

Chapter 32

The Role of Multi-Media in Expanding Pre-Service Teachers' Understanding of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms and Furthering Their Professional Identities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter details a qualitative study conducted with pre-service elementary school student teachers enrolled in a Masters course on cultural and linguistic diversity at one university teacher education institute in France. The study aimed to evaluate the impact of the course on the student teachers' understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and questioned whether the use of multi-media resources throughout the course could contribute to fostering a greater sense of empathy towards their future culturally and linguistically diverse students. The data analysis reveals that the use of video in particular, in combination with theoretical readings, was highly instrumental in helping the students to understand the concepts linked to second language acquisition and in providing them with strategies for their linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. The authors question whether the use of multi-media is sufficient to foster a sense of empathy in students and suggest further pedagogical interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

The power of using multi-media resides in its ability to increase cognitive and emotional interest and attention by creating more coherent and authentic representations of knowledge. (Wankel & Blesinger, 2013, p.6)

According to many researchers and education professionals in Europe and around the world, pre-service teachers are increasingly faced with cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom for which they are only slightly or not at all prepared. (Cajkler & Hall, 2012; Kuiken, 2014; Murakami, 2008; Schwartz & Mor-Sommerfeld, 2010; Thomauske, 2011). It has thus become necessary to develop intercultural skills and sensitivity to otherness among teachers. In 2005, a bi-national team (France-Scotland) attempted to address this problem within the European project *TESSLA* (Teacher Education for the Support of Second Language Acquisition) by designing, piloting and evaluating a teacher education course. The aim of the course was to sensitize pre-service elementary school teachers to the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students and to generate strategies and classroom practices that would support all students in their learning (Hancock et al, 2006).

Since its conception, the course has been adapted and delivered in a variety of contexts (Mary & Young, 2010; Young & Mary, 2010; Young & Mary, 2016). However, the sensitization of student teachers to the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse pupils through collective reflection, and the development of tools and practices to support their learning, has remained a central concern. One of the objectives in the study described in this chapter was that, through participating in the course, student teachers would not only gain important knowledge but would also acquire the ability to empathize and become agents of change. Previous research has highlighted the fact that many student teachers come to such courses with already established attitudes and ideologies about language (conscious or unconscious) which act as roadblocks to gaining new awareness (Banks, 2001; Commerford, 2005; Garmon, 2004) and that knowledge of content and pedagogy alone are not sufficient in helping teachers to be effective (Horan & Hersi, 2011). In light of this challenge, the didactic model *Problem Based Learning* (Komur & Kogut, 2006) was chosen as the most appropriate approach for the course. It was hoped that this instructional method, based on authentic or real world problems, in conjunction with theoretical reading and the use of multimodal and multimedia resources and tools would provide a rich context in which the students could confront their ideas and engage with their learning within a safe space. This chapter aims to highlight in particular the types of resources used, the reasons underlying the choice of these, the ways in which they were implemented and their role in expanding pre-service teachers' understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and in furthering their professional identities.

BACKGROUND

The training of teachers and educators to better take into account the linguistic and cultural diversity present in schools is a challenge teacher educator's face. Teachers and education professionals in general often lack the training necessary (Murakami, 2008; Wiley, 2008; Schwartz et al, 2010; Thomauske, 2011; Cajkler & Hall, 2012; Kuiken, 2014) to assist the increasing number of children for whom the school language is not the language spoken at home. Schools need professionals who have developed the capacity to empathize and an ability to understand others in their differences in order to reduce the gap

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