Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/csje20

Perceptions of Cultural Diversity among Pre-service Teachers

Annelise Brox Larsen

To cite this article: Annelise Brox Larsen (2021): Perceptions of Cultural Diversity among Pre-service Teachers, Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, DOI: 10.1080/00313831.2021.2006300

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.2006300

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 14 Dec 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 122

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=csje20

SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.2006300

Perceptions of Cultural Diversity among Pre-service Teachers

Annelise Brox Larsen

Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromso Norway

ABSTRACT
The present article examines how a group of Norwegian pre-service teachers of English and other foreign languages perceived the term "cultural diversity" when student-centred learning activities were used. A qualitative inquiry, comprising data retrieved from three student-centred activities: student narratives, role-playing, and focus group discussion are thematically analysed. Theoretical concepts from translation theory are applied to discuss students' perceptions of cultural diversity. The translation of the term in the student-centred learning activities led to individual and collaborative reflection in which controversial connotations and ethical dilemmas were debated. In the student narratives, conventional connotations were appraised; however, differing aspects were emphasized. When role-playing was used, the students' interpretations were more emotive. The students tended to cast the role of teacher in the majority cultural position, thereby impeding the possibility to view the term in a wider perspective. In the focus group discussion, the students' multifarious comprehensions regarding cultural diversity were debated.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 10 October 2020
Accepted 3 November 2021

KEYWORDS
Pre-service teachers; student-centred learning activities; role-playing; cultural diversity; narratives; EFL/FL didactics; translation theory; velocity and viscosity

1. Introduction

The term "cultural diversity", henceforward referred to as CD, is generally defined as "the existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a society" (Collins, 2014). In Norway, for instance, where the present study took place, the indigenous Sami population and the five national minority groups: Jews, Kvens/Norwegian Finns (people of Finnish descent in northern Norway), Forest Finns, Roma and Romani people live alongside the Norwegian majority population (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020). The somewhat neutral dictionary definition suggests an unbiased denotation, connected to other terms operating in the international communicative landscape to indicate notions of equality among people. In The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by UNESCO (2001), CD is acknowledged as the "common heritage of humanity" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 1), and its safeguarding is considered to be inseparable from respect for human dignity, incontrovertibly "a concrete and ethical imperative" (ibid.). Thus, CD could be perceived as part of an ideal of equality which is spread worldwide and throughout the education sector in ever-larger circles (Castro, 2010; Czarniawska & Sevon, 2005; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008).

According to Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) there seems to be weak conceptual clarity regarding how the term CD is used in teacher education research. May and Sleeter (2010) observe that the meaning assigned to the term seems to vary; "multiculturalism" is often used synonymously (Banks, 2014). In their review of intercultural competency within teacher education, Smolcic and

CONTACT Annelise Brox Larsen annelise.larsen@uit.no Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromso, 9037 Norway

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Katunich (2017) claim that such a lack of conceptual clarity indicates a shortfall in culturally apposite knowledge. Fylkesnes (2018), who has reviewed the use and meaning making of the CD term in 67 studies within teacher education research, claims that, "despite trying to promote social justice" (p. 32), the teacher education researcher's positionality facilitates a dichotomous understanding of CD with binary opposites. In a study of Spanish teachers' perceptions, CD was seen as an issue to be solved by individual multicultural students adapting to the majority culture (Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2014), and the authors argued that teacher education programmes should include questions related to multicultural education (p. 400). In a study of Norwegian student teachers' orientation towards CD in schools, it appears that they are uncomfortable talking about race and colour (Thomassen & Munthe, 2020); the students expressed a concern for inclusion, and requested more knowledge about diversity issues.

1.1. Context of the Present Study

To study how student teachers perceive CD is relevant, first and foremost on account of their future responsibilities in school. And future language teachers will teach target language culture and facilitate their pupils' development of intercultural communicative competence, in addition to the literary and linguistic aspects of the target language, according to the regulation relating to the framework plan for lower and upper secondary teacher education, years 8–13 (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2013). Furthermore, the training should qualify student teachers to provide instruction in Sami affairs and give them knowledge of the status of indigenous peoples internationally (p. 1). In the school subject English, this aspect has been included since the late 1990s (Larsen, 2009, p. 82); simultaneously, indigenous affairs were incorporated in the other foreign languages (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 1997).

In Norway, some students could be regarded as English as second language, L2, users. Notwithstanding the proficiency attained, they are not L2 users in the sense, as is often the case for L2 postcolonial language users, that English is the language of government (Graddol, 2006). Hence, the term "English as a foreign language", EFL, is applied in this research context to account for English as a schools subject in teacher education and school (Ørevik, 2015). English is taught from the first year of primary school, and the most common additional, but non-mandatory, foreign language, henceforward referred to as FL, is either German, French, Spanish or Russian (Larsen, 2014b) p. 2). According to Bjørke et al. (2018), the last decades have shown an increased focus in EFL/FL teaching on communicative skills and cultural insights to promote interaction, understanding and respect between people with different cultural backgrounds (p. 23). When "knowledge about cultural and societal issues in *various* countries" (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 170, my emphasis) in which the target language is spoken is accentuated and culture in language studies is constantly becoming more concerned with variety and diversity and less connected to nationality (Risager, 2007), it is relevant to explore how EFL/FL student teachers perceive CD.

1.2. Research Questions

The following questions are explored in this article:

How is CD translated in student-centred learning activities among a group of Norwegian student teachers of EFL/FLs?

What thematic aspects of CD are highlighted in the following student-centred learning activities: student narratives, role-playing activities and focus group discussion?

1.3. Theory

In this qualitative inquiry (Cresswell & Poth, 2018), holding a phenomenological perspective, the focus is on the essence of the investigated experience (Smith et al., 2009). Concurrently, concepts

from organisation theory and the sociology of translation therein (Czarniawska & Sevon, 2005) are used as an inroad into discussing how students may interpret or translate CD. In organisational translation studies, the way in which ideas travel and are spread and translated by different stakeholders or receivers is theorised (Røvik, 2016) "the way in which translators use various translation rules and perform translations may be decisive for outcomes of knowledge-transfer processes" (p. 290). Likewise, translation theory presupposes that ideas and their rhetoric wrappings and terminology are translated by miscellaneous groups, of which students could be viewed as one such recipient group. The conceptualisations of the different terms within teaching and learning discourses, constituted by knowledge-producing institutions, work mainly through educational curricula but also through practice (Afdal & Nerland, 2014). In this article, Cox's (1993, p. 6) well-established definition of CD as "the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance", is endorsed. Due to increasing differences in the population of many countries, diversity issues become increasingly more important Mazur (2010, p. 5). In this research context, translation-theoretical concepts are applied to discuss how students, as recipients of the notion of CD, translate the term. To study the practical approaches to the term is relevant, in order to understand how meaning is produced and negotiated among users of the term. What student teachers take CD to mean is influenced, not only by curricula but practically by all activities they are involved in and exposed to in their everyday life, as well as in the different student active learning methods applied in class (Repstad et al., 2021). Through active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), students view the term from different angles; in the present context, the term "student-centred learning activities" is used to refer to this type of learning.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) applied the terms "velocity", "the speed in which knowledge moves" (p. 102), and "viscosity", "the richness or thickness of the knowledge transfer" (ibid.), to denote the complexity involved in communication. The two terms have been used within the field of educational research (Larsen, 2014a) to discuss how students may translate curricular terminology in role-playing (p. 289). In Davenport and Prusak's (1998) study of knowledge transfer, the velocity, "How quickly do people who need the knowledge become aware of it and get access to it" (p. 102), and the viscosity, "How much of what we try to communicate is actually absorbed and used", were "often at odds" (ibid), because it "involves so many personal and psychological factors" (ibid.). Velocity and viscosity suggest that the complexity involved in any translation process: the many-layered meanings of a given term, especially when used in communication with other interlocutors – bringing their understandings of the term in question into the communicative act – imply rich associative and connotative meanings being assigned to any term. The present study of students' understanding of CD hypothesises that the velocity and viscosity of the translative practice will vary, depending on the student-centred learning activities involved in the translation of the term. Hypothetically, the speed and rhythm – velocity – of the translation would be higher and tighter in settings in which there is little time for preparation, and less spontaneous in situations with more time to consider the complexity of the terminology in question. Besides, the viscosity – consistency and substance – of the translation would hypothetically be influenced by the actual form and dynamic settings of the activity involved in the translation process.

2. Materials and Methods

A qualitative inquiry (Cresswell & Poth, 2018), in the form of a phenomenological single case study (Cresswell, 2013; Silverman, 2017; Yin, 2014) followed by a thematic analysis of the data, has been conducted (Clarke & Braun, 2014; Johannessen et al., 2018).

2.1. Participants

The case involved a group of nine student teachers, of whom three studied English, one French, two Spanish, and three Russian. All participants had Norwegian as L1 and English as L2. This was their

final year of the teacher education programme for lower and upper secondary teacher education, years 8–13 (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2013). In a written statement, the students were informed about the study and asked to give consent. They were ensured that their participation could be withdrawn at any point; no sensitive data were obtained or stored, and the participants were of age; therefore, no enrolment at the Norwegian Social Science Data Service was required. The students were working with the CD concept as part of their regular EFL/FL education course at a teacher education institution in the northern part of Norway.

2.2. Case

The case study involved the teacher/researcher in a teaching scheme in her regular class and, thus, indicates a case of insider researcher position (Cresswell, 2013). The teaching activity on CD took place in a regular double lesson of 90 × 2 min plus a 15-minute break. The teacher/researcher gave an oral, plenary and dialogic 15 min' introduction to the planned student activities; this presentation did not include traditional lecture and seminar arrangements. The curriculum texts relevant for the teaching scheme (Bjørke et al., 2014; Dema & Moeller, 2012; Kramsch, 2013), as well as the activities involved, were known in advance through the study plan for the EFL/FL didactic course handed out at the beginning of the course. The students' regular electronic and digital classroom, a commercially available learning and teaching platform provided by Its learning Fronter (1999) was used for the text production and exchange activity in the group.

The empirical data are threefold and consist firstly of a collection of nine student narratives, i.e., short narrative reflective texts concerning a specific topic (Larsen, 2016). Secondly, the data comprise the researcher's observation notes (Cresswell, 2013) of three student-produced role-playing sessions, in which fictitious parent-teacher conferences were portrayed. In a similar teaching scheme (Larsen, 2014a), the researcher's experiences, involving a different EFL/FL student group and concerning a different topic (formative assessment), suggest that students may identify themselves strongly with positions other than that of the teacher role when role-playing is used as a teaching method (p. 77). In the present study, the students designed role-plays in which they performed according to well-established standards for role-playing in educational settings (Jacobs, 2010; Sawyer, 2015; Shu, 2011). Thirdly, the data consist of the teacher/researcher's participatory observation log (Cresswell, 2013) of the student teachers' focus group discussion (Fern, 1982); Flores and Alonso (1995) used focus group discussions to explore teachers' views on educational change. In this case, a focus group discussion concerning the role-playing and the narrative writing was conducted.

2.3. Data set 1: Student Narratives

The students were invited to write short reflective narratives on their understanding of CD. In educational research, narrative enquiry (Niemi, 2019) offers a purposeful way to recount and represent incidents "by providing a structure for understanding and conveying the meaning of experiences" (p. 652). Even shorter reflective texts can be used to formulate notions and opinions about topical questions (Larsen, 2016). In the present study, no exact word limit was given, but an upper limit of approximately 200 words, in the allotted time of circa 15 min, was suggested. The students wrote the texts in class simultaneously and were told to publish and exchange texts with their fellow students in the digital classroom. All students were asked to read the nine narratives. The narratives showed great variation in terms of length. The shortest text contained 63 words, the longest 317. On average, the nine texts contained 157 words.

2.4. Data set 2: Observation Notes from Role-playing

The students were told to dramatize parent-teacher conferences with one teacher and one or two parents present. All nine students participated in the role-playing. They were invited to decide in

plenary whether they wanted one group of three and three groups with pairs, or three groups with three participants; the students opted for the latter. Afterwards, they were randomly divided into groups of three. Within the groups, they created topics in which one teacher role and two parent roles were designed. Such role-playing activity has previously been used to discuss relevant questions in students' professional practice (Eriksen et al., 2015; Larsen, 2014a). In the present project, the groups were asked to design and act out a parent-teacher conference. The topic of the role-playing was introduced by the teacher/researcher with the brief headline "Cultural Diversity". The students discussed possible dilemmas in groups of three and chose relevant themes. The teacher/researcher – in this particular activity, in the role of what Cresswell (2013) refers to as a non-participant observer (p. 167) – conducted a direct observation of the performance of the three role-plays. A tripartite descriptive observation form, noting (1) characters acting in the role-play, (2) topic of the discussion in the role-play and (3) symbols or artefacts used to illustrate the topic, constitutes the data from this activity. The students chose to act out parent-teacher conferences with the following casts and themes:

1. Mother, father and teacher discussed pupils' obligatory participation in different outdoor activities and practice in moving about safely in different kinds of weather, activities much appreciated in the somewhat stereotyped notions of Norwegian culture. These activities often require robust, expensive gear and clothing that some parents either cannot afford or are not accustomed to, or both. The teacher defended the principle of involving all pupils in presumably healthy year-round outdoor activities.
2. Mother, father and teacher discussed swimming lessons, which are mandatory for all pupils. The parents wanted modesty swimwear, burkini, for female pupils and expressed the demand to have separate female and male groups. Norwegian tradition suggests that mixed-gendered swimming does not constitute or present a problem or difficulty, as long as separate changing rooms and showers are used. The teacher defended the common mixed-gendered arrangements for swimming lessons.
3. Mother, father and teacher discussed the representation in the teaching material of a variety of family constellations. The parents focused on how to avoid exposing the pupils to stories involving same-sex marriages, whereas the teacher defended the more secular stance presented in the teaching material.

2.5. Data set 3: Participatory Observation log from Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was organised as a roundtable discussion, involving all nine students, and was led by the teacher/researcher in the role of discussion moderator (Fern, 1982). Focus group discussion, a method in which a researcher assembles a manageable group of up to 15–18 people to discuss a certain topic, aims to draw from the complex perceptions, personal experiences, beliefs and attitudes of the participants through a moderated interaction (Morgan, 1988; Stewart et al., 2007). The teacher/researcher and – in this particular activity – moderator's participatory field notes in the form of an observation log constitute the data collected from this activity. To support the researcher's observation of the focus group discussion, a bipartite observation form, with the two categories, student and topic, was used. The students were numbered from one to nine and grouped in threes to align with the role-playing groups, and the researcher ticked off whenever a student participated; in the second column, a keyword denoting the topic was logged, in addition to some quotes when the time allowed the moderator to take notes. Immediately after the lesson, she completed the notes with additional keywords to document the incident further. All students participated actively in the focus group discussion, which took place immediately after the writing session and role-playing.; the students reflected on the differences in the narratives and discussed what could be learnt from the narrative writing (Larsen, 2016). They shared their experiences

from the role-plays (Ryan, 2013) and discussed what could be learnt from the role-playing (Henry, 2000).

2.6. Validation

This study adheres to ethical standards for research provided by the Norwegian Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH). The insider position of the researcher and the double role of teacher and researcher has been researched by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), who maintain the importance of the practitioner, as both teacher and researcher, being conscious of their own beliefs and values during the analysis. This study holds with Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) in their view of the insider as the knowledge facilitator. The insider position is considered to facilitate in-depth study (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015); however, any researcher carries certain expectations and biases, and needs to be aware of these, as well as the asymmetrical power relationship between researcher and participants. The triangulated use of three data sets, student narratives, observation notes from role-playing and the participatory observation log from the focus group discussion, contributes to the validity of the study. The narrative and the focus group discussion methods ensure that direct student voices are reflected in the material. Also, sharing material and analysis procedures with colleagues in the researcher's internal research group (RITE) may strengthen the reliability and validity of the study, in the sense that the analysis has been discussed in the local setting with which the debaters are familiar. Additionally, a paper debating preliminary findings regarding the activities in class was presented at the conference, Edulearn 18 (Larsen, 2018), in what Cresswell (2014) calls peer debriefing (p. 202), to ensure that an international researcher community could raise questions regarding the qualitative study. Suggestions were made about adding a second round of narrative writing. However, this was not possible since the project was finalised by then. Aspects considering the thematic analysis and discussion were presented and debated with international colleagues in Hamburg, Germany, at the European Conference for Educational Research in 2019; questions were raised which contributed to the process of defining emerging themes.

2.7. Data Analysis

Data from the three activities were subject to a thematic analysis which set out to focus on recurring aspects in the material (Clarke & Braun, 2014) and prevalent themes were identified. Data comprising nine student narratives, teacher/researcher observation notes from three role-plays and the teacher/researcher participative observation log from the focus group discussion were first read, reread and analysed separately (Johannessen et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2009). The findings were first allocated to the three data-sets and then manually organised thematically into three topics, of which firstly, the students' embracement of diversity, secondly, a theme of majority versus minority culture, and, thirdly, the cultural positioning of the role of teacher emerged.

3. Results

The students' embracement of cultural diversity was mainly expressed in the narratives. In the role-plays, the demanding aspects regarding majority and minority cultural traits were portrayed. Moreover, the cultural positioning of the teacher role was formed in the meeting with the parent role.

3.1. Embracing Diversity

An affinity with several co-existing cultural practices was highlighted in the student narratives; CD was presented as an uncomplicated matter and the positive stance was maintained in the focus group discussion. The opportunities that embracing CD provides for growth to the individual

identity and to society were foregrounded. One student started her/his narrative like this: "CD means that within a society we accept and recognize the existence of other cultures". Another said, "CD to me is, as in the American term salad bowl, a salad bowl. It consists of several ingredients mixed in one and the same bowl. Even though it is mixed, we can still distinguish the different ingredients from each other". The more practical effects were also mentioned: "In terms of food, there are countless cultures. Food culture is constantly changing. The diversity of food spreads quickly and it is no longer the case that one eats only one type of food". Another pointed to the multifaceted connotations of the term: "Culture is language, behaviour, religion, food, geography and much more". Geography was also mentioned by another student: "Many people travel and may feel immediate belonging to one's region. For example, darkness and midnight sun are something everyone has to live with in polar areas". Another student wrote about religious diversity: "Different religions have different practices. For example, Norwegian, but Muslim, one might feel part of Norwegian culture, but also belonging to the culture that is about being a Muslim". Many narratives dealt with cultural identity on an individual level. "One's own behaviour can be formed from the upbringing, but also from one's social affiliations here and now". Also mentioned was the fact that behaviour is open to change: "Much of one's behaviour is characterised by tradition and habits, but one constantly changes". Another student claimed: " … one would be able to form new cultures, too". Likewise, benefits were accounted for: "By living with people from different cultures, you get a more open attitude." Another pointed to the "different factors in one's own life that form your identity". Yet, another wrote that "Different parts of you may belong to different cultures". "You learn to know other cultures through building relationships" another student maintained. Linguistic diversity was mentioned, too: "As a human being, you may speak different languages. This makes you feel like belonging to people who speak the same language".

In the focus group discussion, one student pointed to the benefits of reading his fellow students' texts, to get a broader picture of what CD meant to different people: "It is as if we reveal a lot about our own personality when we approach the same task differently". Another student said, "We approach CD so differently in our narratives. I focused on the melting pot effect, you know, when cultures blend, others about the effects of CD on an individual level"; as another student put it: "We emphasized totally different aspects".

3.2. Majority Versus Minority Culture

The theme of majority versus minority cultural traits was the main topic in the role-playing; controversies between conflicting cultural practices were portrayed. From the teacher/researcher observation position, what could be labelled foreign or minority cultural traits in general were portrayed in two role-plays. For instance, special clothing for rough outdoor activities were at issue in role-play 1. In role-play 2, the challenges involving same- or separate-gendered swimming lessons were at issue, the demand for modest swimwear to be allowed for girls, likewise. Religious practices were the topic of two role-plays. Role-play 2 portrayed what could be construed as a Muslim couple and role-play 3, a Christian couple. Their respective claims differed beyond this, although both couples argued in favour of conservative practices regarding gender; the parents in role-play 3 wanted only traditional opposite-sex couples to be represented in teaching schemes. All three role-plays portrayed traditional majority cultural family constellations, in the sense that they involved two-parent parenthood with a mother and a father. Accordingly, the parents held minority cultural positions in which religious affinity was highlighted in role-plays 2 and 3, and a more general non-Norwegian cultural affinity in role-play 1. In the focus group discussion, the potential conflicting views on cultural practice were debated. In the student narratives, religious affiliations were generally represented as a neutral phenomenon, part of the salad bowl, so to speak. In the role-playing session, however, religious practices were often the primary source of conflicting views. In the focus group discussion, differing religious practices were debated with the highest level of

engagement from all students. Religious practices were treated as a minority culture issue brought into the majority culture by parents and not teachers.

3.3. Cultural Positioning of the Language Teacher Role

The theme of the majority culture teacher role was a frequent underlying theme in the role-playing. The teacher role was represented by one male and two female teachers, reflecting the gender of the students who acted in the roles but also the gender division in the Norwegian teacher population (StatisticsNorway, 2020). However, none of the students stated that the teacher was of majority cultural origin. They left the teacher character undescribed, and it was in the meeting with the minority cultural parents that the teacher character was formed. As a representative of the government-issued curriculum, the teacher, both indirectly and directly, became a defender of majority cultural perspectives. In the focus group, they reported they had to face real emotions like anger and frustration. One of the students, acting in the role of teacher in role-play 2, expressed his emotions like this, "I sensed that I was angry at the parents and that I strongly disagreed". The student said he felt he had to compromise on things that he earlier would have claimed he was never going to compromise on. The burkini was the artifact of the compromise. But he could not accommodate the parents' demands fully and maintained boys and girls had to share the same water in the swimming pool. The student acting as the teacher in role-play 3 said: "It was my responsibility to act in a professional way and to avoid aggravating the conflict with the 'parents'". He added: "I knew that I had to accept some of their opinions, without compromising too much." Being true to their own values regarding, e.g., equality was seen as challenging by all students, since they wished to find solutions and make compromises. That the teacher characters were somewhat undefined in terms of cultural background was hardly problematised. The moderator's careful mentioning of this phenomenon regarding their role-playing did not bring about any further discussion, aside from the students commenting briefly on their potential lack of awareness regarding this.

4. Discussion

Clearly, the conceptualisation of a complex term like "cultural diversity" is not defined and determined by curricula and syllabi alone but situated in practice (Afdal & Nerland, 2014). Thus, to make sense of what it means involved the students in what could be called a translation process (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008), in which the term is given meaning by the people who use it. The two research questions are concerned with how CD was translated among the students and what thematic aspects were taken up in the three student-centred learning activities.

4.1. Translations of Cultural Diversity

The students were encompassed in complex translation practices in which the viscosity and velocity of their conceptualisation varied in the various settings (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). It is assumed that the velocity, "the speed", and viscosity, "the richness or thickness of the knowledge transfer" (p. 102), were influenced by the nature of the activity involved. When the students wrote narratives, they worked individually. Partly, the velocity involved in their translation practice was preordained, since they knew how much time they could spend on the activity. Still, even if the student had 15 min to formulate a text, s/he obviously did not start writing on a *tabula rasa*. Indeed, students do not meet any activity unprepared; their prior notions about the term and the activities – together – increase awareness and reflection (Afdal & Nerland, 2014). In the narrative writing, in which they expressed their views without being noticeably disturbed by others, the viscosity of the translation was almost attenuated and imperturbable; they did not have other people's views to consider; to some extent, they could contemplate the matter and formulate contents within the narrative

structure without interference. Their narrative writing provided little opportunity for external or conflicting views. In this case, the positive and uncontroversial aspects of the term were themed.

As noted in regard to the role-playing –– an activity in the project, in which a situation similar to what they may experience in their future practical work was dramatized (Henry, 2000; Larsen, 2014a) – the translation of CD happened in settings with little opportunity for preparation and contemplation as the dialogue in the role-playing proceeded; there were many, often opposite, interests at stake (Sawyer, 2015). Whilst acting in the teacher role, the students defended the school culture, while simultaneously responding to parents' demands; there was dialogic communication involving representatives of a transcultural population. The velocity of the translation practice was high: they had to hold different understandings simultaneously in situations in which they did not have much time to prepare themselves; the viscosity of their translation was densified (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). The translation of the term happened fast in the situation at hand.

In the subsequent focus group discussion, the translation proceeded. Being collaborative by nature, the focus group discussion setting ensured they were able to discuss their different views (Stewart et al., 2007). When the students created and acted out role-plays, they had little time for reflection during the actual role-play. When they prepared themselves for the roles, they used their preconceived notions about the kind of opinions and statements that the characters they played were most likely to voice. They had to think and talk quickly and alter their line of argumentation based on what the other students acting in the other roles said. In the focus group discussion, it became apparent that the role-playing activity in particular presented an opportunity to dig deeper into the conflicting and often emotional aspects of CD.

4.2. Thematic Aspects of Cultural Diversity

The translation of the term by students, who approached it in various ways, by writing about it, by acting out topics related to it, and by discussing it collaboratively, involved a complex translation practice (Røvik, 2016). Notably, the embrace of CD was their first response. All students presented a positive view in which they pointed to the possibilities of cultural prosperity for society and value-added individual growth.

Majority versus minority cultural issues were central in the role-playing. In a sense, the parent couples spoke with one minority cultural voice and in opposition to the teacher.

In the three students-centred learning activities (Repstad et al., 2021), the students did not write about or portray or discuss a situation involving Sami cultural traits even if this indigenous people have their core areas in the northern part where the project took place. Neither did they mention any of the five national minorities, of which Kven have their core areas in northern Norway. The students did not embrace the possibility of acting in the role of the opposite gender or in transgender roles. Among the students acting in the roles of parents, the two remaining male students played fathers. Of the four remaining female students, three students played mothers, whereas one female student acted in the role of father.

With regard to the cultural positioning of the teacher role, the students chose to make the teacher character undescribed, creating the impression that the teacher characters identified themselves with and represented the majority culture. Since all parents were holding minority culture positions, the teacher indirectly could be seen as holding a white ethnic Norwegian majority position. Because of the dichotomous settings of the role-plays, parents and teachers held opposite views (Fylkesnes, 2018). This suggests that care must be taken in the instruction if the role-play design is to be open to a variety of teacher characters. The impression gained was that the students were playing someone similar to themselves as future teachers. Unintentionally, this might strengthen a possible us–them notion. If the students seemingly identified themselves with the white middle class majority, they might run the risk of contributing to the possible conservation of an us–them dichotomy. When they kept the characters who played the teacher role as similar to themselves, as they did in this case, they might subconsciously see the culture that the parents present as the Other's meeting

with the school culture, the us. The teacher represents the school, and could be seen, if not necessarily as a government tool, at least as a messenger between the public and private spheres. The diversity concept may then become something that only applies to the Other. Seeing their own cultural background as diverse was seemingly not at issue. Although this is an experience from which they might learn, would it not have been even better, if the instruction at the beginning of the project asked them specifically to open the teacher character to a variety of cultural traits? However, the students got to acquaint themselves with how they might react to CD issues from a teacher perspective through the white middle class majority position (Castro, 2010). They probably also got to know more about what it is like to come from a minority culture, from the parent perspective.

4.3. Teacher/Researcher Perspective on Students' Perceptions

The insider position requires practitioners to evince an awareness of teachers/researchers' values and beliefs (Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009). Their influence is plausibly present in any activity in the teacher's own teaching schemes. The teacher/researcher in this case agrees with the formulation in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that "Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (UNESCO, 2001). To claim s/he is a non-participant observer in one of the activities studied is therefore inaccurate. The insider position is difficult to pull out of and not something you can withdraw from entirely, but s/he was less participatory in the narrative writing and role-playing than in the focus group discussion. An added function as moderator of the focus group complexifies the researcher position even further. Still, the classroom experience as empirical data facilitates a classroom setting involving teacher and students and comprises a near-identical real-life incident, without including the possible interference from an outsider position. Having a second researcher present could influence both the level and substance of student participation in the discussion. Yet, observing and moderating simultaneously could be demanding, for practical reasons. In this project, this double function was feasible because the group was relatively small. Since all students participated actively, there was time for the moderator to take some account of her notes while the students spoke. For larger groups, it might be advisable to have a co-researcher present to relieve the moderator of the observation function in this activity or to videotape the incident. However, such interference leads to new variables having to be considered. Both narrative writing and focus group discussion ensure that direct students voices are heard, but just to a certain extent. The focus group discussion method runs the risk of becoming consensus-oriented (Stewart et al., 2007). Individual interviews would have ensured even more that individual voices were incorporated. However, the level of engagement from all students suggests that the atmosphere of the discussion was making them relatively comfortable in terms of speaking their mind.

As this is a phenomenological study, it means that the findings are not automatically generalisable (Cresswell, 2013; Silverman, 2017; Yin, 2014). The qualitative findings from a similar study involving another teacher and a different student group could show a different result. Still, to discover that the majority cultural teacher position was so dominant in a teaching scheme like this draws attention to the necessity of observing that activities make a point of opening the teacher role to a variety of cultural traits, to ensure diversity for the teacher position and not only for the parent position (Thomassen & Munthe, 2020).

5. Conclusions

The student teachers' perceptions of CD were influenced by the three student-centred learning activities applied in class; by implementing student narrative writing, role-playing and focus group discussion, the students' conceptualisation of the term may even have deepened. In the role-playing sessions, the consequences of differing religious practices were at issue. The students chose situations portraying CD in which they designed the characters acting as teacher and parents.

The students' understanding of the concept was complemented when they wrote narratives and acted out parent teacher conferences; however, the underlying us–them notion was not sufficiently challenged. When students evaluated and reflected on their performance in the role-plays in the following focus group discussion, they claimed they attained a more profound, complex and dynamic understanding of the term compared to the narrative writing. Viscosity was dense and velocity was high, especially in the role-playing in which an opposing view was present and articulated. The complexity of the term was more visible and the pace in which they had to capture this complexity was tighter; they were challenged in ways that made them attain new understanding as the interaction with others went along. In the narrative writing, they could spend more time on reflection and contemplation before expressing their comprehension of the term, at a safe distance from the field. Keeping in mind that this was their first student active assignment in the teaching scheme on CD, they might have tuned in to the topic through this very first task by recapturing common connotations of the term. To examine whether narratives written after role-playing would differ is an interesting topic for future research.

Seemingly, the instruction at the outset of such a project as this could specify that the teacher role is open to different cultural characteristics, too. If the teacher role were stereotyped, implying that only white, middle class, ethnic Norwegian teachers were represented, the minority position could only be viewed from a parent perspective. In the worst-case scenario, a discursive ideology of white supremacy might even be buttressed. Yet, more importantly in this particular case, the students might miss the opportunity to dig into important and multifaceted perspectives. Nevertheless, play-acting in the roles of minority culture parents and majority culture teachers is a step forward in their development towards professionalism and provides an opportunity to practise their communicative ability when CD issues are involved. In this project, the students used and thereby translated the term by applying it in various activities. Accordingly, they acquired both knowledge and proficiency about CD. The term could be argued to be particularly relevant to EFL/FL pre-service teachers, who constantly deal with questions related to CD as an integrated part of the language subjects taught in school. When the students wrote and shared their narratives to explain how they understood the term, they maintained, in the focus group discussion, that they thereby attained some basic knowledge about CD. Furthermore, the students described their emotional reactions in the course of the role-playing session and discussed the substance of their individual reflections during the role-playing. In the focus group discussion, they also described the challenges they met while acting in character in the role-plays. The students discussed how they had to adjust their own opinions and beliefs, in order to enable communication with their fellow role-playing characters. Besides, they recognised how working individually on their narratives had given them the opportunity to articulate their own notions about CD, even if they could see in retrospect that their notions concerning the term had changed during the role-playing, as one student put it: "cultural diversity was more complex".

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

Afdal, H. W., & Nerland, M. (2014). Does teacher education matter? An analysis of relations to knowledge among Norwegian and Finnish novice teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *58*(3), 281–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2012.726274

Banks, J. A. (2014). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching*. Pearson.

Bjørke, C., Dypedahl, M., & Haukås, Å. (2014). *Fremmedspråksdidaktikk (foreign language didactics)*. Cappelen Damm.

Bjørke, C., Dypedahl, M., & Haukås, Å. (2018). Fremmedspråkdidaktikk før og nå [foreign language didactics earlier and now]. In C. Bjørke, M. Dypedahl, & Å Haukås (Eds.), *Fremmedspråkdidaktikk [foreign language didactics]* 2 ed. (pp. 18–32). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Bonwell, C., & Eison, J. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom*. George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Castro, A. J. (2010). Themes in the research on preservice teachers' views of cultural diversity: Implications for researching millennial preservice teachers. *Educational Researcher*, *39*(3), 198–210. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X10363819

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2014). Thematic analysis. In C. Theo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of critical psychology* (pp. 1947–1952). Springer.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. Teachers College Press.

Cochran-Smith, M., Villegas, A. M., Abrams, L., Chavez-Moreno, L., Mills, T., & Stern, R. (2015). Critiquing teacher preparation research: An overview of the field, part II. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *66*(2), 109–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487114558268

Collins. (2014). *Collins english dictionary – complete and unabridged. (12th ed.)*. HarperCollins Publishers.

Coronel, J. M., & Gómez-Hurtado, I. (2014). Nothing to do with me! teachers' perceptions on cultural diversity in Spanish secondary school. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *21*(4), 400–420. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2014.968896

Cox, T. (1993). *Cultural diversity in organizations, theory, research and practice*. Berrett-Koehler Publishing.

Cresswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.)*. Sage Publicatiions Inc.

Cresswell, J. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (4 ed.)*. Sage Publications Inc.

Cresswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design, choosing among five approaches (4th ed.)*. Sage Publications Inc.

Czarniawska, B., & Sevon, G. (2005). *Global ideas – how ideas, objects and practices travel in the global economy*. Liber.

Davenport, T. H., & Prusak, L. (1998). *Working knowledge*. Harvard Business School Press.

Dema, O., & Moeller, A. J. (2012). *Teaching culture in the 21st century language classroom*. Faculty Publications; University of Nebraska. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282228233_Teaching_culture_in_the_21st_century_language_classroom

Dypedahl, M., & Bøhn, H. (2018). Intercultural competence and culture pedagogy. In H. Bøhn, M. Dypedahl, & G.-O. Myklevold (Eds.), *Teaching and learning english* (pp. 158–177). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Eriksen, A., Larsen, A. B., & Leming, T. (2015). Acting and reflecting; making connections between theory and practice in teacher education. *Reflective Practice International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, *16*(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2014.969697

Fern, E. F. (1982). The use of focus groups for idea generation: The effects of group size, acquaintanceship and moderator on response quantity and quality. *Journal of Marketing Research, XI(February)*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378201900101

Flores, J. G., & Alonso, C. G. (1995). Using focus groups in educational research: Exploring teachers' perspectives on educational change. *Evaluation Review*, *19*(1), 84–101. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X9501900104

Fronter. (1999). (Learning Management System). Retrieved from https://itslearning.com/global/fronter/fronter-home/ https://itslearning.com/global/fronter/fronter-home/

Fylkesnes, S. (2018). Whiteness in teacher education research discourses: A review of the use and meaning making of the term *cultural diversity*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *71*(April 2018), 24–33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.12.005

Graddol, D. (2006). *English next*. The British Council.

Henry, M. (2000). Drama's ways of learning, research in drama education. *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, *5*(1), 46–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/135697800114195

Jacobs, J. (2010). Teaching and live performance: Applied theatre in universities and schools. *Applied Theatre Researcher/IDEA Journal*, *11*(1), 1–7. Retrieved from https://www.unesco-care.nie.edu.sg/research/teaching-and-live-performance-applied-theatre-universities-and-schools

Johannessen, L. E. F., Rafoss, T. W., & Rasmussen, E. B. (2018). *Hvordan bruke teori? Nyttige verktøy i kvalitativ analyse (How to use theory? Useful tools in qualitative analysis)*. Universitetsforlaget.

Kramsch, C. (2013). Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, *1*(1), 57–78. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1127430.pdf

Kunnskapsdepartementet. (1997). *Core curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education in Norway*. Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter.

Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2013). *Forskrift om rammeplan for lektorutdanning for trinn 8–13 [regulation relating to the framework plan for lower and upper secondary teacher eduaction years 8-13]*. Lovdata. Retrieved from https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2013-03-18-288

Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2020). *LK 20 overordnet del*. Utdanningsdirektoratet. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/opplaringens-verdigrunnlag/1.2-identitet-og-kulturelt-mangfold/

Larsen, A. B. (2009). *Content in Nordic pupil narratives in instructed EFL: A Norwegian perspective.* (PhD PhD-Thesis. University of Tromsø, Tromsø. Retrieved from https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/11035/thesis.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

Larsen, A. B. (2014a). Rollepspill som oversettelse (role-play as translation). In K. A. Røvik, T. V. Eilertsen, & E. M. Furu (Eds.), *Reformideer i norsk skole: Spredning, oversettelse og implementering (Reform ideas in Norwegian school: Distribution, translation and implementation)* (pp. 289–307). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Larsen, A. B. (2014b). Språkfagenes fremtid i et organisasjonsteoretisk perspektiv: Er det liv laga for fremmedspråk? (The future of language subjects: Is there still room for foreign languages?). *Acta Didactica Norway*, *8*(2), 1–14. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/abl002/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/1136-##default.genres.article##-4948-1-10-20150216%20(1).pdf. https://doi.org/10.5617/adno.1124

Larsen, A. B. (2016). Språklærerstudentene møter forskning i praksis (student teachers of foreign languages doing research in practicum). In E. Allerby, T. Leming, & T. Tiller (Eds.), *Forskerstudentene [student researchers]* (pp. 78–88). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Larsen, A. B. (2018). *Perceptions of the Term Cultural Diversity among Pre-service Teachers of English and Other Foreign Languages*. Paper presented at the Edulearn18, Palma, Spain.

May, S., & Sleeter, C. E. (2010). Introduction. In S. May, & C. E. Sleeter (Eds.), *Critical multiculturalism: Theory and praxis* (pp. 1–16). Routledge.

Mazur, B. (2010). Cultural diversity in organisational theory and practice. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, *2*(2), 5–10.

Morgan, D. L. (1988). *Focus group as qualitative research*. Sage Publications Inc.

Niemi, R. (2019). Five approaches to pedagogical action research. *Educational Action Research*, *27*(5), 651–666. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1528876

Ørevik, S. (2015). From book to screen: Changing genre patterns and communicative purposes. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, *10*(2). https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-943X-2015-02-04

Repstad, K., Ruhaven, I., & Smith-Gardsen, M. (2021). *Studentaktiv undervisning [student active teaching and learning]*. Pedlex.

Risager, K. (2007). *Language and culture pedagogy: From a national to a transnational paradigm*. Multilingual Matters.

RITE. Research in Teacher Education Practices, RITE. Retrieved from https://uit.no/forskning/forskningsgrupper/gruppe?p_document_id=665650

Røvik, K. A. (2016). Knowledge transfer as translation: Review and elements of an instrumental theory. *International Journal of Management Review*, *18*(3), 290–310. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12097

Ryan, M. (2013). The pedagogical balancing act: Teaching reflection in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *18*(2), 144–155. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13562517.2012.694104 https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.694104

Sahlin, K., & Wedlin, L. (2008). Circulating ideas: Imitation, translation and editing. In R. R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism* (pp. 218–242). Sage Publications Inc.

Sawyer, R. K. (2015). Drama, theatre and performance creativity. In S. Davis, H. G. Clemson, B. Ferholt, A. Marjanovic-Shane, & S. Jansson (Eds.), *Dramatic interactions in education-vygotskyan and sociocultural approaches to drama, education and research*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Shu, J. (2011). Teacher as actor: Future english teachers' training in the natural approach using drama. *Applied Theatre Researcher, IDEA Journal*, *12*(1), 1–17. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309767730_Teacher_as_Actor_Future_English_Teachers'_Training_in_the_Natural_Approach_Using_Drama

Silverman, D. (2017). *Doing qualitative research (4 ed.)*. Sage Publications Inc.

Smith, J. A., Larkin, M., & Flowers, P. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage Publications Inc.

Smolcic, E., & Katunich, J. (2017). Teachers crossing borders: A review of the research into cultural immersion field experience for teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *62*(February), 49–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.11.002

StatisticsNorway. (2020). Employees in primary and lower secondary education. Retrieved from https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/utdansatte. from Statistics Norway https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/utdansatte

Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P. N., & Rook, D. W. (2007). *Focus groups: Theory and practice*. Sage Publications Inc.

Thomassen, W. E., & Munthe, E. (2020). A Norwegian perspective: Student teachers' orientations towards cultural and linguistic diversity in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *96*(November), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103151

UNESCO. (2001). *Universal Declaration on cultural diversity*. UNESCO. Retrieved from http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study Research Design and Methods (5 ed.)*. Sage.