Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in higher education:
The use of a CLIL conceptual tool
for research into a university elective course

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has a history of a little over thirty years and has been proposed as an approach which supports the learning of content, a second language (L2) and learning skills. It is also an approach that has been used and researched over all three levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary which, for the purposes of this article, will be referred to as higher education (HE). However, over the past decade there have been voices which question the validity of CLIL as an approach to be used in HE for the teaching of subjects taught in English to students whose first language (L1) is not English. Instead alternatives such a English Medium Instruction or English Medium Education have been proposed. In this article, I argue that CLIL still has a role to play in HE and that over its history conceptualizations useful for SLA teachers have been proposed that are equally productive for researchers into the field, including those inquiring into HE. In the first part of the article, a description of CLIL is given followed by examples of how it has been used in HE. After this, English Medium Instruction is presented and what it proposes that is an alternative to CLIL. The article finishes with a description of a research project in HE instigated by this author, in which a CLIL conceptualization was used as a research tool.

Zintegrowane kształcenie przedmiotowo-językowe (CLIL) w szkolnictwie wyższym: Wykorzystanie narzędzia koncepcyjnego CLIL do badań nad kursem fakultatywnym na uniwersytecie

Abstrakt

Zintegrowane Kształcenie Przedmiotowo-Językowe (CLIL) ma nieco ponad trzydziestoletnią historię i zostało zaproponowane jako podejście wspierające naukę treści, drugiego języka i umiejętności uczenia się. Jest to również podejście, które było stosowane i badane na wszystkich trzech poziomach edukacji: podstawowym, średnim i wyższym. Jednak w ciągu ostatniej dekady pojawiły się głosy kwestionujące zasadność CLIL jako podejścia do nauczania przedmiotów w języku angielskim w szkolnictwie wyższym dla studentów, których pierwszym językiem nie jest angielski. Zamiast CLIL zaproponowano alternatywne rozwiązania, takie jak język angielski jako medium nauczania (English Medium Instruction) lub język angielski jako medium edukacji (English Medium Education). W niniejszym artykule argumentuję, że CLIL nadal ma do odegrania rolę w szkolnictwie wyższym i że na przestrzeni jego historii zaproponowano koncepcje przydatne dla nauczycieli języka angielskiego, które są równie produktywne dla badaczy w tej dziedzinie, w tym dla tych, którzy badają szkolnictwo wyższe. W pierwszej części artykułu przedstawiono opis CLIL, a następnie przykłady jego zastosowania w szkolnictwie wyższym. Następnie przedstawiono English Medium Instruction i jego propozycje jako alternatywy dla CLIL. Artykuł kończy się opisem projektu badawczego w szkolnictwie wyższym, zainicjowanego przez autora, w którym konceptualizacja CLIL została wykorzystana jako narzędzie badawcze.

1. Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has a history of a little over thirty years, although the use of a second language (L2) as a medium of instruction for educational content has a long tradition. Mehisto et al. (2007: 9–10) and Coyle et al. (2010: 2–3, 6–9) trace its roots back five thousand years to educational practices which occurred in the middle-east, the use of Greek by the Romans two thousand years ago and the prevalence of Latin as the language of education during the middle-ages. Closer to the present time and there were educational programmes in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s that became influential as models for L2 immersion around the world. For Europe (Eurydice 2006: 14), in countries where there is more than one official language, there is also a long history of teaching content through L2, while in post-World War Two Europe, in countries where regional and minority languages exist, a number of content and L2 educational programmes were implemented. With regard to bringing together content and language learning when the L2 is a foreign language, the impetus for this has grown since the 1980s and more especially since 1994 (Maljers et al. 2007: 7), when the CLIL initiative was first announced and gained support from the European Commission (Montalto et al. 2014: 6).

That the CLIL initiative is supported by the European Commission should come as no surprise. It appeared as an effective approach (both in terms of learning benefits and cost) to produce an educated population competent in languages that would be able to work across the member states, thereby

providing the European Union with a competitive edge in connection with globalization (Mantalto et al. 2014: 6). As Mantalto et al. (2014: 8) state, in the twenty-first century moving into the future, as well as subject competencies, people should have IT skills, be flexible and independent, and possess the communicative and social skills to function effectively in teams and successfully work on projects. For the realities of multinational industries and multicultural communities, this means the willingness to learn new competencies and skills, especially those related to language and intercultural engagement. The CLIL experience is perceived to offer training in these areas.

In addition to the above, Mehisto et al. (2007: 11) add another reason why the CLIL approach should be adopted and this is linked to education and who its recipients are at the present time. Technological advances have meant that the world is more connected than ever before and that contact is immediate. The people born at the beginning of the twenty-first century are the 'beneficiaries' of such a situation. They learn to handle the technology as they are using it and value the immediacy of contact and range of solutions it offers. Therefore, when it comes to education they are interested in learning through use, rather than learning to use at a later date. And again, in this matter, Mehisto et al. argue that CLIL offers an effective approach for this generation when it comes to learning content knowledge and L2, areas which are normally separated out and treated as two distinct subjects: with CLIL the focus is on the use of an L2 to learn content and the use of the content to learn the L2.

2. Overview of CLIL practice

CLIL is an approach in second language acquisition (SLA) in which content, language and learning skills are developed together. The content to be learned is given through authentic L2 materials (materials produced for the L2 language community rather than specially prepared for language teaching-learning), while the L2 is also the medium of instruction. Because of this,

learners have contact with and learn the content of a given subject as well as the L2 in which that content is given; basically, the lexis and grammar that is used but also the discourse in which it is framed – the way ideas are organized and developed and how these effect the reader or listener. Since L2 is the medium of instruction, contact with the language to be learned also includes the classroom language that is used by the learners (and the teacher) to negotiate the meaning of the content and the learners' understandings of it. In addition, by working together in this way and by being made aware of the processes they are involved in, learners have a chance to understand and develop their learning skills.

With regard to the choice of content for a CLIL course, Coyle et al. (2010: 27-28) link it to the institutional context. As such, it can be determined by curriculum demands or the specific needs of a project, where the interests of individual students influence what is done. Because of this, it is a flexible enough approach to allow a broad range of topics to be covered. In addition, the course content can be arranged thematically, on a cross-curricular basis or in a way that is interdisciplinary. The models that underly how content is learned derive from social-constructivist approaches based upon the theories of Vygotsky (1978). This means that the learners work with others, are actively involved in the educational process and are supported to construct meanings that they can articulate. With the latter, this may be helped through the application of a dialogic approach (Wells 1999, Skidmore et al. 2016) to teaching-learning.

In terms of cognition, frameworks such as Bloom's revised taxonomy (Coyle et al. 2010: 30–32) or a combination model which brings together critical thinking and affective development (Mehisto et al. 2008: 155–165) are advocated as useful guides for determining the type and effectiveness of learning that takes place when a particular task is used in the classroom. In connection with Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl's 2001: 67–68) there is acknowledgement of knowledge construction as a part of cognitive development, with

differentiation between the conceptual, procedural and meta-cognitive functions. There is also a separation between low-order processes such as remembering, understanding and applying, and the higher-order processes of analyzing, evaluating and creating; involvement in the CLIL classroom should ensure a place for both. The combination model that Mehisto et al. propose is largely taken from propositions for thinking and learning, as well as those for cognition and affective development summarized in Moseley et al. (2005: 79–85, 90–93, 94–98, 140–148, 200–206). Mehisto et al.'s model gives brief descriptions of activities for students at primary, secondary and vocational levels of education and are based on verbs that help students to "bring out facts; look at various processes including the learning process; analyze attitudes, emotions and values; and support the development of thinking skills and emotional intelligence to create new knowledge and experiences for the learner" (Mehisto et al. 2008: 156).

To a great extent, the role of language in CLIL is influenced by communicative language learning (CLL). As such, activity in the classroom should emphasize the communicative aspect of the language (where the aim is to use L2 as well as learn it), authentic contexts should be used, learner competence is viewed to be relative (according to genre, style and correctness), there is diversity and the approach to teaching and learning is eclectic (Sauvignon 2004). This, in turn, has consequences for what occurs in the CLIL classroom. Rather than concentrating purely on the language aspects of the content, learners are supported to use language for content learning, which means language carries meaning and is not only form, discourse creates meaning and is not only an expression of it and through the acquisition of knowledge new language and meaning is acquired (Coyle et al. 2010: 37).

In connection with learning skills, Coyle et al. (2010: 29) view knowledge of the metacognitive skills as vitally important if the learner is to be able to function in the learning environment and as a result of this develop successfully. This includes

knowledge of how to learn and think which, when used in the CLIL classroom, means learners understand the demands of the tasks they are given and are able to choose appropriate methods and skills to negotiate the learning process. It also entails knowledge of and the application of the lower and higher order processes noted above, as well as areas of conceptual and procedural knowledge. In addition to this, the abilities to cooperate collaboratively and deal with unexpected occurrences are also mentioned. Throughout their volume on the practical application of CLIL, Mehisto et al. (2008: 74, 75, 81) reiterate a number of these ideas and also add a language skills dimension when they suggest learners should "know when and how to interrupt and to ask for repetition and clarification".

3.   CLIL in HE

In two significant texts concerned with CLIL, one which emphasizes its practical implementation (Mehisto et al. 2008) and the other which deals with the theoretical underpinnings for the approach and its practical application (Coyle et al. 2010), HE figures as an appropriate level of education where it can be used. In the former text, HE is included in a diagram showing 'The Many Faces of CLIL', where it is placed underneath primary, secondary and vocational as one of the sectors for which it is appropriate (Mehisto et al. 2008: 13). However, throughout the book, the analyses, suggestions for implementation and activities are based in the other sectors mentioned above rather than HE. In the latter text, consideration is given as to why the CLIL approach might be adopted and why it is appropriate. For Coyle et al. (2010: 24) the reasons for the uptake of CLIL in HE has benefits for both students and academic staff. For most students, the use of CLIL allows them to develop additional language skills to deal with the cognitive demands of course content or it gives students with low language proficiency the support to actually negotiate that content. For academic staff, because of its focus on interactional rather than transactional

modes of delivery, involvement with CLIL processes means academic staff are more ready to deal with the demands of the contemporary educational encounter in which knowledge is not simply passed on but engaged with in meaningful ways by students. It also gives academic staff an opportunity to develop skills that are more generally useful when it comes to the research and administrative demands of working in HE.

Fortanet-Gómez (2013: 50) reiterates this latter point as one of the positive aspects of CLIL, when she gives two reasons for implementing it at HE level: the fact that it promotes academic, research and professional networking and leads to the development of intercultural skills. However, unlike Coyle et al., Fortanet-Gómez (2013: 49-50) does not restrict these benefits solely to academic staff but lists other positive aspects of using CLIL at HE level and these are connected with the gains for the institution and its place within the local community and beyond: the use of CLIL makes the university an attractive proposition for national and international students, helps to increase its profile and thereby promotes it, makes collaboration with other countries easier in terms of economic and cultural development and, as part of this, facilitates cooperation with companies at home and abroad. These factors coincide with European Higher Education Area objectives (Räsänen 2008), but there are also other reasons for implementing CLIL and this is connected with the opportunities it gives students to become multilingual and through this fulfil their ambitions; it gives them access to disciplines that my not be available in their L1 and "the linguistic and cultural skills to function effectively in an international social context and labour market" (Fortanet-Gómez 2013: 49). On a prosaic level, but nonetheless important, in face of the financial pressures universities are under and with the need for them to provide content courses and language learning opportunities for students, CLIL in the HE sector would appear to be a cost effective solution.

When it comes to implementing CLIL at HE level, Mehisto et al. offer it as a possibility but do not provide anything definite

in terms of analyses, suggestions for implementation and activities. Coyle et al. (2010: 24) propose three models: the plurilingual education model, where a number of languages are used in different years over the course of study which provides the content; adjunct CLIL, where content and language teaching are offered in tandem; and the language-embedded content course, which is designed with content and language development aims, and where the two components are taught by specialists in their respective fields. Fortanet-Gómez (2013: 41) admits that "CLIL has been associated with pre-school primary, secondary and vocational education" but then sees "no reason why […] [it] should be relegated to only the first stages of the education system; quite the reverse, it has been proved that one of the secrets of success for CLIL is continuity along the education process". And, in the third part of her book, she describes what has been done to implement multilingualism at Universitat Jaume I in Castellón, Spain, "through a CLIL-based pedagogy" (Guinda 2015: 214). Indeed, in Europe, Spain has been at the forefront of implementing CLIL at pre-school, primary and Secondary levels, but less so at HE level (Morton 2019: v). In Japan, meanwhile, the approach was first introduced at HE level followed by primary and secondary (Morton 2019: viii). As well as Fortanet-Gómez's contribution, therefore, and outside of Europe, research exists that analyses the implementation and/or use of CLIL at HE level: there is an investigation into a "soft CLIL" course offered at Yamaguchi University, Japan, between 2012 to 2017 for second, third and forth year undergraduate engineering students as part of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Sports and Technology Go Global Japan national project (Uemura, Gilmour and Costa 2019: 175–201); there is also a study undertaken at Yokohama City University, Japan, which analysed the use of translanguaging in a CLIL classroom small discussion group (Tsuchiya 2019: 263–284).

In Poland, there would appear to be reasons for optimism with regard to the situation for bilingual education and CLIL in particular. There has been sustained interest (Marsh et al.

2008, Olpińska 2010, Pawlak 2015, Romanowski 2018a) in developing the approach, while for lower-secondary level education Romanowski (2018b: 604) believes "subjects offered in bilingual provision in Poland do not differ much from those in other countries which can be regarded as pioneers of CLIL, i.e. Germany and Spain." Although he adds four caveats to this statement: there needs to be unification of curricula, an increase in the amount of exposure given, development of plurilingual competence in bilingual programmes and further training for Polish teachers who want to pursue the approach. Interestingly, in a recent publication about future possibilities for HE level education, English Medium Instruction (EMI) is focussed upon rather than CLIL (Hüttner 2019).

4.   Contestation of CLIL in HE

A problem for CLIL and one which is compounded at HE level education is a clear definition of what it actually is. Therefore, although the outline given at the beginning of this article (Section 2) proposes roles for content, language and learning skills, there is little agreement as to what percentage of a CLIL course should be devoted to work on each of these components. There are also doubts as to whether it is primarily a classroom practice that provides a set of techniques and materials for L2 learning together with content or a theorized approach based on research undertaken in L2 acquisition and constructivism. Additionally, in terms of curriculum, there is no consensus as to the role of language or content: should the former involve full or partial immersion and should the latter be project based or part of a school subject? In fact, there is concern that because the parameters for CLIL are so broad it would be difficult to think of any teaching-learning activity or situation that could not be considered part of the approach (Cenoz et al. 2014: 244–246).

With regard to CLIL in HE, the issues mentioned above are compounded by the fact that some researchers doubt its validity as an approach suitable for tertiary education. Lasagabaster

(2019: 347), for example, states HE courses are not dual-focus so that L2 medium instruction at universities is not CLIL. Additionally, there other approaches in HE with respect to content and language learning that are sometimes viewed to be synonymous with CLIL although they are not.[1] Prominent amongst these at the present time is EMI. It is different to CLIL in a number of ways, the most important of which includes its focus on English as the L2 (Macaro 2020: 263; Dearden 2014: 2, 4) and the less important role it places on developing the language competence of students (Dearden 2014: 4). However, the situation with EMI is less clear cut than it may seem. It is not only restricted to HE environments (Smit 2023: 499; Deardon 2014: 10–11) and the importance of language competences may depend on the learning objectives for a particular course (Macaro 2020: 264), or that there is pressure on course providers to support the development of those competences in their students (Fenton-Smith et al. 2017: 201; Walkinshaw et al. 2017: 6).

5. Conceptualizations for CLIL

In spite of the inconsistencies that exist, it does not mean the learning aspects of CLIL are left to chance. Researchers into CLIL and its practitioners are adamant that there should be a balance between the content and language learning, as well as skills development. To ensure this they offer support in terms of underlying principles and conceptualizations that aim to provide a theoretical framework for CLIL which can be put to practical use. With reference to the two texts concerned with CLIL mentioned in Section 3, Coyle et al. (2010) offer conceptualizations-cum-tools, and Mehisto et al. (2008) sets of exercises and activities, which can be used by prospective users of CLIL to

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[1] Walkinshaw et al. (2017: 6) write about Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), while Macaro (2022: 534) adds English Medium Education (EME) and Bilingual Education.

ensure a considered and structured implementation of the approach.

For example, Coyle et al. (2010) provide conceptualizations such as the language triptych (36–38), the spiral of language progression (38), the 4Cs framework (41–42) and the CLIL matrix (43–44), which enable teachers to view and reflect on what they aim to do with content and language and organize their classes appropriately. They also provide a CLIL tool kit based partly on these conceptualizations so that theory can be transformed into practice. The tool kit also includes "brainstorming and discussion techniques for building an ideas bank [which] provides the basis for vision sharing and prioritizing, so that relevant overarching goals can be constructed" (Coyle et al. 2010: 50): the use of a diamond nine activity to build a consensual vision for CLIL based activity (49–51), constructing a model for the CLIL programme from teachers' personal statements (52), brainstorming around the 4Cs framework (a theme explored through content, cognition, communication, culture) to create a unit of work (53-65), auditing selected tasks using the CLIL matrix (68-69), and use of the Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique – LOCIT approach – to monitor what is done in the classroom to share experiences and ideas with others (69–72).

Mehisto et al. (2008) also provide a range of tools to facilitate the implementation of the CLIL approach in the classroom. These include a CLIL core principles model which serves as a reference point for planning lessons based around cognition, community, content and communication and their attendant aspects (31), a core CLIL features review chart which includes all the characteristics that should be considered in a CLIL lesson (multiple focus, active learning, safe and enriching environment, scaffolding, authenticity and co-operation) (45), and a single lesson and week long grid for student outcomes in connection with content, language and learning skills (51). Other tools include scaffolding for how to work *with* a text (81–84) and *on* a text (87-89) to make it accessible for learners, lists of

sentence fragments to be used for guided reflection (128–129), step-by-step instructions to support learners through a writing project (214–215), and information and activity ideas for using drama in a CLIL project (219–225).

The conceptualizations-cum-tools are proposed as aids to help stakeholders in the CLIL enterprise implement CLIL courses and for teachers to put them into practice in a classroom situation. However, in extension of these propositions, they have also been used as research tools. In one example, Alonso-Belmonte and Fernández-Agüero (2018: 311–312) mapped the variety of pedagogical tasks offered to promote critical thinking skills in the CLIL classroom at primary level. In their analysis of the data collected from a survey, they classified the activities and tasks teachers declared they used according to the Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001), a framework proposed by Coyle et al. (2010: 30–31) as an appropriate tool with which to view cognitive engagement in the CLIL classroom. In another example, a 4Cs framework combining ideas from both Coyle et al. and Mehisto et al. was used: "Content (subject matter), Communication (language), Cognition (cognitive skills), and Culture/Community (awareness toward learning community and pluricultural understanding)" (Yamano 2019: 92) to explore the potential for using CLIL in a Japanese primary school. In the same inquiry, Coyle et al.'s CLIL matrix was also used to visualize how learners developed their cognitive levels in connection with the linguistic demands of each lesson (Yamano 2019: 108–109).

As can be seen from above, conceptualizations-cum-tools offered by Coyle et al. and Mehisto et al. have been used as research tools into CLIL activity. However, these have been based in the primary sector. To this author's knowledge, in connection with research carried out in HE, the conceptualizations-cum-tools have not been used as research tools. In spite of this, the core principles model offered by Mehisto et al. (2008: 31) was viewed as an interesting prospect as a research tool for analysis of an elective course which was not CLIL based. This was

because the main purpose of the research was to view critically what had been done over the nine editions of the elective course as part of the review stage of an action research (AR) model of plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005: 564). The core principles of cognition, community, content and communication and their attendant aspects gave a broad range of perspectives from which to carry out this process. Importantly, its aspects were also viewed to be sympathetic to the characteristics and principles of happening and performance based practice that underlay the elective course, thus making it an appropriate tool with which to view what had occurred in terms of the ontology of the elective course.

6.   The CLIL core principles model used as a research tool

6.1. The CLIL core principles model and its correlation with characteristics and principles of happening and performance based practice

The core principles of the CLIL core principles model are cognition, community, content and communication and their subsidiary aspects. For **cognition**, the aspects concentrate on:

- student engagement in the learning process across content, language and the learning skills;
- cooperation between students and teacher in the articulation and then analysis of learning outcomes (with the aim to set new outcomes);
- learning that builds on students' individual resources (existing knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests and experiences);
- synthesis, evaluation and application of knowledge and acquired skills in several subjects.

With regard to **community**, the aspects concern:

- students' feelings about involvement in the learning community;

- the ability to work in groups;
- partnership between those involved in the educational process;
- students' self-awareness of their role in and beyond the classroom.

The **content** aspects cover the content of the course and include:
- relevance of the content to the community inside and outside of the classroom;
- application of new content using experiential activities which also help students to develop related skills;
- integration of various subjects in which the cultural content is recognized and exploited.

For **communication**, the aspects include:

- right of the students to choose to participate (in activities and communication in the classroom and the community);
- classroom management (desk placement, wall displays and use of other equipment);
- co-construction and negotiation of meaning between students with the inclusion of the teacher;
- development of language and communication skills in all the subjects that are part of the course

(Mehisto et al. 2008: 31).

As well as offering a broad range of perspectives from which to view the elective course, the core principles model was chosen as a research tool because its aspects were seen to correlate with the characteristics and principles of happening and performance based practice that underlay the elective course. These characteristics and principles were taken from various sources (Blaszk 2017: 54–56, Jogschies et al. 2018: 53–54, Monk et al. 2012: 2–5) and included the following precepts. For cognition, students are actively involved in the learning process to which they bring their own ideas on what is done and how it is assessed. There is also acknowledgment of a range of learning

styles in the educational process. With community there is a belief in partnership, where students and educators work together, different points of view are encouraged and ideas from the individual are valued and accepted within the work of the group. Meanwhile, content is based in real life, understanding (competency) comes from practical application and there is acceptance of different forms of content and ways to express it. There is also an awareness that contact between people is informed by their interests and the points of view they hold. With communication, active participation is encouraged and educators work with students to facilitate situations in which co-designing and co-creation can take place. There is also acceptance of the fact that the arrangement of the space and issues of pace need to be taken into account if the performance-based educational encounter is to be successful.

Choosing the CLIL core principles model as a research tool meant the various possibilities open to an elective course based on the characteristics and principles of happening and performance based practice would be visible and could be acknowledged when analysing the data. It also meant other perspectives, ones which were not an intrinsic part of the performance characteristics and principles, could be taken into account – development of L2 and learning skills.

6.2. A HE elective course about creativity and happening

As was stated in the introduction, the research project in which the CLIL core principles were used did not concern a CLIL course. That is, the course was not planned following a CLIL approach, rather it was a HE elective in which the students learned about creativity and happening as a performance practice, took part in activities in which they were physically involved, and then planned, prepared and enacted individual and group happenings. These areas of activity were presented in the form of four components. In Table 1, the four components and the types of input offered are shown.

Table 1. The four components of the elective course and the types of input offered in each component

Component of elective course	Type of input
One	analysis of written texts on creativity and involvement in creative activities
Two	analysis of written and spoken texts about happenings and videos of happenings
Three	involvement in physical and performance related activities and reflection on that involvement
Four	planning, preparation and enactment of group and individual happenings

The elective course was offered to students on three courses of study: Management of Artistic Institutions – Management Specialization (MAI-MS), English Studies – Teacher Specialization (ES-TS) and American Studies – Culture Specialization (AS-CS). There were nine editions of the elective, of which five were offered to students from the MAI-MS, three to students from the ES-TS and one edition to students from the AS-CS. The editions for the MAI-MS and ES-TS consisted of 30 contact hours, while the edition for the AS-CS consisted of 15 contact hours. In total, 118 students participated in the nine editions of the course.

Generally, over its nine editions, the course received positive responses from the students who participated. It was also successful in the achievement of its declared aims as given in the syllabuses of each of the editions: to acquaint students with different theories and characteristics connected to creativity and happening and then to apply this knowledge in the planning, preparation and enactment of their own happenings. However, there were a number of issues that appeared across the nine editions that were "areas of concern" for this author, who was also the course provider. These related to the language level of the students choosing the elective course and the level at which the materials and classroom language were pitched and, as

a result of this, I had doubts about the effectiveness of the exploitation of the materials and activities offered. There was also a feeling among some of the students that there was a mismatch between their profile and the aims of the course with regard to physical content. As a result of these issues it appeared an appropriate time to look critically at what had been achieved thus far on the elective course and decide what should be changed.

6.3. The research undertaken

As was mentioned in Section 5, the research undertaken was done as part of the reflect stage of an AR model of plan, act, observe and reflect. The data was gathered from different sources over the nine editions of elective course. The sources included:

- written observations of the courses as they progressed and notes taken related to particular incidents;
- documents related to the courses: syllabuses, course descriptions, assessment sheets, copies of texts (reading and listening) and videos used on the courses, and descriptions of physical activities;
- artefacts created during the courses: happening scripts, and happening enactment plans;
- visual documentation: photographs and video films, and images created by the students;
- course portfolios created by the students.

Analysis of the data used the point of entry text (POET) strategy described by Kinchloe (2008: 340–346). This involved viewing and re-viewing the data from the perspectives offered by the aspects of the core principles to build up as full a picture as possible of what occurred over the nine editions of the elective course.

6.4. The results

In this section the purpose is to show the efficacy of the core principles model in relation to research into the elective course. For this reason a selection of the results is given rather than a more copious account – this will appear in a future volume. For the sake of clarity, the results are presented following the order of the aspects from the CLIL core principles model.

6.4.1. Cognition

In terms of the learning outcomes and student involvement in constructing them, analysis of the data showed that the outcomes written into the syllabuses for the different editions of the elective course concerned areas such as content and learning skills but were lacking for language development. For the first three components of the elective course, the students were not involved in creating the outcomes. In the forth component, however, the students did have a part in constructing the content outcomes: the students decided on the content and form of the group and individual happenings that they created. The existing knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests and experiences of the students over a range of subject areas were utilized throughout the four components of the elective course. This related to the main content areas of the course given in components one and two, where the students' knowledge and interests connected with their chosen courses of study were continued and extended: creativity in relation to the MAI-MS and ES-TS, and happening with regards to MAI-MS and AS-CS. The procedures employed to exploit materials related to creativity and happening also got the students to bring their own knowledge and experiences to the themes explored: at pre-reading/listening or viewing stages, for example, they discussed their ideas in pairs or small groups with their colleagues. In the component dedicated to happening, the students also carried out individual research on happenings and performance art enactments that

were of interest to them, which they then presented to other students using PowerPoint or through the use of mobile phones. In component three, the students used their individual physical skills doing the suggested activities. Meanwhile, in component four, the students brought the full range of their existing knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests and experiences to bear on the work they did to create and enact group and individual happenings. In this component, during the planning, preparation and enactment of the happenings, students also synthesized, evaluated and applied the knowledge and skills they had gained from the elective course, as well as from other subject courses.

6.4.2. Community

As was mentioned in Section 6.1., the students' feelings about involvement in the learning community of the elective course were generally positive. This concerned the variety of involvement, the possibility for students to pursue their own ideas, the way feedback was conducted and the fact that nobody was forced to be involved in activities they did not want to be a part of, as alternatives were always given or found. Initial doubts about involvement in component three activities were also overcome because of the way in which the activities were run and because engagement in them gave the students confidence when it came to enacting the group and individual happenings. Even when part of one cohort of students (edition four) had negative feelings about the course,[2] they were still positive about how involvement in the course and group happening had strengthened their bonds of community.

Throughout the four components of the course, the default position for student work was either in pairs or small groups (three to four students). There were also whole class activities.

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[2] These concerned the elective course's promotion of active involvement, doubts about my handling of the very first meeting and difficulties in doing the group happening because of extreme weather conditions.

Even tasks which demanded individual work were prefaced by students talking together and sharing ideas before doing the task or carrying out the same procedure after a task was done. In terms of partnership between those involved in the educational process, this not only relates to those involved in the classroom encounter, but also those people who are part of and facilitate the educational offer in any educational institution. With regard to the elective course and the classroom encounter, in components one, two and three, the input and the form in which it was presented and dealt with by the students was decided upon by me as the course provider. Therefore, the relation was asymmetrical (less partnership orientated). In component four, the relation changed to one which was more symmetrical (partnership orientated): as the component progressed, the students made more decisions about content and how they pursued it, while I as the course provider supported that activity through questioning, offering suggestions as well as different options for some of the problems they encountered. In connection with the involvement of other staff in the elective course, this occurred in a number of editions in relation to component four, when the students either had to seek permission to enact their group happenings from the dean of the faculty (editions two, three, eight and nine) or the rector of the university (edition six). There were also cases where the students had to liaise with the organizers of an annual festival at which they were able to present their happenings (editions one and four).

6.4.3. Content

Throughout the four components of the elective course, the content was relevant to the needs of the community inside and outside of the classroom. In components one and two, students explored content through engagement with authentic reading materials, listenings and video recordings; 'texts' that students and researchers interested in the psychological aspects of creativity or happening as an artistic and socio-political phenomenon

would look at. Additionally, a number of the physical activities used in component three were those used by actors in workshop situations, while others were adaptations of sporting activities, for instance, a Tug-of-Peace activity based on Tug-of-War. In component four, because the students explored issues that were of concern to them and dealt with contemporary social and political problems – the experience of young people (edition two), migration (editions three and four), the pandemic (editions five and six), freedom (edition eight) – again, the content was relevant to the needs of the community inside and outside of the classroom.

There were also opportunities for students to apply new content through the use of experiential activities. For instance, in component one, to experience psychological categorisations of creativity, students solved riddles (convergent thinking) and developed a drawing from a squiggle that a colleague had made on a piece of paper (divergent thinking), or did a version of Guilford's Alternative Uses Test (1967), which measures fluency, originality, flexibility and elaboration in relation to divergent thinking. In component two, students read about and discussed characteristics for happening and then, in component three, engaged in activities where they could experience one or more of the characteristics. In component four, the enactments of the group and individual happenings were experiential activities in which the students brought together and made sense of the different forms of input they had been exposed to and engaged with in the previous three components.

The elective course was an integration of several subjects as students negotiated texts that were based in psychology, education and the arts (including the visual arts, performance and literature). There was also an interdisciplinary element when content from one subject helped the students to understand more fully processes that occurred in another; where, for example, psychological precepts for creativity were applied to happening to help the students understand how ideas for an enactment might be developed or how people might react to it. In

component four, for the group and individual happenings, students also chose to explore a variety of issues. As already mentioned, there were group happenings which were socially and politically orientated but there were also ones that were aesthetically based: the group happenings for editions one and two were interpretations of Samuel Beckett texts. The individual happenings also dealt with a variety of subjects thus broadening the subject/cultural base of the elective course even further. Among other things, there were explorations of the local area, personal activities, the power of influencers, women's rights, capitalism, the environment, aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and existing works of art or art forms. And, in agreement with what Coyle et al. (2010: 39), the cultural content here was not simply the information given in the materials that the students read, listened to or watched or the products they created, rather it was present when the students interacted with the material or products and, in the company of others, shared their experiences connected with it; because in such cases it became relevant to the students (and, in connection with the happenings, other people) and offered possibilities for enrichment and development.

6.4.4. Communication

With the right to choose to participate in activities and communication in the classroom and the community, the majority of students willingly took part in all four components of the elective course. When individual students were reluctant to participate, a discussion was entered into with me as the course provider and alternatives were sought. For example, in editions three and nine of the elective course, when students expressed unwillingness to be involved in the group happenings as "actors", they enthusiastically took on the roles of documenting the group happenings. Classroom management was an important factor throughout all editions and components of the elective course. For components one and two, a traditional classroom

arrangement was adequate, where tables were placed in rows facing the front of the classroom towards the whiteboard and screen for multimedia projection. When it came to components three and four, the traditional classroom arrangement was disrupted. Tables and chairs were pushed to the sides of the classroom and the space in the middle was used. If this space was not large enough, corridor or other spaces in and around the faculty building were used, including outdoor spaces. For component three, for example, the Tug-of-Peace activity mentioned in 6.4.3. above, was done in a corridor space. For component four, edition six of the elective course, one of the university car-parks was used to carry out practice for the happening enactment which entailed students spinning round with two metre long canes held parallel to the ground.

The procedures adopted to work with content materials, meant students were involved together in the co-construction and negotiation of meaning and this also included me as a the course provider. 'Pre' and 'post' stages were used when the students tackled content material connected with components one and two – creativity and happening. At the pre-stage, students reflected on and made brief notes about a specified subject area and then shared their ideas in pairs and small groups. Following this, individually, the students read, listened to or viewed content material on the same theme as their reflections and discussions, and then compared their ideas. At the post-stage, the students came together in small groups once more to discuss their reactions which they then shared as a whole group. In component four, students co-constructed and negotiated meanings towards the creation of group happenings. There were also procedures for this. There were discussion activities in small and whole groups, the sharing of ideas through mind-mapping, as well as a poster construction activity where all the students of a particular cohort worked together and made a large poster showing all the issues and ideas they wanted to pursue. After that, over consecutive sessions, the students worked together to

deconstruct and pair down the initial proposals to end up with a working idea for a happening.

In the nine editions of the elective course, there was no formal development of language and communication skills in the subjects that were part of the course. As was mentioned in section 6.4.1., such development was not written into the syllabus and there was no conscious effort on my part as the course provider to pursue their development. There was incidental work on language, when an individual student or a cohort asked for elucidation of a particular word or phrase (the words 'indeterminacy' and 'compartmentalization' from a text about happening and performance art in component two), or activities were done that got the students to consider areas of language (a vocabulary activity that tested the students' knowledge of homonymy and thus convergent thinking, from component one). For some materials (for example, an extensive listening about how to make a happening), as part of a flipped classroom procedure the students were given homework assignments in which they studied the content and also worked on unknown language items. Most of all, however, in connection with language development, students consulted their colleagues or me to confirm meanings or used dictionary applications on their Smartphones.

7.   Conclusion

In this article I have argued that conceptualizations proposed for the practical application of the CLIL approach are productive research tools for inquiries into the field of SLA but also beyond that. In research undertaken by this author, the core principles model offered by Mehisto et al. (2008: 31) proved an effective tool with which to view nine editions of an elective course on creativity and happening offered to undergraduate students at HE level. This was because the principles of cognition, community, content and communication and their attendant aspects, offered a wide range of perspectives from which to analyse the

elective course at the review stage of an action research strategy. In terms of the research carried out, it showed that for the majority of the aspects of the core principle aspects, the materials, activities and procedures used were appropriate in support of the main aims of the course (see above, Section 6.2). However, it also highlighted that while the content was dealt with adequately, very little provision was made for work on the development of language (L2) and learning skills. With the former, this relied upon incidental teaching, reacting to student requests for clarification or ad hoc consultations with me as the course provider, their colleagues or dictionary applications on their Smartphones. In terms of the latter, the learners practised learning skills connected with working in groups, working on tasks and planning and organizing their work, as well as dealing with unexpected occurrences in relation to enactment of their happenings. However, there was no overt training of these areas. Application of the core principles aspects also showed that there was no consistent cooperation between students and teacher in the articulation and then analysis of learning outcomes with the aim to set new outcomes, as this only occurred in component four of the elective course. In line with the nature of the research that was undertaken, AR, these are areas for consideration and further action before implementation of the next edition of the elective course. Finally, even though there are doubts about whether or not the CLIL approach is appropriate for subjects taught using L2 at HE level, it does provide useful conceptualizations with which to view what is done on such courses in relation to content and language. In terms of the core principles model in connection with the nine editions of the elective course this was especially the case, as the various aspects of the model allowed a complex view of the elective course in keeping with the needs of the research undertaken.

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