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## Why all the drama? Perceptions and Experiences of Foreign Language Student Teachers on Training in Improvisational Drama Pedagogy

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### Abstract

Improvisational drama techniques (IDTs) can benefit foreign language (FL) learners by offering them an engaging way to practise speaking while hiding behind the safety of a character mask. This study aimed to glean perceptions toward and experiences with IDTs among FL student teachers, as well as training needs related to integrating IDTs as a pedagogical tool. Foreign language student teachers at a Dutch university who had not received IDT-training took part in a questionnaire (n = 197). Former student teachers who had taken such a course in drama were interviewed in depth (n = 9). Almost all student teachers - both those who had and had not received IDT-training-shared the belief that IDTs have added pedagogical value. The majority of student teachers who had not had drama training indicated that they did not often implement IDTs in their classes. Former student teachers who had IDT-training continued to integrate IDTs with some regularity. Both groups provided valuable input on the components that should be included in a future IDT-training module for both student teachers and in-service teachers. Our findings give rise to the hypothesis that training can play a key role in galvanizing teachers to implement IDTs, and allow us to formulate design criteria for an innovative training module.

**Keywords:** improvisational drama; speaking skills; foreign language teacher education

### Introduction

When referring to multilingual ability, one commonly says, “She *speaks* a foreign language,” underscoring the importance of verbal interaction. This ability directly impacts a person’s success in situations ranging from a shop transaction to a UN convention, and the foreign language (FL) classroom can serve as a rehearsal space for such communication.

This focus on real-life interaction is the cornerstone of communicative language teaching (CLT), in which the chief aim is to utilise authentic situations that require learners to communicate as they would when they encounter the FL beyond the classroom (Brandl, 2008). Extensively supported by linguistics scholars (Dornyei, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), CLT remains the preeminent FL teaching pedagogy driving teacher education curricula internationally, and the Netherlands is no exception (Hulshof, Kwakernaak & Wilhelm, 2015). Yet in the Dutch secondary school FL teaching practice for which these student teachers are prepared, a CLT-oriented approach remains uncommon, particularly in spoken interaction (West & Verspoor, 2016).

One way teachers can stimulate such interaction is by incorporating improvisational drama techniques (IDTs), such as role-plays and other games in which participants portray characters (Winston & Stinson, 2011). These techniques are imminently suitable to a CLT-approach, as they recreate authentic communication (Maley & Duff, 2005). With the simplicity of a table, chair and two pupils - one to play the waiter and the other, the

customer—the teacher has transformed the classroom into a restaurant. By nature, IDTs also have the advantage of allowing learners the safety of temporarily hiding behind a character mask (Atas, 2015) while they engage in a playful scenario (Chang & Winston, 2012).

Notwithstanding their sustainability, providing FL student teachers with training on IDTs as a pedagogical tool is not common practice. To take our own institute, HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (HU) as a case in point, the four FL departments (English, French, German and Spanish) share common learning goals for their teachers-in-training with the communicative approach serving as a foundation (<https://kennisbases.10voordeleraar.nl/pdf/kennisbasis-bachelor-engels.pdf>). Only the master-level English programme, however, offers a course specifically dedicated to integrating IDTs as a pedagogical tool. In this course, Drama in the Curriculum (DITC), student teachers film themselves teaching an IDT to a group of upper-form pupils in a secondary school English class.

In five years of offering the course leading up to the current study, a noteworthy pattern of student teacher behavior emerged. When student teachers learned they had to film themselves implementing an IDT, a number of them responded with initial reluctance, sharing such concerns as fear of chaos or not possessing the talent to incorporate a drama activity. Yet, year after year, these same student teachers would report back on the engagement and confidence these activities stimulated in their classrooms.

The transformation taking place among student teachers in the DITC course engendered the premise that implementation of IDTs does not require particular personality traits or talent, but instead specific training. This premise served as an impetus for the current study (which is part of a larger project) among FL student teachers on their overall perceptions toward and experiences with IDTs in order to determine the degree to which such a training would be considered relevant to this population. As a large number of innovations for FL teachers do not survive to the institutionalization phase (Van den Branden, 2009), IDT training must be built upon a firm foundation of (student) teacher needs. We therefore also gathered student teachers' input on the components that should be included in an IDT training module for both student teachers and in-service teachers.

### **The added value of IDTs in the foreign language classroom**

The term *improvisational drama techniques* was inspired by Maley and Duff's (2005) seminal work *Drama Techniques*, combined with the descriptor *improvisational* to reflect the spontaneity of real-life communication in line with CLT principles (Brandl, 2008). While many drama resource books are quite broad in their inclusion of creative games, the parameters of a drama activity for this research is one in which participants portray characters, as the presence of this figurative mask distinguishes IDTs from other speaking activities.

Perhaps little need for providing IDT-training in teacher education programmes or in-service training would exist if secondary school FL classrooms were replete with teachers engaging their pupils in activities that stimulate them to speak to each other with confidence and enthusiasm. Yet in the Netherlands, for instance, this scenario often does not manifest itself. Despite the CLT-based philosophy that serves as the foundation for the curriculum in Dutch FL teacher education, secondary schools often employ a grammar-oriented approach devoid of authentic communication (SLO, 2015). This is the reality student teachers face when entering the field of FL teaching. Spoken interaction in

particular is a skill often neglected in FL classrooms in the Netherlands (Fasoglio & Tuin, 2017; Rouffet, Van Beuningen & De Graaff, 2021).

A corresponding phenomenon is that secondary school pupils often do not speak the target language in class. In their observations of Dutch FL classrooms, West and Verspoor (2016) discovered that students rarely interact with each other in the FL. Their findings matched Haijma's (2013) study in which the majority of pupils indicated that they seldom speak the target language--one-third of them admitted that they experienced speaking anxiety, indicating that more class time should be spent on speaking to increase confidence.

It is not to be expected that IDT-training can singlehandedly tackle these wide-scale challenges FL student teachers face when entering the teaching field, yet evidence exists to support the notion that experimenting with IDTs can invigorate teachers to in turn inspire their pupils to speak the FL. In the United Kingdom Hulse and Owens (2019) identified circumstances similar to Dutch FL education, namely a textbook-based curriculum lacking in authentic communication; in their study student teachers received training in drama techniques, their results indicating that such training can increase the likelihood that student teachers will incorporate drama in their future teaching practice.

While teachers can incorporate many types of activities to encourage their pupils to interact verbally, IDTs have the unique characteristic of allowing learners the safety of stepping into another's shoes, collectively creating a communicative context with fellow pupils. Pupils can of course engage in conversation as *themselves* by, for example, discussing a movie, yet the figurative character mask can reduce anxiety and give them confidence to communicate more freely (Atas, 2015; Galante & Thompson, 2017). Brandl (2008) notes the necessity of recognising the affective aspect of language learning, namely anxiety, motivation and attitude, referring to seminal second language acquisition theorist Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (1984) - in essence, when a learner feels confident and motivated, she is more likely to take the risk of speaking the FL (Lamb & King, 2019).

Humor also encourages learners to take speaking risks (Effiong, 2016), and the absurd scenarios IDTs can generate can lead to hilarity in the classroom. Winston advocates for integrating drama in the classroom with the premise that "laughter is the liberating energy that encourages participants to forget their own identities and all the baggage that comes with it and start to become a player" (2009, 39). In a large-scale study, Khajavy, MacIntyre and Barabaldi (2018) furthermore found that enjoyment significantly increased communication among learners, emphasising the importance of a positive classroom environment.

The social atmosphere in which one uses the FL plays a major role in motivating pupils to speak, and to this end IDTs can positively influence group dynamics. There exists a collective excitement that takes place in the act of creative collaboration (Even, 2011; Gallagher, 2007). Reed and Seong (2013) also found that as IDTs involved the whole class, group bonding took place that engendered a climate of safety in which to communicate.

The relationship between the use of IDTs in FL classrooms and learner affect has received research attention internationally, although primarily in the form of short-term studies. In a British project analyzing use of a drama in a middle school German class, all students exhibited signs of increased confidence expressing themselves in realistic situations (Rothwell 2012). Drama techniques also correlated with significant decreases in English speaking anxiety in two Turkish schools (Atas, 2015; Saglamel & Kayaoglu, 2013). Based on findings from a study with Brazilian teenagers participating in a four-month EFL drama program, Galante (2018) suggests that drama can positively contribute

to speaking confidence, yet she stressed the need for longitudinal research. Galante and Thompson (2017) mention elsewhere that training teachers can be crucial to successful implementation of IDTs.

### **Training teachers to integrate IDTs in the FL classroom**

Training has the potential to play a vital role in galvanising student teachers and in-service teachers alike to incorporate IDTs into their pedagogical repertoires, yet no research appears to exist on the degree to which such training can influence long-term integration of drama in the FL teaching practice. Belliveau and Kim (2013) discovered in their research synthesis on drama in FL classrooms that a prevalent interest exists among teachers in drama as an engaging pedagogical tool, yet at the same time they noted an ironic absence of widespread implementation. They subsequently identified the need for longitudinal evidence on training of FL teachers in drama techniques. For student teachers and in-service teachers alike, training can serve as a crucial component to successful implementation of IDTs (Dunn & Stinson, 2011). Implementing drama requires teachers to develop self-efficacy to release inhibitions, particularly since modeling the task can be key (Ntelioglu, 2012). Hulse and Owens (2019) highlighted the importance of on-the-job mentoring from drama trainers for student teachers who are experimenting with these skills.

### **The current study: materials and methods**

The current research project served as an exploratory study into the relevance of IDTs for student teachers. The aim was to glean perceptions toward and experiences with IDTs among student teachers and to gather input on which components should be included in an IDT-training module that can serve as an impetus for student teachers and in-service teachers to integrate IDTs into their FL teaching repertoire. This study sought to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: What are the perceptions among student teachers toward improvisational drama techniques as a tool to promote speaking in the foreign language classroom?
- RQ2: To what degree do student teachers, both those trained and untrained in IDTs, integrate these techniques into their teaching practices and what barriers do they perceive?
- RQ3: What components should be included in an IDT-training module for (student) teachers?

### **Research context**

HU is a university of applied sciences situated in Utrecht, an ethnically diverse city located in the center of the Netherlands. Dutch Secondary school teacher education is organised into two tiers: bachelor and master. The bachelor's degree qualifies students to teach vocational and lower form secondary school. With a master's degree students can also teach in the upper form.

Fostering communication is a primary focus of FL teacher training at HU. At the bachelor-level, each FL department offers pedagogical content courses to train student teachers in how to create curricula and assessments in communicative skills, as well as how to integrate culture, grammar and vocabulary using the tenets of CLT. The only course in which student teachers are specifically trained to apply IDTs to their teaching, however, is in the English master's DITC course. Rather than having student teachers develop hypothetical lesson plans or engage in peer-teaching, in DITC student teachers film themselves conducting and in turn reflecting upon an IDT with an upper form class.

This research grew out of the first author's experience teaching DITC over a five year period, as described above. The transformation these student teachers often underwent during the course, as well as ample evidence from studies worldwide on the benefits of IDTs, gave rise to the belief that providing IDT-training as a pedagogical tool more widely in FL teacher education could galvanise both student teachers and in-service to incorporate these techniques into the FL teaching practice.

### Participants

A mixed-methods approach was utilised in this study by means of a questionnaire and interviews. For the questionnaire, both bachelor and master-level student teachers from all four FL departments at HU were included in the sample (n = 197), with the exception of first-year bachelor-level student teachers, who usually do not teach independently at their traineeships. Also excluded from the questionnaire were English master-level student teachers who had already taken the DITC course. Among the 197 teachers-in-training at HU who completed the questionnaire 106 were studying English, 32 French, 53 German and six Spanish. Former DITC student teachers who had taken the course at least one year earlier were included in a separate sample (n = 9), and were interviewed in depth rather than surveyed, given their experience in having received training in IDT as a pedagogical tool as part of their teacher education.

### Data collection and analysis

#### The questionnaire

A questionnaire was chosen as the most efficient means of gathering information from the large sample of FL student teachers who had *not* taken the DITC course. Primarily closed questions were utilised to generate quantitative data that would provide a wide-scale impression of their experiences with and perceptions related to IDT-use in the FL classroom.

The term IDT was defined for participants as *speaking activities without a script in which the participants portray characters in fictionalised situations*. Sample questionnaire items are shown below (along with an example response option).

Related to RQ 1:

- Do you think drama techniques can offer benefits that other speaking activities cannot? (e.g. *maybe*)

Related to RQ 2:

- How often do you use drama techniques? (e.g. *about once a month*)
- If you do not or rarely use drama techniques, what prevents you (e.g. *I don't have time to do them in class.*)?

Related to RQ 3:

- If you feel like drama techniques have value in foreign language classes, what kinds of support/tools would you need as a teacher to implement them regularly into your classes (e.g. *training with a drama teacher to practise using drama techniques*)?

Participants could elaborate on their responses through open-ended questions. They were asked to share other IDTs utilised, reasons for not implementing drama or possible support/tools they might need that were not listed in the questionnaire, as well as describing possible benefits of drama techniques. The questionnaire was first piloted with a cohort of 30 master-level student teachers. Participants were informed on the questionnaire that their results would be used anonymously for a research project.

Quantitative responses from the questionnaire were entered in IBM SPSS Statistics to generate descriptive statistics. A content analysis of responses to the open-ended questions was also carried out. These qualitative responses were examined iteratively to identify possible themes, and were subsequently categorised under common themes and calculated for frequency.

#### *The interview*

For the much smaller population of former master-level student teachers who had taken DITC, an interview format was utilised to allow for greater depth of response related to the course and its role in integration of IDTs into their teaching practices. Interview participants were recruited among student teachers who had taken the DITC course at least one year earlier. Interviewees provided consent to being audio-recorded, as well as the resulting data being utilized anonymously for research purposes. Transcripts excluded all identifying information, and were e-mailed to interviewees for approval.

Questions for this semi-structured interview were developed to align with questionnaire items. Additional items were formulated to elicit reflection on their perceptions on and experiences with the course itself and IDT-integration in the year that followed. Sample interview questions correspond with the RQs as follows:

Related to RQ 1:

- Do you feel like using improvisational drama techniques are beneficial to your teaching practice? Explain.

Related to RQ 2:

- Do you incorporate drama regularly into your teaching practice this year? Explain.
- Would you like to use it more often? If so, what is holding you back now?

Related to RQ 3:

- If applicable, in what ways did the course encourage you to use drama?
- What could have prepared you better to incorporate improvisational drama techniques into your teaching practice?

The audio-recording of each interview was transcribed, and the transcription was subsequently e-mailed to participants for review. Through repeated readings themes were developed inductively, and in turn these themes were interpreted alongside the themes that had emerged from open-ended questions on the questionnaires to discover salient commonalities among or disparities between interviewees and questionnaire respondents.

## **Results**

### ***RQ 1: What are the perceptions among student teachers toward improvisational drama techniques as a tool to promote speaking in the foreign language classroom?***

To answer this question, untrained student teachers were surveyed as to whether they thought drama techniques can offer benefits that other speaking activities cannot. If answering affirmatively they could follow up the closed question by sharing potential benefits. Of the student teachers surveyed, 97.5% expressed the belief that IDTs could benefit learners more than other types of speaking activities (e.g. a conversation about their own weekend). Among these, 64.5% chose *definitely* and 33% *maybe*.

In analysing potential benefits participants mentioned, three salient themes emerged during the inductive categorisation process, namely increased motivation, stimulation of authentic communication and increased confidence as shown in Table 1. It appeared that almost half of student teachers surveyed associated IDTs with increased motivation.

Benefits	Frequency of comments	Example keywords
Increased Motivation	47	fun, game element, activating
Stimulation of Authentic Communication	38	free, spontaneity, real-life
Increased Confidence	38	daring to speak, less anxiety, safety of wearing a mask

Table 1: Potential benefits of IDT over other types of speaking activities

The trained interviewees were also asked about potential benefits of IDTs, as well as whether they felt IDTs benefitted their own teaching practice. Among these student teachers trained in IDT, all nine noted advantages of IDTs over other types of speaking activities. The same three themes that most often emerged among questionnaire respondents were most common among interviewees as well; all participants mentioned the motivational element of IDTs, seven discussed drama as a means to stimulate authentic communication and five described factors related to confidence-building among their pupils, as shown from anecdotes in Table 2.

<p><b>Increased Motivation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Every class that started after I did drama techniques they asked me, ‘When are we going to do this again?’” - Student B</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stimulation of Authentic Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“I just compare it to when students travel to, for example, England, and you may encounter a familiar situation but things will always be different than the way you’ve practised it. So it resembles actual life the most, I guess.” - Student E</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increased Confidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“They can pretend to be somebody else and that feels, I think to a teenager, that probably feels safer than if you have to talk about something from your own point of view.” - Student F</li> </ul>

Table 2: Anecdotes from the interviews related to benefits of IDTs in the FL classroom

**RQ 2: To what degree do student teachers, both those trained and untrained in IDTs, integrate these techniques into their teaching practices and what barriers do they perceive?**

Respondents were asked to state how often they used drama techniques, and if so, which ones, and if not, they could choose from a list of options as to what prevents them, as well as writing in their own barriers. Approximately 63% of questionnaire participants stated that they rarely or never employ drama as show in Table 3.

Frequency of implementation	% of respondents
Never	21.8%
Once a Year	41.1%
About once a year	28.4%
About once a week	8.1%
No response	0.5%

Table 3: Frequency of IDT-Implementation

Among the 153 student teachers who stated that they implemented IDTs, even if only once a year, 131 shared that they use role-plays and 41 chose the option *other improvisation activities (e.g. comedy show-style/theatre sport games)*. Participants were also invited to write in other drama techniques they implemented; among the 16 responses from student teachers who integrated drama, half of the activities stated did not, however, clearly fit the definition given for an IDT.

Student teachers surveyed were offered a multiple response list of possible barriers that prevent them from using drama more often. Questionnaire responses can be seen in Table 4. Items 1 (*classroom management*) and 3 (*lack skills/experience/training*) relate to perceived lack of self-efficacy. The other three most frequently chosen responses: 2 (*time in class*), 4 (*fixed curriculum*), and 5 (*time to plan*) can be categorised collectively as lack of time.

Perceived barriers	% of respondents
I think they would create classroom management problems.	26.4%
I don't have time to do them in class.	20.3%
I don't think I have the skills/experience/training to implement them.	19.3%
There is no freedom to alter the curriculum.	18.3%
I don't have time to plan them.	15.7%
I don't think my students would be willing to do them.	14.7%
I've never considered it.	12.2%
I don't see the value in them.	2%

Table 4: Perceived barriers to integrating IDT regularly

NOTE: Each percentage here above represents the number of student teachers from the total number of respondents who selected that item. Respondents could select multiple items.

In the interview, trained former student teachers were asked to compare how often they used drama activities before and after taking DITC, the extent to which they still used them, and whether they would like to use IDTs more often. Interviewees' answers varied considerably in the extent to which they used drama in their teaching practice before taking DITC. Three gave an unequivocal *never*, one said *rarely*, and two gave examples that did not fit the definition of an IDT. The remaining three mentioned role-play activities, including a dating show.

Eight former student teachers expressed that a year or more after completing the course they continued to use drama more often than they had previously. Table 5 includes excerpts on how the interviewees continued to integrate IDTs. The one interviewee who stated that she had not incorporated IDTs since the training mentioned that it was nonetheless a goal for her after she completed the master's programme.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I'm trying to incorporate it in as many classes as I can, wherever it is possible." - Student B</li> <li>• "When I, for example, see that a class is very energetic and I can't really move on with what we are supposed to do and then I just quickly use the drama activity and then just continue with the course materials after that." - Student E</li> <li>• "They find it (grammar) so difficult so I act out things and then I make them act out things." - Student I</li> </ul>
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Table 5: How former student teachers continue to integrate IDTs



While almost all interviewees stated that they still used drama more often a year after completing DITC, eight expressed that they would like to use these activities more often. The remaining interviewee shared that she already uses IDTs at all the levels she teaches. As with questionnaire respondents, time remained a barrier for student teachers trained in IDT-use, mentioned by seven individuals. Interviewees nonetheless appeared not to have merely accepted time as an insurmountable obstacle, but instead a significant challenge with which they were grappling, as evidenced in the interview excerpts in Table 6. Unlike with questionnaire respondents, self-efficacy did not appear to persist as a barrier for student teachers who had received training. None described problems with classroom management, for example, which was chosen as the foremost concern among untrained student teachers surveyed.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“I’m really enthusiastic and I think a lot of people should use it, not just as an excuse to get ready for the PTA (exams) or anything but again time is really important for a lot of schools.” - Student A</i></li> <li>• <i>“I could do more drama activities using that but the amount of preparation that takes is usually not time that I have.” - Student D</i></li> <li>• <i>“It (time constraints) doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t use it because I have experienced it can be beneficial, albeit it takes time but still.” - Student F</i></li> </ul>
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Table 6: Time as a barrier for integrating IDTs

**RQ3: What components should be included in an IDT-training module for (student) teachers?**

In the final section of the questionnaire, untrained participants were asked to select items from a multiple-response menu as to which tools might galvanise them to implement IDTs regularly into their classes. From Table 7, a clear preference for ready-made lesson ideas is evident (Item 1). Approximately half of respondents also showed interest in training activities to gain new ideas, exchange experiences and practise using drama techniques (Items 2 and 3). Ancillary support mechanisms outside of training sessions (Items 4-7), such as a social network or in-class feedback, appeared of almost equal value among participants, but significantly less important than ready-made lessons or training activities.

<b>Tools and support options</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
A collection of ready-made lesson ideas	61.4%
Refresher courses to get new ideas and exchange experiences	51.8%
Training with a drama teacher to practice using drama techniques	49.2%
An online social network with other language teachers using drama	27.9%
Periodic e-mails from a drama teacher with new lesson ideas/encouragement	26.4%
Support from colleagues	26.4%
Having a drama teacher observe you teaching and providing feedback	24.4%

Table 7: Tools and support to foster regular integration of IDT

NOTE: Each percentage here above represents the number of student teachers from the total number of respondents who selected that item. Respondents could select multiple items.

Interviewees were asked in what ways the course encouraged them to use drama, as well as what could have better prepared them to incorporate IDTs into their teaching practice. Seven student teachers specifically mentioned ways in which the training equipped them with the skills and/or confidence to integrate drama, as shown through example excerpts in Table 8. As to what could have better prepared them to incorporate IDTs, three mentioned that they would have liked even more resources with ideas, such as activities sorted by specific language goals.

Interviewees were also questioned on their opinions on the content and ancillary support mechanisms of a future training module for teachers, and were offered examples from the list from the questionnaire. The one component about which these student teachers were unanimous was the value of trying out the activities during training, as was explicitly mentioned by six individuals. On support mechanisms, their answers varied widely and were at times contradictory, with one participant commenting that a classroom visit would be beneficial while another one cautioning that this would scare potential training participants.

- *“The fact that I had done certain things allowed me to see the value and also to feel confident that I could implement it in an effective way.” - Student D*
- *“You really had to experience yourself how certain techniques work and what it did to you because I think that if you experience what it does to yourself then you can, well, maybe in a way think about how it could feel to your students.” - Student F*
- *“It’s a good thing to try out activities with others before you try them out in class so you can see what works.” - Student H*

Table 8: Anecdotes on the role of training in the integration of IDT

## Discussion

This study aimed to glean perceptions toward and experiences with IDTs among student teachers at HU and to gather input on the essential components that should be included in an IDT-training module for (student) teachers. The first research question sought to discover *what the perceptions were among student teachers toward IDT as a tool to promote speaking in the FL classroom*. Both untrained questionnaire respondents and trained interviewees expressed a clear belief that IDTs can benefit language learners in ways that other speaking activities cannot. The examples of benefits most often provided were characterised as increased motivation, stimulation of authentic communication and increased confidence.

The second research question examined *the degree to which both trained and untrained student teachers integrate IDTs into their teaching practices and what barriers they perceived*. The majority of untrained student teachers surveyed stated that they do not integrate IDTs more than once a year, if at all. Most trained student teachers, however, mentioned that they did incorporate IDTs at least somewhat regularly, and more often than they had before taking DITC. Both groups identified time as a primary barrier to integrating IDTs. Questionnaire respondents also revealed that absence of self-efficacy was a significant barrier.

Finally, the third research question asked participants to speculate or reflect upon on the components that should be included in an IDT-training module. Among untrained student teachers, ready-made materials were given a clear preference, although half of respondents also expressed interest in training sessions in which they could practice the techniques, gather new ideas and exchange experiences. Interviewees reflected on their own experiences in DITC, and were unanimous that practicing IDTs themselves was most

beneficial. Both among trained and untrained student teachers opinions were divided on support mechanisms, and no mechanism emerged as most desirable.

Results from this study show similarities to existing literature on the affective aspects of language learning. From questionnaire respondents and interviewees alike, it appears that enthusiasm for IDTs is not lacking, as was found in Belliveau and Kim's (2013) research synthesis. Student teachers surveyed noted the motivational aspects of IDTs. These beliefs in affective benefits correspond with the findings of Khajavy and colleagues (2018) who found correlations between enjoyment and increased communication among FL learners. Student teachers furthermore made a connection between IDTs and the central principles of CLT (Brandl, 2008), namely authentic communication, as well as factors related to confidence, which was also evidenced in numerous studies conducted in FL classrooms, including Atas (2015).

Belliveau and Kim (2013) identified a persistent contradiction between FL teachers' beliefs in drama as a beneficial tool in the FL-classroom and their lack of implementation. A similar discrepancy between enthusiasm and integration was apparent in questionnaire results. This was, however, not the case among those who had been trained; almost all of the interviewed student teachers who had taken DITC, *did* continue to integrate IDTs, albeit with varying frequency. Their experiences provide small-scale evidence that including a training module of this nature into teacher education programmes, as well as offering professional development in IDTs to in-service teachers, could diminish the discrepancy described above. The next step in our longitudinal research will be to glean perceptions, experiences and input from in-service teachers for a training module with the ultimate goal of designing innovative training for both groups.

Both by examining interviewees' responses and by returning to the anecdotal evidence referred to in the introduction on the larger body of master-level student teachers in the drama course, it is evident that when faced with the reality of implementing an IDT, trepidation can set in. Perhaps through experimenting with activities in the course student teachers become accustomed to acting a bit crazier than they normally would—to the point that portraying anyone from a disgruntled roommate to a time traveler seems possible. It appears from the interviews with former student teachers that this process lowers the threshold for integrating IDTs in their own practice, and if they are in turn met with positive responses from their pupils the inclination to continue using IDTs grows.

Interestingly, not one former student teacher interviewed reported classroom management problems, while this was the most often perceived barrier for implementing drama among questionnaire respondents. This could be explained by the fact that questionnaire respondents had not been specifically trained to integrate IDTs. An additional explanation could be that the majority of questionnaire respondents were still completing their bachelor's degree with less teaching experience than the average master-level student teacher.

### **Limitations**

Both the interviews and the questionnaires were conducted by the first author, who is also a teacher educator at HU. Her presence may have created a student-teacher dynamic that would incite student teachers to provide socially desirable answers. The interviews in particular were susceptible to bias that could affect reliability, as all participants knew the researcher professionally. While they were encouraged to speak freely, their perceptions toward IDTs and their commitment to its further use in their classrooms were almost categorically positive. This enthusiasm nonetheless matches the discoveries of Belliveau and Kim's (2013) study, as well as Hulse and Owen's (2019) findings when

training FL student teachers to use drama activities; 100% of their participants expressed the belief that drama could prove beneficial in the classroom.

With regards to the questionnaire, it was somewhat surprising that only 63% of respondents stated that they rarely or never used IDTs, or rather, a large minority ostensibly *does* incorporate IDTs with some regularity. Their responses could be the influence of social desirability when completing the questionnaire. It is also possible, however, that while they were provided with a definition for IDTs at the beginning of the questionnaire, they nonetheless interpreted the term *drama technique* more widely, as evidenced by examples they provided that did not fit the definition.

### Conclusion

The gap between the communication-oriented techniques student teachers learn in teacher education and the grammar-based approach they often encounter in traineeships at secondary schools extends far beyond the integration of IDTs. Even if IDTs became an integral part of the curriculum in teacher training throughout the Netherlands, the question remains as to whether student teachers will continue implementing IDTs long-term once they are absorbed into a more traditional teaching field if they are virtually alone in doing so. Therefore, longitudinal research is necessary to gather insight on the relationship between training and long-term implementation of IDTs. Hulse and Owen's study (2019), however, offers promise that such training not only provides student teachers with tools to integrate drama but also cultivates a creative identity that could stimulate on-going innovation in their teaching approach. As evidenced in interviews with master-level student teachers as well, if teachers are trained, it does appear possible that they will integrate IDTs with some regularity. Given that lack of time emerged as a chief barrier, training would need to show student teachers that IDTs are not simply extra activities to squeeze into an overloaded schedule, but that the existing curriculum can be dramatized by replacing, for example, rote exercises with role-plays that incorporate the same skills into authentic situations.

The current study also identified components student teachers deem important in an IDT training module. These findings can provide key input for the development of teacher training curricula. They also serve as design criteria for a professional development program (PDP) that will be developed in a subsequent research project. With this PDP we will examine whether *in-service* teachers also incorporate IDTs into their pedagogical repertoire as a result of receiving training. If both student teachers and in-service teachers alike are trained in IDTs, it could create a learning culture more conducive to student teachers utilising these tools in the classroom. As spoken interaction remains neglected in Dutch secondary schools, training can potentially provide teachers with the tools to implement IDTs structurally. And with regard to IDTs, the goal is of course to engender a different sort of dialogue—that between language learners—first behind the mask of a character and ultimately, as themselves.

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