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# Teachers' Perspectives on CLIL and Classroom Innovation in a Method based on Drama Games

## *La perspectiva de los profesores acerca de CLIL y la innovación en clase en un método basado en juegos teatrales*

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**Abstract:** This paper presents an analysis of a set of semi-structured interviews conducted with a group of CLIL and non-CLIL teachers from Germany and Spain on topics related to CLIL and the use of drama games. The purpose of this study is to determine the conceptualizations and attitudes they have about these two methods and the combination of both. We conducted a thematic analysis and a case study, and determined the similarities and differences among the teachers interviewed. We also examined the degree of 'investment' (Norton, 2013) they may be willing to make regarding a new method resulting from the project 'playingCLIL'.

**Keywords:** CLIL; drama games; thematic analysis; innovation.

**Resumen:** Este artículo presenta un análisis de un grupo de entrevistas estructuradas llevadas a cabo con un grupo de profesores CLIL y no-CLIL de Alemania y España. Estas entrevistas incluyen temas relacionados con CLIL y el uso de juegos teatrales. Nuestro propósito con este estudio es determinar las conceptualizaciones y actitudes que tienen acerca de estos dos métodos y de la combinación de ambos. Hemos llevado a cabo un análisis temático y un estudio de casos, y hemos determinado las similitudes y diferencias entre los profesores entrevistados. Además, hemos intentado establecer el grado de *investment* (Norton, 2013) que pueden tener, de acuerdo con un nuevo método emergente a partir del proyecto 'playingCLIL'.

**Palabras clave:** CLIL; juegos teatrales; análisis temático; innovación.



## INTRODUCTION

A much quoted definition of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) by Coyle et al. (2010) conceptualises CLIL as ‘a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content *and* language’ (p.1, original emphasis). As such, CLIL is an innovative method for most teachers, as they are not normally trained for –or used to– integrating both content and a foreign language in their classroom practice. The combination of the two domains may therefore challenge teachers to rethink and adapt their teaching practice, but it also potentially affects their identities as teachers. Existing research shows that teachers frequently construct their professional identity –besides other continua– along the ‘subject teacher’ ‘foreign language teacher’ divide (Chadwick, 2007; DelliCarpini and Alonso, 2015). Following from this, it appears reasonable to assume that if CLIL teachers are offered an innovative methodology for their CLIL practice, their responses to this method will be specifically grounded in the teachers’ professional identities.

In this paper, we report on results from a study conducted in conjunction with the EU-funded project ‘playingCLIL’ (Lifelong Learning, Key Action 2, project No: 543143-LLP-1-2013-DE-KA2-KA2MP). The idea of ‘playingCLIL’ is to make use of drama games in the CLIL classroom for the dual purpose of scaffolding language and content learning processes by strengthening learners’ communicative, cognitive, and interactional abilities (Spolin, 1986; Pierse, 2006; Arampatzis et al., 2015). This study draws on data from interviews with CLIL and non-CLIL teachers from Germany and Spain participating in an in-service ‘playingCLIL’ training course that took place in the course of the project. Given the nature of the ‘playingCLIL’ project as a measure to foster language learning throughout the EU, the research linked with it shares this normative angle. This is to say that we assume the soundness of the rationale of the ‘playingCLIL’ method on theoretical grounds (Arampatzis et al., 2015). In the study presented here we seek to understand how teachers perceive ‘playingCLIL’ and how their identities impact on this perception.

In the first section we outline the rationale of the research project we report on in this paper. The second section presents the methodology used in this study. Next, we present a thematic analysis of our corpus of data, followed by individual case studies which illustrate our findings. To conclude, we discuss the results obtained in our analysis, and draw some conclusions, also touching upon implications of our findings for teachers’ professional development with reference to innovating CLIL classroom teaching through ‘playingCLIL’.



### RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

Since the so-called social turn (Block, 2003) in Applied Linguistics, teacher development research has increasingly focused on teachers' identities (Varghese et al., 2005). Varghese et al. state that over time identity has widely been conceptualized as "not a fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon but [...] multiple, shifting, and in conflict" (op. cit., p. 22). Also, identity is seen as "transformational and transformative" (op. cit., p. 23) and considered to be "constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse" (ibid.). Finally, context is important as a third determining factor for the formation of teacher identity: "identity is not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political context" (ibid.). This last notion is closely linked with the work done by Norton (e.g. Norton, 2013). Norton argues in particular that motivation cannot be seen as the product of an individual's psychological dispositions alone, but that it has rather to be understood as formed within a social context which is itself structured by power relations that afford opportunities of varying degree for personal agency (p. 3). Hence, Norton conceptualizes motivation from a sociocultural perspective (i.e. readiness to teach in CLIL and to implement innovation in CLIL) with a social component and refers to this complex as 'investment' (ibid.). CLIL teachers have been shown to accept innovation if they are invested in the innovation process and enjoy participation and freedom of action (Hunt, 2011; Massler, 2012). At the same time, teachers can become 'dis-invested' and disengaged in CLIL if they are working under conditions of external control and pressure (Palmer and Snodgrass Rangel, 2011). Drawing on Norton's (2013) notion of 'investment' we will discuss in this paper in which way teachers invested in CLIL (or rather not) and how this (dis-) investedness may impact on their reception of 'playing CLIL' as a new teaching method. Using a qualitative approach, we will explore the perceptual categories that emerge from the teachers' own accounts of their CLIL practice, and relate these to issues of motivation, identity and investment.

### METHODOLOGY

The goal of our research study is to understand the way teachers who are involved in CLIL, either as practising teachers or as teachers considering adopting CLIL in the future for their own teaching, perceive and make sense of an innovative method specifically designed for CLIL contexts. We, therefore, aim to learn about the teachers' cognitions (Mayring, 2008, p. 50-51) regarding CLIL as a pedagogical



cal approach and the teachers' attitudes towards some of the key issues related to content and language integrated teaching and learning.

The method chosen for data collection is the 'problem-centred interview' (PCI) (Witzel, 2000), which is a semi-structured type of focused interaction between researcher and informant partner. We used a thematically structured guideline consisting of open-ended questions to elicit the verbalisation of our interview partners' understandings of and views on CLIL and the new teaching method 'playingCLIL', offered at an in-service training course as part of the EU-project 'playingCLIL'. Guidelines are a typical tool used in PCIs (Witzel, 2000), but they also helped to assure a certain amount of consistency (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) as, for pragmatic reasons, the interviews had to be conducted by several persons. To prepare the ground for a qualitative analysis, we followed a verbatim transcription protocol (Guest et al., 2013).

We used slightly different guidelines for the interviews with CLIL and non-CLIL teachers, because of the difference in context. However, to structure our analysis, we selected a set of seven questions which were included in both guidelines. These questions covered topics related to the conceptualization of CLIL (questions 1 and 2), the image of a CLIL teacher (questions 3 and 4), methodological aspects of CLIL (questions 5 and 6), as well as to the teachers' idea on the use of drama games to support teaching in the CLIL context (question 7). Two of the interviews were conducted shortly before the start of the 'playingCLIL' training course while the other three were carried out during the training course.

For the data analysis we follow Mayring's (2008) approach to content analysis and examine our data for specific themes that emerge when teachers talk about CLIL in terms of their own conceptualisations and attitudes. We agree with Riessman (2005: 3) that "the thematic approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases – finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report".

The interviewees in our study are five teachers with different professional profiles, which are summarised in the following table.

**Table 1**

| Interviewee | Teaching educational stage | Country | University education | Teaching subjects | Years of expertise as a teacher | Years of expertise as a CLIL teacher | CLIL training |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| A           | Primary education          | Spain   | EFL                  | EFL               | 9                               | 4                                    | Yes           |



| Interviewee | Teaching educational stage | Country | University education       | Teaching subjects                   | Years of expertise as a teacher | Years of expertise as a CLIL teacher | CLIL training |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| B           | Primary education          | Spain   | EFL                        | EFL                                 | 11                              | 6                                    | Yes           |
| C           | Primary education          | Spain   | Physical Education         | EFL and Physical Education          | 7                               | 4                                    | Yes           |
| D           | Primary education          | Germany | EFL and Physical Education | EFL and Physical Education          | 18                              | -                                    | No            |
| E           | Primary education          | Germany | EFL and German             | EFL, German, Social Studies and Art | 20                              | -                                    | No            |

## DATA ANALYSIS

### *Method and procedure*

In the following, we will report on findings from analyses of our interview partners' responses to the aforementioned set of seven questions. Leaving aside those questions that make reference to the organisational aspects of CLIL at the teachers' schools, we focus on four broader topics: 1) the conceptualisation of CLIL, 2) the conceptualisation of what a CLIL teacher is, 3) teachers' personal attitudes towards CLIL, and 4) their attitudes towards an innovative pedagogical method, i. e. 'playingCLIL', which is based on the functional use of drama games in the CLIL classroom. Studying the teachers' subjective perceptions on CLIL, we are aiming at a better understanding of the notions that teachers draw on in order to rationalise CLIL as a meaningful teaching practice, through which they perceive external attempts to innovate the established CLIL teaching method.

Our first aim is to explore the potential bandwidth and diversity of notions about CLIL and attitudes to methodological innovation. We therefore first present the results from our thematic analysis in a summative fashion that cuts across cases. The emerging map of themes represents the themes in the corpus as "aspects of a single, collective case" (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 79). This idealised map



allows us to highlight the content structure of our corpus material gathered from 5 interviews at a general level (Mayring, 2008, p. 59) by identifying the themes that teachers address to frame their views of CLIL as such, and within the context of the training course on ‘playingCLIL’ more specifically. In order to accentuate the individual character of each of the cases, we also conducted individual case-studies to access the level of teachers’ professional identity.

Our data analysis procedure implied multiple readings of the selected material by both authors in the light of the broader topics of conceptualisation of CLIL, the image of the CLIL teacher, attitudes towards CLIL, and attitudes towards the key idea of ‘playingCLIL’. These provided the direction for the analysis of the content.

Unlike the topics, which were deduced from the literature review, the analytical categories within each topic were generated from the data. As each topic was explored by two questions in the interview guideline (with the exception of the last one addressing the teachers’ attitudes to the ‘playingCLIL’ methodology, which had one question only), the material was grouped under the heading of the relevant general topic. Repeated readings yielded a set of analytical categories, which were used in the following step of consensual coding (Schmidt, 2005, p. 453) to identify key-themes that could be related to them. Some key-themes were also linked with sub-themes. Within this terminology, under a given topic categories denote a conceptual field quite broadly. Themes can be seen as mini-narratives that relate to individual rationalisations or meaning-making moves done by the teachers. Sub-themes, then, are related to the main theme but add specific extensions to them.

### *Thematic structure of the corpus*

The first two questions refer to the conceptualisation of CLIL in general. The respective questions in the interview guideline were “Could you explain what CLIL is?” and “What are the specific challenges of CLIL from your point of view?” Whilst the first question asks for conceptualisations in a straightforward way, the second refers to conceptual aspects of CLIL indirectly by addressing what teachers think are defining features of CLIL from the angle of practical teaching issues. The way in which teachers define CLIL and the perceived challenges of this teaching concept are of particular interest in our context because we consider these cognitions to be influential on how teachers rate the significance and usefulness of any innovative method – such as ‘playingCLIL’ in our case. All in all, we found two analytic categories regarding the conceptualisation



of CLIL emerging from the data: 1) CLIL as relating language and content, and 2) CLIL as an innovation.

In the first category, CLIL as relating language and content, we identified three key themes. The first two focus on the function of language for the teaching of content matter – and vice versa. Theme one captures the idea that ‘content serves as a vehicle for teaching a foreign language’, while the second theme is in direct opposition to the first and conceptualises the content, or subject, as the core of teaching, while the language used may vary. The third theme in this category is ‘seeing CLIL as a way to integrate the teaching of language and content’. In conjunction with this general theme, a sub-theme emerges that critically addresses the potential ‘danger of oversimplification of the content’.

The second category within the topic ‘conceptualisation of CLIL’ that could be identified in the data was ‘CLIL as innovation’. Four themes were found to be emergent here. The first refers to a ‘change of the teachers’ mind’, especially to English language teachers’ awareness of the significance of teaching language through content. The second theme in the category of CLIL as innovation addresses the ‘proliferation of English as a means of communication within the school beyond the language and CLIL classrooms’. Themes number three and four have a distinctive pedagogical focus, one being ‘planning for progress in two different fields’ and the other ‘making content accessible’.

The next two questions address the image of a competent CLIL teacher. The questions asked were: “What qualities should a CLIL teacher have?” and “Which of these qualities do you think you are missing?” Again, we used a double-approach with one question offering an opportunity for an abstract answer such as a definition or general characterisation, and the second focusing on the individual teacher’s perception of herself or himself as a (potential) CLIL teacher. We were thus hoping to learn about our interview partners’ priorities regarding personal qualities and qualifications of CLIL teachers, but also about how they position themselves *vis-à-vis* these potentially idealised images. This general topic yielded three categories with a total of four themes and four sub-themes.

The first category is ‘teacher’s set of mind’. In this category, one main theme could be identified, which is that ‘CLIL teachers should display an open mind and seek collaboration with other teachers’. The relevant sub-theme addresses the motivation for collaboration, which is to ‘overcome one’s own limitations’.

The second category refers to ‘pedagogic and didactic skills for involving learners’. We identified three main themes, the first being ‘versatile communication strategies for learners at all stages of their language learning process’. The second theme highlights the significance of having a ‘wide repertoire of teaching



techniques' to make lessons interesting and also has a sub-theme focusing on the 'diversity of materials and resources' a teacher can feed into the learning process. The third theme here is the teacher's general 'sensitivity to learners' needs'.

The third category references the teacher's 'proficiency in the language and the subject'. It has only one theme, which is the stipulation that 'proficiency in the fields of language and content is important'. The two subsequent sub-themes offer two different directions as possible reasons why this should be true: sub-theme one suggests that 'both are linked', while sub-theme two holds that 'in the higher grades learners will not accept language deficits in their teachers'.

The next set of questions elicits the respondents' attitudes towards CLIL. We asked "How important are content and language in a CLIL lesson?" and "Should the L1 be included in the CLIL approach? Why?" These questions gave the teachers a chance to reconsider the conceptualisations of CLIL that they had talked about earlier in the interview. Data analysis for this topic resulted in four main categories.

Category one negotiates the 'priority of language or content in CLIL'. Theme one states clearly that 'language is a priority'. The related sub-theme takes a different angle stating that in CLIL 'content is not always a priority'. The second theme sees 'changing priorities according to contexts', while the third theme generally holds that 'language and content have equal priority'.

Category two concerns a ban on 'L1 use by the teacher'. Four themes can be identified, the first being that the teacher's use of the L2 will 'foster the learners' habit of using English', while the second claims that 'using the L1 breaks the learners' attention'. The third theme concedes 'difficult moments' that may occur when 'abstract concepts have to be explained' (sub-theme one) or when teachers are 'teaching content to very young learners' (sub-theme two). The fourth theme distinguishes between the teacher's and learner's use of the L1 stating that 'the teacher's use of the L1 ought to be avoided' because, as the sub-theme explains, teachers' L1 occurs through a 'slip of control'.

Category three is about the 'acceptability of learners' use of the L1', especially in 'peer-to-peer-interaction', which is the only theme in this category. Category four is about 'acceptable use of the L1 depending on circumstances'. Theme one refers to the 'amount of exposure that learners have had in the L2', and a related sub-theme specifies that 'L1 use should be increased when it is feasible'. Theme two refers to the argument that 'L1 should be allowed to ensure understanding and save time'.

Finally, the question "What do you think about teaching CLIL through drama games?" aimed at eliciting the interview partners' attitudes towards the method of



‘playingCLIL’. Two categories emerged, one welcoming ‘playingCLIL’ as a ‘practical tool’, the second expressing some reservation as ‘using drama games can be a personal challenge’. We identified two main themes in category one, the first making reference to the ‘motivation created by drama games’, the second highlighting the ‘potential of drama games to activate learners’. The latter theme also has two sub-themes, one alluding to ‘making use of the learners’ own creativity’, and the other to drama games as especially ‘beneficial for learners who do not have an academic leaning’. The only theme in the second category foregrounds that ‘teachers may not feel confident with the use of drama games’, especially, as is stated as a sub-theme, when they feel a ‘lack of creativity to think of suitable games’.

### *Case studies*

#### Interviewee A

Interviewee A is a female who works as a CLIL teacher and who was trained at university level to be a primary English teacher. In her responses she focuses on the importance of language and language teaching and highlights its foregrounding over content. When asked about the relationship between content and language, she makes the prevalence and importance of language itself very clear: “I use the content as a tool to provide language, language, language, language, language, and uses of language [...]”.

Her answers show some redundancies when she keeps focusing on the importance of language: “I think that the language is the most important, language, language, language, and communication [...]”. There is an interesting example of a digression which evidently brings to light her own understanding of the topic in her answer concerning the balance between content and language. In this case she dedicates her entire answer to refer to resources that she uses in the classroom, and the digression takes the topic back to her favourite theme, language: “[...] is more important because you get in use to the language [...] if you don’t know the words you are not able to write it”.

Her narrative follows a personal and subjective storyline. Nevertheless, she can also place herself in a more general context, investing her own viewpoint in a social framework: “I think that people sometimes they don’t understand what we really do”. This reflection shows some certain level of frustration when she continues in her discourse: “sometimes it’s very hard to continue or to work better”.

Finally, when referring to the main guiding theme (CLIL) of the interview, she highlights two main ideas in her discourse. On the one hand, she makes clear



reference to being ‘different’: “You have to be different”; “Yes, it’s different, totally different”. On the other hand, she alludes to the innovative potential of the CLIL methodology: “It changed our mind”.

We think of A as deeply invested in language teaching as she challenges herself to “work better”. Apparently, she uses CLIL as a transmission device to improve her teaching, for which she works very hard. She seems to identify with an existing or imagined collective of CLIL teachers, who may even represent a kind of *avant-garde* in reforming language teaching. She sees CLIL teachers as distinct from other teachers, not always receiving the recognition they deserve. She refers to the positive attitude of learners towards drama, as well as the instrumental nature of this methodology: “They really like it and I think it’s a really good tool to teach”.

### Interviewee B

Interviewee B is a male teacher who works as a CLIL teacher and who was trained at university level to be a primary English teacher. We find him to be markedly undecided when referring to the importance of content and language in CLIL. First, he mentions the integration of both aspects as an essential condition: “What they are learning and not specifically the English, the content, but all integrated, no?” Later, he expresses a more differentiated view taking a number of context variables into account: “It depends on the grade [...] on the children, the stage [...]”. Eventually, he endorses a priority of language over content. “I think if we are thinking about CLIL, content is not the most important”.

Unlike interviewee A, who widely uses the first person singular pronoun, B makes extensive use of the second person singular pronoun, making a general reference to the figure of the teacher rather than himself: “You can see changes, you can see at least you can see that they are enjoying and we know that when you enjoy something probably if it’s learning, you will do it forever”.

Despite this rather impersonal storyline, B uses the first person singular pronoun to refer to himself severely when it comes to imagining using the ‘playing-CLIL’ method, which he views with some scepticism: “I’m very bad at drama”, and “I think I’m not very creative”.

However, there is a moment at which he directs his attention to a problematic aspect in the classroom (loss of control) making use again of the second person: “you lose your control”. This comment appears related to the need to use the L1 under circumstances in which the exclusive use of the L2 can make teaching more difficult. Thus, following his storyline, this seems to be a fact which he relates to teaching in general and not, unlike the previous ones, just to himself.



There is a case of digression in his discourse when he answers the question referring to the challenges of CLIL. In this case, he shifts the focus from CLIL to himself: “To involve children in the learning process and make them act and live what they are learning”. He is not specific about the challenges of CLIL but he mentions a challenge which can be related to the role of the teacher in any activity to develop in the classroom.

The analysis shows B to be not very much at ease with the role of a CLIL teacher. He seems, however, to identify more clearly with learner-centred classroom pedagogies aimed at learner involvement and with his own awareness of learners’ needs. He seems, therefore, less invested in the idea of CLIL as such, having not yet arrived at a conclusive conceptualisation of this approach. As his own personal skills and resources also seem to mismatch with what he sees as the prime qualifications needed to teach through the ‘playingCLIL’ method, he perceives himself to be on the defensive regarding the challenge to adopt it for his own practice.

### Interviewee C

Interview C is a female teacher who works as a CLIL teacher and who was trained at university as a Physical Education teacher. She attended an official school of languages where she studied English. Due to the competence acquired through these English lessons she was asked to enter the CLIL program, teaching Physical Education through English. Therefore, her core field is the subject matter, and she makes this clear in her discourse by using the first person possessive determiner when defining CLIL: “For me is teaching my subject , Physical Education, for example, my topics and I use the language, English language, to explain and to speak with the children”.

Despite her extra-university language qualification in the language, English as the means of communication remains an issue for C. She does not seem to feel generally very confident in the language saying “Sometimes I need more people [...] to speak in English, a good English [...] to correct me for example”, while in class she sometimes asks the learners to translate when they face difficulties with language: “They translate for the others”, “Can you explain for your classmates please?”

For her, the English language appears as a site of struggle that also involves one other concern she comes back to several times in the interview with a more positive emphasis, which is her commitment to establish a link with the children in her class: “When you look at the faces and you are sure that they don’t understand



you". As with B, we see C deeply invested in relating with her students. English as a medium to reach this goal functions less as an integrated element but rather more as a puzzle to be solved in order to reach this aim: "To connect with children is the first [...] You need to connect with children in English".

When asked about the use of drama games as a new methodology for CLIL she alludes to a more traditional idea of 'drama', and thinks of learning the texts beforehand in order to perform afterwards. Despite referring to the benefits and joy that drama brings into the class, she does not relate to the idea behind the rationale of the 'playingCLIL' methodology.

### Interviewee D

Interviewee D is a female 'non-CLIL' teacher, who teaches English and Physical Education, which are the two subjects in which she was trained at university level. Despite the fact that she teaches Physical Education through English, she does not consider herself a CLIL teacher: "I use English in my PE classes but I don't know if that really is CLIL already".

Her definition of CLIL points to the connection between content and language, not referring to any primacy regarding these two features. Nevertheless, when she is asked about the challenges of CLIL she hints at the 'simplification' of content. She repeats this idea ("simplifying the content", "it has to get simplified too much") several times. She refers to language mainly as a teaching skill: "If I were gonna teach PE in English I could probably do it in a fairly authentic way". Hence, language only becomes an issue if the teacher's linguistic skills are inadequate: "If a teacher tries to do CLIL with limited English that's probably not sufficient".

Her understanding of her own practice seems to be related more to the ideas of EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) than to CLIL. This can be explained with reference to her previous teaching experience at schools in an English-speaking country for several years. This biographical feature might also explain why she expressed little concern with her own language competence and places consistent emphasis on the teaching of content. Within this configuration, the 'playingCLIL' methodology takes on a primarily instrumental role to facilitate learning: "It opens venues of learning that a regular classroom doesn't provide". She actually repeats the idea of "venues of learning" later, again without making specific reference to language.

We consider D to be strongly invested in an EMI-style of the PE classroom in which she accepts the challenge posed by the learners' demands for her to be



linguistically proficient and authentic. She regards ‘playingCLIL’ as a welcome opportunity for innovating her teaching repertoire, yet without necessarily aiming for a classroom in which content and language teaching are balanced features of instruction.

### Interviewee E

Interviewee E is a female non-CLIL teacher who teaches English, German, Social Studies and Arts at a primary school. Her training at the university was German and English. The moment of the interview, unlike in the cases of A, B and C, was during the training course in which she came into contact with the ‘playingCLIL’ methodology. However, unlike D, she had no previous EMI teaching experience abroad or in other CLIL-related settings. E’s answers seem to be highly conditioned by these specific circumstances.

In her conceptualisation of CLIL, E relies strongly on the knowledge she has received in the course: “So I only know what I read about it and what I heard about it here”. Not only does this happen when defining CLIL, but also when describing the challenges of this methodology: “So far as I’ve heard it’s to plan progress in a subject and at the same time to plan progress of the language or progress the students should need”.

Therefore, E seems to want to make it clear that she is not familiar with the methodology. She does not seem to be particularly invested in the CLIL approach and emphasizes the fact that her opinions and knowledge come from what she is learning in the course. When she is asked about the importance of content and language she goes back to the same argument: “I think they are equally important as far as I have understood [...] as I have understood it should be the same”.

She does not even see much difference between CLIL and the ‘traditional’ way of teaching, apart from the fact that teachers have to be in control of both the language and the content. This we can gather from her comments about the qualities a CLIL teacher should have: “It’s probably the same like in any other lesson”.

E puts some noticeable distance between herself and the ideas regarding CLIL, not making any personal reference to preconceptions or ideas that she may bring or have in her mind. Another example of this appears when she refers to the ‘playingCLIL’ methodology: “So what I’ve seen here I think games are a good way to come into contact, to communicate [...]”.

E is noticeably reluctant to become engaged with the notion of CLIL in general and the ‘playingCLIL’ method in particular. She seems rather more invested in what she considers ordinary teaching, which according to E is already based on the



principles that she sees will apply to CLIL or ‘playingCLIL’. E presumably only sees a difference in degree but not in kind between her existing teaching practice and CLIL as far as the fundamental principles are concerned.

## DISCUSSION

To create the corpus of data for the study we report on here, we selected responses from five teacher interviews regarding the four topics ‘conceptualisation of CLIL’, ‘the image of a competent CLIL teacher’, ‘attitudes towards CLIL’, and ‘attitudes towards the ‘playingCLIL’ methodology’. Data-driven analysis of each topic area generated several categories, which in turn held various themes and occasional sub-themes.

For the first topic area, the conceptualisation of CLIL, two main categories emerged that describe CLIL as a teaching approach which is innovative and integrates content and language. The answers cover the three options that balancing both content and language may provide, establishing three themes. Two of them refer to the dual approaches discussed in Lyster and Ballinger (2011): content as a more important element than language (‘content-driven approach’) or vice versa (‘language-driven approach’). The third theme refers to the balanced state of importance. One sub-theme shows the concern about a simplification of the content in responding to the learners’ language needs. Regarding CLIL as an innovative method, the answers revolve around ideas such as the change of teachers’ minds and the opportunity to spread the use of English as a communicative tool in the school, even out of the language and CLIL classrooms.

The analysis of the image of the CLIL teacher as a competent figure brought forth three categories related to the teachers’ set of mind, didactic skills and their proficiency in the language and the subject. Regarding the teachers’ set of mind, respondents highlight the need to keep an open mind and the tendency towards collaborative work. This need for collaboration is conditioned by their ideas about overcoming their own limitations.

In the case of didactic skills, the respondents refer to the versatility of communication strategies, as well as the teaching techniques that may create more interesting lessons. As they also point out, this could be accomplished through the use of different materials and resources in the classroom. Being sensitive and open to learners’ needs is another key aspect that appears in this section. Finally, the high degree of competence in the language and the subject taught is another aspect that the respondents refer to.

Regarding their attitudes towards CLIL, the respondents go back to the ideas expressed previously about CLIL. However, in this case they give an extra twist to



the dichotomy between content and language and specify that the predominance of one over the other may vary depending on the context. With respect to the use of L1 by the teacher, our respondents present a marked opposition that they base on the ideas that the L2 will improve the learners' use of English and that using the L1 may imply an element of distraction in the classroom.

However, there are some specific circumstances in which the respondents may find the use of the L1 tolerable or even justifiable. These circumstances include situations such as the learners' interaction with their peers or as a tool for saving time and improving the understanding of the content.

Regarding the implementation of the new methodology 'playingCLIL', the respondents welcome it, on the one hand, as a tool which can enhance the learning process of students. However, on the other hand, some of them also show some restraint about this methodology due to possible insecurities as a result of a lack of specific training in creativity and drama techniques.

Nevertheless, they highlight communication, involvement and interaction as features which can be improved through the use of drama games. In this, they may relate easily to Spolin's (1986) early endorsement of using drama games to teach curriculum material: "Playing theater games with your students will bring refreshment, vitality, and more. Theater-game workshops are designed not as diversions from the curriculum, but rather as supplements, increasing student awareness of problems and ideas fundamental to their intellectual development" (p.2). Pierse (2006) also discusses drama games in education, attributing their positive effects to the combination of benefits in the learning process with a light-hearted form of involvement: "When teachers introduce improvisation games in the classroom, most students want to play or at least watch. [...] The students communicate with each other. They laugh. They have fun" (p.19).

Finally, along the study of the individual cases we have seen different perspectives and degrees of investment among the respondents. The use of Norton's notion of investment provides us with a perspective on teacher identity which includes individual and social context dimensions. Expressed in these terms, our findings echo results from CLIL teacher research on the significance of ownership and collaboration for teacher investment (Massler, 2012; Hüttner et al., 2013). Opportunities for peer-collaboration and lesson planning (Massler, 2012) and possibilities of working in a self-determined way (Hüttner et al., 2013) are key factors for teacher investment into CLIL. A similar observation could be made in our study. While A showed a high degree of investment in language teaching emphasising her perceived membership of a community of practice of CLIL teachers, B seems to be highly invested in learner-centred approaches and not much invested in the



idea of a CLIL teacher. Like B, C seems also rather invested in the interaction with her students but is clearly lacking opportunities for collaboration. D, working with a strong sense of professional independence, shows a high degree of investment in her practice of teaching through the medium of English, and not as much in the integration of language and content. Finally, respondent E appears less invested in all the questions asked along the interview and the themes and categories analysed in them. As a consequence, adopting CLIL in the future appears as a far-away notion for her. When turning to the idea of implementing ‘playingCLIL’ for their own classroom teaching, teachers who proved to be rather strongly invested in CLIL, irrespective of the specific flavour of CLIL they adhere to, show a noticeably more positive attitude towards such a drama games-based teaching method, whereas teachers who are rather marginally invested in CLIL tend to evaluate ‘playingCLIL’ as having little if any potential for their own teaching.

The twofold approach in our data analysis, consisting of mapping the thematic structure across cases and providing individual case-studies, allows us to relate our findings in a constructive way. The thematic structure analysis provided a general understanding of how diverse cognitive and attitudinal approaches of teachers to CLIL and CLIL teaching methodology can be. When looking at the case-studies, it becomes tangible, however, in which way teacher learning may be filtered by perceptual dispositions which are in turn closely linked with professional identities. As, for example, Cammarata’s (2009, 2010) research shows, CLIL teachers very often conceptualise their professional identity according to the subject they studied during their initial training, which in most cases is either in a language or a content subject. Therefore, they are quite likely to perceive the dual approach of CLIL not only as a methodological problem but also as a potential challenge to their existing self-concept (Tan, 2011), which can force them to engage in a transformational (D’Angelo, 2013) process of “(re)-establishing the sense of professional integrity” (Moate, 2011: 343). The same divide also showed in our data between teachers A and B, who as trained language teachers more or less focus on language in their concepts of CLIL teaching, and C and D, both trained PE teachers, who mainly foreground content issues. Within this spectrum, only E takes a stance in favour of an integrated practice, which, however, in her case is rather hypothetical and not underpinned by her own practice.

What we have seen in our data is that teacher investment in CLIL is not concomitant with a realisation of CLIL as a dual method to integrate content and language. Balancing content and language (Palmer and Snodgrass Rangel, 2011) remains an issue among practising CLIL teachers. This certainly indicates a salient need to work towards a more comprehensive understanding in primary teacher



CLIL training programs and in in-service support measures of language as a tool for thought through which learners acquire the capacity to complex and conceptual thinking (Lake, 2012: 71-114). From our point of view, such measures would also be desirable to help to make the potential of the ‘playingCLIL’ methodology as a tool for language and content scaffolding more accessible.

Our findings also indicate the “situated nature of teaching and learning” (Varghese, 2004: 222), which has to be taken into account when assessing the ways teachers perceive CLIL. These findings corroborate the argument put forth by Bonnet and Breidbach (forthcoming) that in order for CLIL teachers to be able to make personal sense of specific content in teacher development provision, they will need to be given the opportunity to make a relevant connection between explicit knowledge, e.g. the content of a training course, and their implicit knowledge, which relates to their professional identities.

## CONCLUSIONS

In order to put our main findings into context and assess their significance, we will briefly re-state them: First, teachers respond to the idea of adopting a drama games-based method such as ‘playingCLIL’ according to their perceptual dispositions. Second, the variety of these dispositions even in a sample as small as five informants is remarkable, even more so considering that all teachers were voluntary participants in the ‘playingCLIL’ training course. Third, teachers’ perceptual dispositions are closely related to the individual professional identities.

Given the diversity of CLIL-type provisions across Europe (Eurydice 2006), it can hardly come as a surprise that teachers, despite working under the same umbrella term of CLIL, refer to diverse practices. When it comes to teacher education and training programmes it is, however, no trivial matter to remind oneself of the diversity of the local contexts and of the heterogeneous professional identities that teachers bring to courses, e.g. those offered at the transnational level by the European Commission such as the ‘playingCLIL’ training course.

For CLIL teacher educators it seems to be important to understand in which way teachers exploring this method are invested (or not) as language or content teachers, as classroom practitioners following learner-centred or subject-centred pedagogies, or, last but not least, as educators who see themselves as embedded in a relevant community of practice or as individual performers without much support from an imagined or factually existing group of peers.

In the case of innovating the CLIL classroom by means of implementing ‘playingCLIL’ as a drama games-based methodology, teachers need to be given the



chance to reflect on their conceptualisations of and attitudes towards CLIL and drama games quite specifically. Both are sources for making sense of this –or any other– classroom methodology. Within the very hands-on approach taken in the ‘playingCLIL’ training course, such reflection can be achieved in phases for meta-cognitive reflection, and supplemented by embedded pre-, while- or post task reflection. Taking teachers’ identities seriously as a major factor in teacher learning holds the key to the successful implementation of innovative approaches such as CLIL for teachers today.

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