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DEVELOPING NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS THROUGH SCENARIO PRACTICE AND REFLECTIVE FEEDBACK

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Abstract

Preparing teachers to prevent violence requires more than knowledge of prohibited behaviour. Teachers also need opportunities to practise listening, formulate respectful boundaries and revise their responses to difficult classroom situations. This paper develops a pedagogical framework for nonviolent communication in initial teacher education. A purposive documentary analysis draws on a doctoral dissertation, five related publications by the author, international guidance on school violence prevention and primary resources on nonviolent communication. The analysis maps communication practices onto observable learning outcomes and teaching activities. Five interconnected mechanisms are identified: observation without judgement, empathic listening, emotional self-regulation, non-blaming expression and reflective feedback. These mechanisms are organised into a recurring cycle of scenario interpretation, response rehearsal, evidence-based feedback and revised performance. The paper also proposes a five-indicator formative assessment rubric and an implementation sequence for pedagogy courses and teaching placements. The framework is a design proposal rather than a tested intervention; no new participant data or estimates of effectiveness are reported. Its contribution is to make the relationship between communication principles, classroom rehearsal and observable feedback explicit. Future evaluation should examine assessment reliability, transfer to teaching practice and the durability of skill development while distinguishing teacher readiness from actual reductions in school violence.

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Introduction

A teacher's response to a difficult classroom interaction can either open or close opportunities for understanding. A pupil who refuses a group task may be expressing uncertainty, exclusion or disagreement. If the teacher immediately interprets this behaviour as a stable personal defect, the response may obscure relevant information. Initial teacher education therefore needs to connect professional commitments to dignity and inclusion with observable communication practices. Knowing that humiliation is unacceptable does not by itself show how a teacher will respond under time pressure. International guidance places school violence prevention within routine institutional practice. The handbook developed by the World Health Organization in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF addresses prevention through school activities and relationships with children, families and communities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019) [1]. UNESCO's synthesis examines school violence, bullying and educational responses across national contexts (UNESCO, 2019). These sources provide an institutional rationale for preparation that extends beyond an isolated awareness session. In this paper, that rationale is applied to the design of communication practice in teacher education. The author's related publications address the protection of children and women, forms and consequences of violence, stakeholder cooperation and the preparation of teaching staff (Sultanova, 2025; 2026a–d). The accompanying doctoral dissertation describes active listening, I-statements, role play, forum theatre and reflective discussion as resources for preparing future teachers to prevent violence (Sultanova, 2026e). The present paper develops a more focused methodological question: how can these resources be connected in an explicit learning sequence that enables students to recognise, practise and revise professional communication? Nonviolent communication distinguishes observations, feelings, needs and requests and connects honest expression with empathic reception (Rosenberg, n.d.; Center for Nonviolent Communication

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[CNVC], n.d.). These distinctions offer useful analytical tools, but a teacher education framework must also address institutional responsibilities and classroom boundaries. Listening respectfully does not require a teacher to suspend a safety rule [2]. Conversely, enforcing a rule does not justify attacking a pupil's character. The educational challenge is to practise both understanding and responsible action. The purpose of this paper is to develop a transparent link between communication mechanisms, learning activities and formative assessment. It asks which observable practices can represent nonviolent communication in teacher preparation, how those practices can be rehearsed and revised, and what evidence would be needed before effectiveness claims become justified. The contribution is a teaching and assessment design grounded in the supplied research materials, not a claim that the proposed sequence has already reduced violence.

2 Materials and Methods

The study uses purposive documentary analysis and pedagogical modelling. Its main source is the methodological material in Chapter II of Sultanova's doctoral dissertation, particularly the discussion of preparation methods, active listening and I-statements (Sultanova, 2026e). Five supplied publications provide contextual material on protection, cooperation and teacher preparation (Sultanova, 2025; 2026a–d). International school violence prevention guidance and primary nonviolent communication resources serve as conceptual reference points (WHO, 2019; UNESCO, 2019; Rosenberg, n.d.; CNVC, n.d.). Sources were selected for their direct relevance to the design problem. The paper is not a systematic review and does not claim exhaustive coverage of the literature [3]. The unit of analysis was a communicative action that could be represented in a teaching scenario: describing an event, paraphrasing a statement, checking understanding, expressing a concern, establishing a boundary or revising a response. The analysis first grouped practices by their pedagogical function. It then linked each function to a learning task and an observable product. Finally, these links were synthesised into a recurring practice cycle and a formative rubric. The resulting categories are the author's analytical organisation of the materials; they are not factors extracted from a psychometric dataset. A source-to-design distinction was maintained throughout. Active listening and I-statements

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originate in the underlying methodological material and communication resources. The integrated cycle, scenario example and indicator descriptions presented here are proposed instructional arrangements. No new participants were recruited, no classroom observations were collected and no statistical tests were conducted for this article. The broader dissertation experiment is not used to estimate the separate effect of any single communication technique. This boundary prevents a conceptual design from being presented as an empirically validated intervention [4].

3 Results of the Conceptual Analysis

3.1 Operational definition and pedagogical mechanisms

For this framework, nonviolent pedagogical communication is defined as the coordinated ability to describe a situation without personal denigration, listen to another person's account, regulate one's response, express a concern or boundary clearly and review the consequences of one's communication. The definition centres on actions available to a teacher rather than on an assumption about a teacher's personality. It also allows for disagreement: a respectful response can be firm and can interrupt harmful behaviour. Five mechanisms connect this definition to instruction. Observation without judgement separates an event from a global evaluation of a pupil [5]. Empathic listening checks the meaning of the pupil's account. Emotional self-regulation creates room for a deliberate response. Non-blaming expression makes the teacher's concern and proposed action explicit. Reflective feedback enables the learner to identify a specific limitation and attempt a revision. These mechanisms are interdependent; none is treated as a complete response to all classroom situations.

Table 1. Mechanisms and their observable expressions

Mechanism	Instructional function	Observable evidence
Observation without judgement	Separate events from character judgements	Describes a specific action and its context
Empathic listening	Check the other person's meaning	Paraphrases and invites correction
Emotional self-regulation	Support a deliberate response	Uses a pause and maintains a measured tone
Non-blaming expression	State a concern or boundary clearly	Identifies a feasible next action without personal attack
Reflective feedback	Connect evaluation to revision	Explains and demonstrates a specific change

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Observation without judgement is taught through comparisons between descriptions and interpretations. “You are always disruptive” assigns a generalised identity. “Several comments were made while the instructions were being explained” identifies an event that can be discussed. This distinction does not remove the need for judgement about safety or acceptable conduct; it improves the evidential basis of the conversation. Students should also learn to identify information they do not yet have rather than presenting an inference about intention as a fact. Empathic listening is operationalised through paraphrasing, clarification and tentative reflection. The dissertation distinguishes encouragement, repetition, reformulation, reflection, clarification and summarising (Sultanova, 2026e). Within the proposed framework, successful listening requires more than repeating words. The teacher checks whether the account has been understood and gives the speaker an opportunity to correct it [6]. A reflection such as “It sounds as though you felt left out; have I understood?” leaves interpretive authority with the speaker. It should not become a diagnosis or a demand for personal disclosure. Emotional self-regulation is represented as a professional action rather than an absence of emotion. During rehearsal, students identify an impulse to respond, pause briefly and choose words consistent with the educational purpose of the interaction. The relevant evidence concerns the response itself: pace, tone, interruption and wording. A student’s apparent calm should not be taken as proof of an internal emotional state. Equally, a teacher can acknowledge frustration while maintaining respectful boundaries and attending to immediate safety.

Non-blaming expression requires attention to content as well as grammatical form. The sentence “I think you are irresponsible” contains an I-statement but still makes a personal judgement. Students instead practise linking an observed event, a concern and a feasible action. For example: “When several people speak at once, I cannot make the instructions clear. Everyone needs to hear the task. We will take turns now.” The example is an instructional illustration, not a universal script. CNVC’s distinction between requests and disguised demands also invites students to examine whether their wording and nonverbal conduct are consistent (CNVC, n.d.).

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3.2 A recurring cycle of scenario practice

The five mechanisms are organised into four instructional stages: interpret the scenario, rehearse a response, receive evidence-based feedback and perform a revised response. The cycle is designed to move beyond discussing a communication principle. It requires a learner to enact a response and then demonstrate what has changed. A subsequent scenario alters one feature of the interaction, allowing the teacher educator to distinguish flexible application from memorisation of a single phrase.

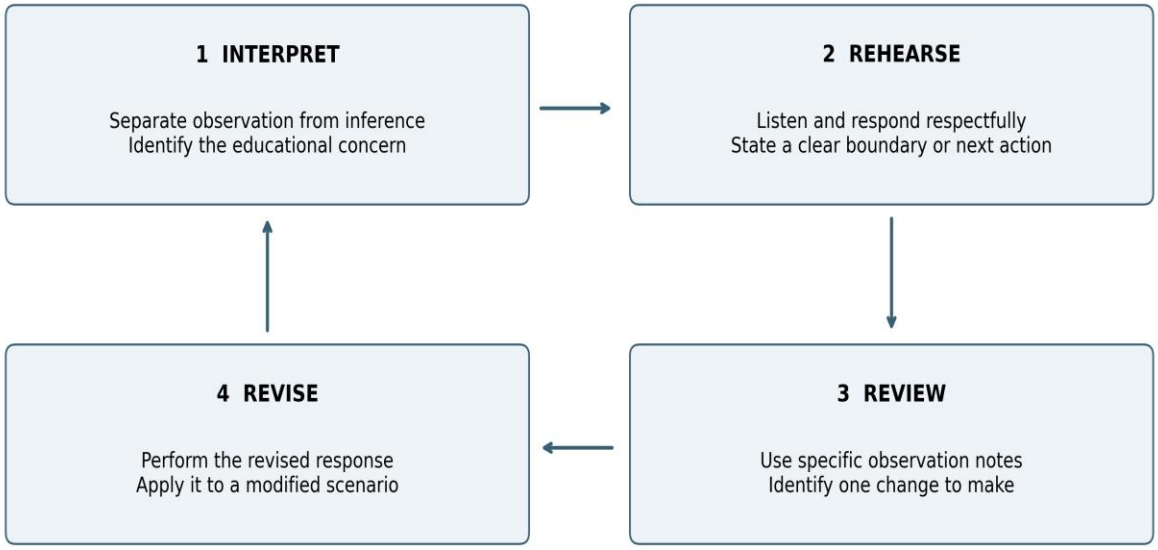


Figure 1. Proposed cycle for practising and revising communication

Small groups of three provide a practical format: one student acts as the teacher, another as a pupil or parent and a third records observations. Roles rotate so that each participant experiences expression, reception and observation. Before the first attempt, the group identifies the purpose and boundaries of the task. Afterward, the observer reports a specific action rather than a personality judgement. “You paraphrased the concern but did not check its accuracy” offers a clearer basis for revision than “You need more empathy.”

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Table 2. Teaching activities aligned with the proposed mechanisms

Stage	Learning activity	Evidence for feedback
Interpretation	Rewrite an evaluative account as an event description	Short description separating facts and inferences
Listening	Paraphrase an account and invite correction	Recorded or written dialogue excerpt
Expression	Reframe a blaming response as a clear professional statement	Alternative wording and rationale
Application	Rehearse a scenario with one changed condition	Observer notes on adaptation
Reflection	Compare two attempts and set a practice goal	Specific explanation of the revision

An illustrative scenario concerns a pupil who declines group work and says, "They never let me join." The task is to acknowledge the account, establish what can be clarified safely and organise a feasible next step. A response such as "Stop making excuses" closes the inquiry. A possible alternative is: "You are saying that joining the group has been difficult. I want to understand. Let us work out your role now, and we can also discuss what happened privately." The revised response does not establish whether exclusion occurred; it makes further understanding possible while addressing participation. This scenario was constructed for methodological illustration and is not a report of an observed incident [7].

The sequence can be incorporated into pedagogy seminars and then revisited during preparation for teaching placements. The first phase focuses on recognising communication patterns. The next phase combines skills within short scenarios. A later phase varies the speaker's response, the setting or the complexity of the concern. No fixed dosage is prescribed because duration and intensity have not been tested. Teacher educators should record the actual activities and practice opportunities if the framework is subsequently evaluated.

3.3 Formative assessment and interpretation

The proposed rubric translates the mechanisms into five indicators with three descriptive levels. Its purpose is to structure feedback on an observed performance. The levels are not a validated developmental scale, and a summed score should not be interpreted as a diagnostic measure of empathy or violence-prevention competence. An observation record should retain the words or actions

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supporting each judgement. The performance profile may be more useful than a total because different students can require different forms of practice.

Table 3. Proposed formative observation rubric

Indicator	Initial expression	Partial expression	Demonstrated expression
Event description	Labels the person	Mixes events with evaluation	Describes specific behaviour
Listening	Interrupts or dismisses	Listens without checking meaning	Paraphrases and checks accuracy
Response regulation	Uses a threatening tone	Pauses but remains inconsistent	Maintains measured wording and tone
Professional expression	Blames or threatens	States an unclear next step	States a clear, feasible action
Reflection	Rejects feedback	Identifies a problem without revision	Explains and performs a revision

Two observers can independently use the rubric on the same scenario and compare the evidence supporting their ratings [8]. This procedure can expose ambiguous descriptors, but agreement should be assessed rather than presumed. Before formal evaluation, teacher educators should review the indicators for content relevance, clarity and cultural appropriateness. Any later numerical coding must preserve the distinction between an ordinal description and an equal-interval measurement. Thresholds for "high" or "low" competence should not be introduced without a defensible validation process. Fluent speech must also be distinguished from safe communication. A polished response may still minimise a pupil's concern or contain a personal attack. Conversely, a hesitant student may demonstrate careful listening and an appropriate next step. Formative feedback should therefore focus on the specified actions rather than rewarding confidence alone. Comparable but non-identical scenarios are needed if repeated assessment is intended to examine transfer rather than recall.

4 Discussion

The framework makes a proposed pathway from principle to practice explicit. A learner first identifies what is known about a situation, then rehearses a response and examines evidence about that response before trying again. Its pedagogical

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rationale is that feedback becomes actionable when it identifies a specific behaviour and is followed by another opportunity to perform. This is a design argument. The present analysis does not establish the magnitude of learning gains or show that the cycle is superior to another teaching approach. Listening and professional expression perform complementary functions. Listening seeks to understand the other person's account; expression communicates the teacher's concern, responsibility or boundary. Listening without a feasible next step may leave an interaction unresolved. A clear instruction without listening may overlook information that changes how the situation should be understood. The framework therefore teaches these functions together while allowing their relative emphasis to vary with the context. The supplied publications help situate this communication focus within a wider prevention agenda. Stakeholder cooperation is directly addressed in Sultanova (2025), while child protection and the consequences of violence are discussed in Sultanova (2026a, 2026c, 2026d). Teacher preparation is the focus of Sultanova (2026b). These publications provide contextual and conceptual support; they are not treated as independent trials validating the proposed cycle. The distinction matters because an institutional commitment to protection cannot be reduced to an individual teacher's conversational skill. Communication rehearsal must preserve safeguarding boundaries. Fictional or composite scenarios can be used without asking students to reveal painful personal experiences. A pupil should not be pressured to recount possible abuse publicly or to reconcile with a person who may have harmed them. Supportive listening does not replace an institution's protection procedures or specialist assistance. In immediate danger, protective action takes priority over completing a dialogue exercise. This limitation is consistent with treating communication as one component of a broader school response (WHO, 2019). The framework has several limitations. The source selection was purposive and does not establish that all relevant models were considered. The five mechanisms have not been independently validated as a comprehensive representation of teacher communication. The scenario and rubric were designed for instruction rather than tested with participants. Institutional context, language, age and prior relationships may affect how an expression is received [9]. A particular I-statement cannot guarantee cooperation or prevent an aggressive response. The framework should consequently be adapted and evaluated rather than adopted as

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a universally effective script. Future research should first examine the content and clarity of the rubric with teacher educators and practitioners. A subsequent pilot could assess observer agreement using standardised performances. An intervention study would then require comparable baseline and follow-up tasks, an appropriate comparison condition and documentation of practice exposure. Analyses should account for the nesting of students within classes or institutions where relevant. Delayed assessment and placement observations would help distinguish immediate rehearsal gains from sustained professional application. Actual school violence outcomes require separate measures and should not be inferred from improvements in communication ratings alone.

5 Conclusion

Nonviolent communication can be represented in teacher education as a coordinated set of observable practices: describing events without personal denigration, listening and checking meaning, regulating responses, expressing concerns and boundaries clearly, and revising performance through reflection. This paper organises those practices into a recurring cycle of interpretation, rehearsal, feedback and revised performance. Its practical outputs are a teaching sequence, an illustrative scenario and a formative observation rubric [10]. The framework offers a basis for structured practice in pedagogy courses and teaching-placement preparation. Its value at this stage lies in the transparency of the proposed links between learning goals, tasks and evidence. Effectiveness, reliability and transfer remain empirical questions. Maintaining that distinction enables teacher educators to use the design as a testable methodological proposal while avoiding claims that communication training alone has been shown to reduce violence.

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