity 11 and 15 are given assignment for 7 <sup>th</sup> Week
Exam	Portfolio assessment (%50), Readings and Class Discussions (35%), Attendance and Participation (15%)			
7	BL, EP, V, SA	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing Voice and getting feedback for the activity performances <b>Activity:</b> 11 and 15	Reading A	Activity 16 and 17 is assigned for the 8 <sup>th</sup> Week  Reading B, Chapter 6 for 9 <sup>th</sup> week
8	EP, BL	<b>Subject:</b> Feedback for performances and discussion <b>Activity:</b> 16 and 17	B Chapter 4 & 5	Activity 18 is assigned for the 9 <sup>th</sup> Week
9	SA, EP, V	<b>Subject:</b> Practicing Voice and Feedback for performances and discussion <b>Activity:</b> 18	B Chapter 6	Activity 19 and 20 is assigned for the 10 <sup>th</sup> Week

10	<b>BL, EP, V, SA</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Feedback for performances and discussion <b>Activity:</b> 19 and 20	No Reading	Rehearsal 21, 22 and 23 is assigned for the 11 <sup>th</sup> Week
11	<b>RTI</b>	<b>Subject:</b> Discussion on the Rehearsal writings and feedback <b>Activity:</b> 21, 22 and 23	No Reading	Rehearsal 24 is assigned for the 12 <sup>th</sup> Week
12	<b>RTI</b>	Rehearsal 24 Performance of Trainees	No Reading	One more week may be necessary if the 24 <sup>th</sup> Rehearsal is not completed.
Exam	Portfolio assessment (%40), Completion of Rehearsals (30%), Class Discussions (20%), Attendance and Participation (10%)			

## A SAMPLE ACTIVITY

### ACTIVITY ONE : BREAKING THE SAME OLD MASK EP, SA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

#### AIM

The aim of the activity, as a warm-up, is to create an atmosphere in the class in which the trainees may take risk and get rid of the usual atmosphere. Also this activity is used to increase the emotional sensitivity and empathy of the trainees.

#### DURATION

From 10 Mins to 30 Mins, depends on the setting and participants

#### MATERIALS

Three chairs or any kind of three seats.

#### DESCRIPTION

Three chairs are placed in front of the class. Each chair represents an emotion: Fear, anger and laughter respectively. A trainee stands behind each chair, and her/his aim is to help those who will sit and try to act out the character of the chair.

#### PROCEDURE

After the chairs and responsible trainees are ready, the class lines up and each trainee sits each chair at least one, as quick as possible, so as to experience a sharp transition between emotions. Chair responsables whisper in their ears about possible occasions which may help the sitting trainee catch the right feeling. The activity may continue until the trainer decides that the trainees break their usual trainee role.

#### A Point to Ponder:

The activity is a difficult one. Trainees may have difficulty in the performance or may not take it seriously. The trainer should be patient and wait for the result.

#### English Language Teaching Version

##### Revising Adjectives

The emotions which the chairs represent are not known by the class. Each chair has a responsible. The responsible student gives a role card to the trainee who will sit and act the given role. Then the students guess the emotions by using adjectives.

*An original activity designed by the author*