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**Title:** Ethics, Dialogue and English as a Lingua Franca for ESD in Higher Education

**Year:** 2022

**Version:** Published version

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**Please cite the original version:**

Hämmäläinen, M. S. (2022). Ethics, Dialogue and English as a Lingua Franca for ESD in Higher Education. *Language learning in higher education*, 12(2), 547-565.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/cercles-2022-2062>

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# Ethics, Dialogue and English as a Lingua Franca for ESD in Higher Education

<https://doi.org/10.1515/cercles-2022-2062>

Received February 11, 2022; accepted May 28, 2022

**Abstract:** The urgency for education to participate in the plan of action of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) poses challenges to language education in university language centers. This paper discusses the potential of Higher Education (HE) language center courses to provide students with the knowledge and skills of inclusive, respectful, and equal communication needed in promoting SD and global citizenship. Education for sustainable development (ESD) in language teaching often focuses on integrating the content of SD topics into the language course. This paper focuses on the skills dimension and reports on a case study of a dialogue approach, a pedagogical method that could be central in ESD. A two-credit optional B2-C1 CEFR level university English course with the name *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* is described to give a practical example of how to bring ethical thinking and interaction into an HE language classroom, by introducing the ethical concepts of Bohmian dialogue to students, and by creating a safe place for them to practice ethical dialogue through English as a lingua franca (ELF). The reflections of one group for this case study were analyzed to show how a dialogue approach to teaching ethical communication, interaction and collaboration can raise students' awareness of using ELF in ethical dialogue and perhaps transform their ways of thinking and interacting. The student reflections showed that the pedagogical dialogue method has potential in developing abilities needed in ESD as well as in working life.

**Keywords:** dialogue; education for sustainable development (ESD); English as a lingua franca (ELF); ethical communication; higher education (HE)

## 1 Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language in university language centers as part of degree studies can have a central role in answering educational challenges that have been widely recognized. The need for Higher Education (HE) to promote

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ethical thinking has become obvious in preparing students to face the future. With the challenges arising from climate change, a fact accepted by all United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015, humanity will have to learn to think and interact in ways that make saving the world possible through sustainable development (SD). The concept is a multifaceted one including 17 goals in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015). The goals are demanding and will necessitate new thinking and a lot of cooperation in science as well as in all spheres of society. In their article on rethinking science for sustainable development, Kläy et al. (2015: 75) claim a need for a paradigm transformation if science is to be accountable for contributing to SD and successful in transdisciplinary research. The latter presupposes the creation of a “thought collective”. Beilin and Bender (2011) state that academics do not often interact in ways that would support interdisciplinary culture where co-active engagement is needed to solve the problems facing humanity.

Working life struggles with the challenges of sustainability at a time when workplaces have become and will become more and more multicultural because of globalization, population dynamics and living conditions. Research into workplace communication focuses on how people interact at work, and the cultural, social, psychological, linguistics and philosophical aspects of the interaction are described and discussed within the theoretical frameworks of the respective fields. The demand for dialogue in multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual contexts such as in work for SD (Garrido et al. 2020; Ratner 2004) is becoming increasingly more obvious and HE is part of these contexts. In Finland, the Rectors’ Council of Finnish universities (UNIFI n.d.) has defined 12 theses to guide all Finnish universities to follow the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UNIFI n.d.). The addition of *ethical thinking* to the list of expert skills (under Thesis 4 in UNIFI n.d.) is a new aspect in the otherwise generally accepted list of academic skills. The concept of ethical thinking, and therefore ethical interaction too in a shared foreign language, requires expanding understanding in a way that language education has traditionally not seen as part of its task. Yet, to support the aim of academics in their quest to solve the problems of SD facing the planet, developing skills of ethical thinking together through a shared lingua franca is urgently needed.

Sund and Gericke (2020) have considered ESD in a cross-curricular context and used three different dimensions in their analysis of science, social science, and language teachers’ contribution to ESD, namely, the dimensions of “*what* (content), *how* (methods) and *why* (purposes)” (Sund and Gericke 2020: 772). Integrating the ESD topics into language courses as in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an obvious solution on the *what*-dimension but developing

abilities to collaborate (*how*) is no less important. In the *how*-dimension, the UNESCO documents of ESD stress participatory teaching and learning (UNESCO 2013). Lozano et al. (2017) observe that there is limited research on linking pedagogy and competences in HE. In their review of research on the topic, Lozano et al. (2017: 4) describe a synthesis of twelve competences for ESD presented below in Table 1. The Bohmian dialogue approach supports all these competences (see Section 2).

**Table 1:** A synthesis of twelve competences for ESD (Lozano et al. 2017: 4–5).

Competences	Principles and Summary
Systems thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Analysis of complex systems across different scales and domains of inquiry</li> <li>– Comprehension, empirical verification, and articulation of a system’s key components, structure, and dynamics</li> <li>– Attention to systemic features such as feedback, inertia, stocks and flows, and cascading effects</li> <li>– Understanding of complex systems phenomena, including unintended consequences, path dependency, systemic inertia, and intentionality</li> <li>– Understanding of connectivity and cause-effect relationships</li> </ul>
Interdisciplinary work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Application of modelling (qualitative or quantitative)</li> <li>– Appreciation, evaluation, contextualisation, and use of knowledge and methods of different disciplines</li> <li>– Ability to work on complex problems in interdisciplinary contexts</li> </ul>
Anticipatory thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Envisioning, analysis, and evaluation of possible futures, including scenarios with multi-generational timescales</li> <li>– Application of precautionary principle</li> <li>– Prediction of reactions</li> <li>– Dealing with risks and changes</li> </ul>
Justice, responsibility, and ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Application of concepts of ethics, justice, social and ecological integrity, and equity</li> <li>– Description, negotiation, and reconciliation of principles, values, aims, and goals for sustainability</li> <li>– Responsibility for one’s actions</li> <li>– Ethics and sustainability of personal and professional behaviour</li> </ul>
Critical thinking and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ability to challenge norms, practices, and opinions</li> <li>– Reflection on one’s own values, perceptions, and actions</li> <li>– Understanding of external perspectives</li> </ul>
Interpersonal relations and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participatory and collaborative approaches to solving problems or conducting research</li> </ul>

Table 1: (continued)

Competences	Principles and Summary
Empathy and change of perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Skills and understandings in communication, deliberation, negotiation, empathizing, leadership, and collaboration</li> <li>– Ability to deal with conflicts</li> <li>– Learning from other perspectives</li> <li>– Participation in community processes</li> <li>– Ability to identify own and external perspectives</li> <li>– Understanding and sympathy for the needs, perspectives, and actions of others</li> <li>– Ability to deal with internal and external value orientation</li> <li>– Compassion, empathy, and solidarity with others across differences</li> <li>– Accepting and embracing of a diversity of opinions, experiences, or perspectives</li> <li>– Transcultural understanding</li> </ul>
Communication and use of media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ability to communicate effectively in intercultural contexts</li> <li>– Ability to use appropriate information and communication technologies</li> </ul>
Strategic action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Critical consideration and evaluation of media</li> <li>– Ability to design and implement interventions, transitions, and transformations for sustainability</li> <li>– Active and responsible engagement in sustainability activities</li> <li>– Development and application of ideas and strategies</li> <li>– Planning and executing projects</li> <li>– Ability to reflect on, and deal with, possible risks</li> <li>– Organisation, leading, and controlling processes, projects, interventions, and transitions</li> </ul>
Personal involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identification of scopes of creativity and participation</li> <li>– Taking responsibility for motivating others</li> <li>– Participation in creating sustainability initiatives</li> <li>– Willingness and ability to take action</li> <li>– Willingness to learn and innovate</li> <li>– Self-motivation</li> </ul>
Assessment and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Initiation of own learning</li> <li>– Develop assessment and evaluation standards and guidelines</li> <li>– Independent evaluations with respect to conflicts of interest and goals, uncertain knowledge, and contradictions</li> </ul>
Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coping with conflicts, competing goals and interests, contradictions, and setbacks</li> </ul>

In their framework for connecting sustainable pedagogical approaches to competences for ESD, Lozano et al. (2017: 10) emphasize pedagogical approaches that activate students. Dialogue as a student-activating method for ESD is mentioned by Ceulemans and De Prins (2010: 3) in their article on integrating SD into HE curricula.

Now that collaboration, ethical thinking and thinking together through a lingua franca should be in focus in HE language courses, it is time to consider an ethical approach to language education not just in theory, but in practice too. Although post-normal science has been making the need evident to change the thinking and therefore the paradigm from individualist and competitive to collective and cooperative for more than 40 years (cf. Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993; Kläy et al. 2015; Sardar 2010), little seems to have changed within academia. The paradigm change called for necessitates language awareness; sharing meaning through a lingua franca in a multilingual world in an ethical way requires a new level of consciousness. Sardar (2010: 442) points out that “Indeed, it is ethics, and only ethics, that can guide us out of the postnormal impasse.” It is complicated and challenging for an English as a foreign language teacher to start introducing ethics into the course curriculum. This paper suggests that practicing ethical dialogue in language education would be a way of responding to the challenges described above and contributing to the development of competences for SD.

A dialogical conception of language and learning has been gaining ground in this millennium (cf. Dufva 2013; Johnson 2008). Dialogic pedagogy focuses on teacher-student interaction and is often referred to as an approach based on the thinking of Bakhtin (1895–1975) and Vološinov (1895–1936) (Dufva et al. 2014) as well as Vygotsky’s (1896–1934) sociocultural theory of learning (Teo 2019). David Bohm’s (1917–1992) approach to dialogue has not been discussed very much in research on language education and pedagogy, but Bohmian dialogue (Bohm 1996) has had a strong impact on dialogue practices in working life thanks to Bohm’s followers such as, for example, Senge (1990), Ellinor and Gerard (1998) and Isaacs (1999).

Although language is central in Bohmian dialogue, dialogue literature has so far not considered the context of participants not sharing the same native language and having dialogue through a shared foreign language such as English as a lingua franca. The purpose of this paper is to show and discuss the potential of English language education in an HE context to contribute to raising awareness of ethical dialogue skills that are needed for SD. Student reflections on the course topics of an HE English course based on Bohmian dialogue will be considered.

## 2 Course approach and design

Education in Finnish HE, language education included, aims to respond to the needs and challenges of global academic working life (Finnish Act of Parliament 1039/2013). The task of Finnish university language centers then is to provide students with such language and communication skills that prepare them for the academic and professional challenges facing them. In this context, a two-credit optional course entitled *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* was offered in the English curriculum to degree students at the Language Center of the University of Tampere during the years 2013–2021.

The *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* course approach was based on David Bohm's philosophy of dialogue (Bohm 1996). David Bohm was a quantum physicist whose approach to dialogue emphasizes wholeness and equal participation. The concept of wholeness in Bohmian dialogue has been expressed as 'the art of thinking together' by Isaacs (1999), who, among others, has applied Bohm's dialogue approach in his work in organization management. The central idea in Bohmian dialogue is that participants sit in a circle, and through sharing meaning become conscious of the nature of thought and of how most of the thoughts in language are collective, just as language is collective. Sharing meaning in Bohmian dialogue happens when participants suspend their judgement, check their assumptions, listen to each other, talk to the center, and voice their thoughts when needed, ask questions and reflect, and are aware of how the body is part of the thinking process (proprioception) (Bohm 1996; Ellinor and Gerard 1998). All these actions are part of what Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2015) calls a dialogue orientation. In her comparison and analysis of Socratic and Bohmian dialogue, Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2015) concludes that Bohmian dialogue has an ethical function. Thus, Bohmian dialogue seems to have the qualities called for by the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UNIFI n.d.). The dialogue approach also contributes to the competences for ESD listed by Lozano et al. (2017: 10).

The course introduced the basic concepts of Bohmian dialogue (Bohm 1996), namely, suspending judgement, checking assumptions, listening, voicing, inquiry and reflection, and body language (non-verbal communication including collective art). The goal of the dialogue course was not to teach ethics but to raise students' awareness of ethical communication, and to give them a chance to practice such communication sitting in a dialogue circle. The course consisted of six meetings of three full hours. After the first session where the teacher (the author of this paper) briefly introduced the course approach and session structure, the sessions followed the same format the following four times. Each session started with a 5-min sitting mindfulness exercise. Dialogue is a contemplative practice (Davidson and Dahl 2017) of slowing down, and therefore, a mindfulness exercise

was introduced to create a slow start to the session. Then sitting in the dialogue circle, the teacher introduced the dialogue concept or concepts of the day and gave some pair or group exercises to highlight the concept. Most of the exercises on dialogue skills were taken from Ellinor and Gerard's (1998) book *Dialogue: Rediscover the transforming power of conversation* and from the EU Lifelong Learning Programme project (DIALE 2012). The DIALE exercises are available online. After a short break, the students checked in to work on a group task related to workplace communication. Checking in gave each dialogue participant a possibility to express their thoughts and/or feelings to the group as well as an opportunity to be seen and heard. At the end of the session the students checked out by summarizing not only what needed to be done by the next session but also their feelings about how the dialogue and work was going.

During this second half of the session, the teacher observed the student dialogue without judging, sitting outside of the circle and only intervening on request. This approach was relevant in terms of letting the students feel responsible for the dialogue practice and giving them a chance to create a safe container for dialogue (cf. Isaacs 1999: 242). The instructions for the group task were very broad, asking them only to practice equal dialogue through ELF starting with defining what topic they wanted to have a dialogue on during the rest of the time allotted for the task (5 × 1.5 h). Working on a group task involves having a goal that guides the dialogue. Bohm (1996: 48) calls such dialogue 'limited' as in his approach to dialogue there is no goal nor agenda. However, he does see the value of limited dialogue as well. In the context of a foreign language course, limited dialogue seemed a viable option. The course had three goals described in the course description as follows:

After successful completion of the course the students will

- Use strategies to enhance dialogue and constructive communication at work.
- Understand and know how to overcome barriers to effective communication.
- Have knowledge and tools to reflect on and develop their own communication skills.

Thus, the goals of the course were related to communication at work. SD was not mentioned in the goals nor was it a topic in the course. However, the dialogue skills introduced and practiced aimed at developing students' participatory skills, ethical thinking and interaction that are so much needed in ESD. Before the introduction to the course approach, the students shared their expectations for the course. The most stated goal that the students shared was to gain more confidence in using the English language. This goal is clearly linked with their ability to participate in a multilingual society using ELF.

An integral part of the course was a requirement to write reflections on each course topic after each session. In addition, the students were required to read and



reflect on the contents of two articles: Schein's (1993) *On Dialogue, Culture, and Organizational Learning* and Stone's (2002) *Forgiveness in the Workplace*. The first is a good introduction to dialogue in organizations and the approach in the article is similar to Bohm's (1996). The latter article introduces a concept that Bohm does not discuss but that fits the Bohmian approach well. Thus, the *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* course was an adaptation of Bohmian dialogue especially influenced by the teacher's interpretation of Bohm's work, dialogue literature, the practical exercises provided by Ellinor and Gerard (1998) and by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme project (DIALE 2012). After the in-class exercises, the teacher gave the students a homework task related to the dialogue concept practices in class. It was voluntary for them to share their observations in their blog posts. At the beginning of each session, they had a chance to talk about the homework task in small groups and share what they felt comfortable sharing both in the small groups and, if they liked, in the dialogue circle. There was no pressure to do either, in other words, this was never a homework task controlled by the teacher.

The course was assessed Pass/Fail and the assessment criteria included students' self-assessment on how well they participated in the dialogue, did all the assignments, and reached the course goals. The course goals were very broad, and a focal part of the course assessment was the students' self-assessment of how they felt they had reached the goals or moved in the direction of the broad goals. The self-assessment reflection was part of the blog posts for all the other group members to see.

The research questions of this study are twofold: (1) How do the students describe their experiences of Bohmian dialogue in their reflections? and (2) Do the students' blog reflections show an opening of new perspectives and possible traces of transformation in their thinking about their ethical dialogue skills using ELF? As described above, the course did not address SD as content, but it is proposed here that the dialogue skills practiced and reflected on are essential in ESD.

### 3 Method

The data was collected between the end of the 2018 fall semester and the beginning of the 2020 spring semester. Altogether 144 university students in seven interdisciplinary groups taking the course during this time period were invited to participate in the study. Of these, 105 signed an informed consent to allow their blog posts to be used anonymously for research purposes. The data analyzed here consists of blog posts by 19 students from one randomly selected group to represent one case among the students in the seven groups who had signed the informed consent. Although the blog posts are individual, the students' reflections also

concern the development and dynamics of the group in the dialogue sessions. The students wrote their reflections after each dialogue session in the course Moodle blog. The instruction for the blog posts was the following:

After each session you should write your reflections on what happened in class: write about the topic of the session, the exercises and how the group work and group dialogue went. ***Always reflect on your dialogic attitude: How were you contributing? What would you need to pay attention to and develop?*** The form is free and so is the length, but of course each entry should be at least a paragraph. To continue the dialogue, read and comment on others' entries as well! The blog is visible only to the participants on this course.

The sample data of the students' blog reflections were analyzed using theory-based qualitative content analysis. A four-category scheme for coding and assessing the level of reflection in written work developed by Kember et al. (2008) was used to analyze the students' reflections. The four categories in the scheme are habitual action/non-reflection, understanding, reflection and critical reflection defined as follows:

#### *Non-reflection*

- The answer shows no evidence of the student attempting to reach an understanding of the concept or theory which underpins the topic.
- Material has been placed into an essay without the student thinking seriously about it, trying to interpret the material, or forming a view.
- Largely reproduction, with or without adaptation, of the work of others.

#### *Understanding*

- Evidence of understanding a concept or topic.
- Material is confined to theory.
- Reliance upon what was in the textbook or the lecture notes.
- Theory is not related to personal experiences, real-life applications or practical situations.

#### *Reflection*

- Theory is applied to practical situations
- Situations encountered in practice will be considered and successfully discussed in relationship to what has been taught. There will be personal insights which go beyond book theory.

#### *Critical reflection*

- Evidence of a change in perspective over a fundamental belief of the understanding of a key concept or phenomenon.
- Critical reflection is unlikely to occur frequently.

(Kember et al. 2008: 379)

To begin with, each student post was marked with a letter from A to D where A corresponded to critical reflection, B to reflection, C to understanding and D to habitual action/non-reflection. After this initial deductive analysis, a further

analysis was carried out on the reflections that fell under the categories of reflection and critical reflection in Kember et al.'s (2008) scheme. The other two categories do not involve reflection.

The analysis of the posts included detecting reflections that showed the students' experiences and the opening of new perspectives and signs of transformation in thinking with respect to ethical dialogue skills and ethical interaction in general. Ethical interaction was not mentioned in the course goals but the premise here is that the course goals of constructive interaction and overcoming barriers to effective communication are best achieved by practicing ethical dialogue skills. The definition of ethical dialogue skills was based on the course approach, i.e., the ethical dialogue skills described in Bohmian dialogue philosophy (Bohm 1996). As mentioned above, the main skills introduced to the students during the course were suspending judgement, checking assumptions, listening, voicing, inquiry, reflection, body language and collective art (non-verbal communication). The course started with first an individual and then a collective reflection on values.

## 4 Results

The results of the theory-based qualitative content analysis are reported below under two sections corresponding to the research questions. The first section shows extracts from the students' reflections on their dialogue experiences following Kember et al.'s (2008) four-category scheme described above. The second section shows extracts on how the opening of new perspectives and possible traces of transformation appeared in the data.

### 4.1 Student reflections on dialogue experience

All 19 students had reflection in their posts, in other words, they considered the theoretical concepts and discussed them in the light of their own experiences. Reflection as described by Kember et al. (2008) appeared most in all blog posts and although Kember et al. (2008: 374) state that critical reflection implying transformation of perspective does not occur often, in this data there were 11 students who had critical reflection in their posts as well as reflection. There were some instances in nine students' posts that showed understanding rather than reflection. However, these students did also show ability to reflect in some posts, like the majority of the posts. Table 2 shows the distribution of the types of posts in each student's posts.

**Table 2:** The distribution of posts in the data following Kember et al.'s (2008) four-category scheme.

	A	B	C	D
1	x	v		
2		v		
3		x	v	
4	x	v		
5		x	v	
6		x	v	
7	x	v		
8	v	x		
9	x	v		
10	x	v		
11	v	x		
12	x	v		
13	v	x	x	x
14	v	x		
15	v	x	x	
16		x	v	x
17		x	v	
18		x	v	
19		v	x	

A, Critical reflection; B, Reflection; C, Understanding; D, Habitual action/non-reflection; x, posts appeared in the category; v, posts appeared most frequently in the category.

The students' posts after the first meeting showed how they experience the course approach. It was obvious that they were not familiar with the concept of dialogue. Student 16 (S16) expresses the main concern that students have on an oral English course:

S16: I think that one of my biggest targets to develop is to get courage to open my mouth, even though we are speaking English and even though we have a quite large group. As we discussed, I am not the only one with this aim, and I think that it is relieving that many students in this group have kind of the same goal to achieve.

Overall, I really enjoyed our first session and I think that this course will be enjoyable and useful. I am looking forward next Monday's session!

The above extract also summarizes the positive impression that most students reported in their first post. Indeed, they reacted positively to the course approach:

S11: What is this course where dialogue and theory of it plays more important role than grammar or written assignment? These thoughts were full of positive excitement.

The first posts of 19 students emphasize the friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the group and several expressed their expectation of some more good experiences during the course. Some students were also surprised how easy it was for them to talk in English in this new setting. This was something they were not accustomed to:

S13: I was surprised, that I spoke so much in the session, even though it's not easy for me. The atmosphere was kind of supportive. The moment of mindfulness was new experience for me.

After the second session, the focus in the posts was on the course topics (suspending judgement, checking assumptions, listening, voicing, inquiry and reflection, and body language). The most common type of post was one including reflection. Here are some extracts showing application of the course topics (the virtues) to practical situations and even some personal insights (cf. Kember et al.'s 2008 definition):

S1: Homework was primarily focused on getting us to reflect on our actions during ordinary workday activities. During this week I attended a project meeting where I participate as a project manager, and I was able to observe that I was listening to most of the ideas raised by everyone at the meeting without judging or having assumptions which allowed me to better understand and also contribute with more quality and in a more constructive way in my notes.

S11: Homework was to focus on listening. I like analyzing my own actions, reactions and thoughts but it's almost impossible to do this kind of reflection when there is real conversation going on. Or more exactly, it's possible to do a reflection but it's not possible reflect questions of homework. Man can adapt these ideas and thought processes within long period of time, but it will not be easy. Anyway, the homework is great way to help people to become more aware of own thoughts. I realized that I can easily listen many kinds of people and I can work with them if needed. On the other hand, I also like good debates and within an intense and fast-moving debate it's more difficult to be aware of judgments. Sometimes I take a role of listener and then it's easy, but if I have role of active opponent then it's not easy to listen without resistive thoughts.

Although sharing their reflections on the homework task was voluntary, the above extracts show that the students considered the homework worthwhile in helping them develop their interaction through reflecting on the dialogue concepts. S19 seems to feel that the course has given them something valuable to think about:

S19: But the longer this course has been going on the more I get aware of how important it is to pay attention to yourself when interacting with others. I now have realized how many processes like judging or making assumptions just happen constantly and automatically and can be a burden for good communication every day. I feel like there is so much potential to make the world just a little better each day just by being aware of the power of communication and trying to pay a little bit more attention to one's own actions.

All the above examples show that the requirement to write reflections on the course topics seems to raise awareness of one's own way of communicating and interacting. According to Kember et al. (2008), critical reflection is a prerequisite for a change in perspective to occur. Those extracts from the data will be considered in the next section.

## 4.2 New perspectives

Some students reported changes in their thinking and behavior. The course approach seemed to help open new perspectives and sometimes it may be possible to trace indications of transformation:

S4: However, our homework for this week, getting more aware of our judgement process, is doing good for me, it really makes me more patient and better at noticing my judgement.

S11: Second  
The session when I'm starting to trust that this dialogue method can work. Main reason why I think so is that people were brave enough to talk and atmosphere was relaxed. We laughed a lot and many of us said positive things when we logged out.  
Now I understand slightly better importance of a dialogue. For me it's been easy to talk with few people in English, but large group has not been my favorite. For some reason conversations with pair or small group make it easier to talk in large group also. This kind of method feels good especially in context of language learning when we really can speak something but we maybe fear or we have some other reasons not to speak.

S14: Our group task made some huge progress this week. It was fun to see everyone so excited about filming the scenes and working together. I didn't feel like acting at first, but our group spirit gave me the courage to be part of the scene we filmed. After this session, I didn't feel like I didn't contribute enough. I was able to say everything that was on my mind. I feel that the biggest reason behind it is that everyone has been so respectful of other's opinions. It's nice to see that everyone is keeping our group's values in their minds!

The above are just some examples of students' new perspectives to their own interaction during the course. The self-assessments that the students wrote at the end of the course show how practicing dialogue in a safe space seems to have changed their perspective on teamwork:

S1: Group work surprised me in many ways, and working in a group with many members in a dialogue-based approach was very constructive. Initially I thought that this approach would not work and everyone would get stressed at some point, but everything happened differently, and I will definitely take this dialog-based thinking model to other work that will participate in the future.

S2: I usually do not like group projects, but this one was an exception. Everyone brought something to the table and the idea of dialogue, furthering our collective goal, was present the whole time.

S12: In the very end we checked out. It was hard to try to gather all my thoughts together about the course. I need to admit that I did expect actual things to say in professional situations and advice for hard group situations in working life etc. But the course turned out to teach me patience, big time. Because at times the way the group task was done felt slow and not straight to the point. Even tho this is probably not the way stuff is usually done, it thought me a really important lesson: even tho it might feel slow and frustrating at times, it will get done (in five meetings).

The course gave food for thought and perhaps seeds of transformation in some other respects as well:

S15: Self-assessment: I believe that I did pass the course because I attended every course session, wrote on each session a reflection and wrote a reflection on the two articles from Schein and Stone. Moreover, I tried to always practice the things we learned in my daily living. Especially the part with judging, inquiry and reflection affected my mindset. I try to be more reflective on my perception and why I have certain assumptions about people. By doing this I realized that really often judging starts with my own mind and does have great impact on my mood and reactions. By starting to be more reflective, doing suspension, not reacting emotionally and do instead inquiry it is easier to me to have a good communication and dialog with people. After finishing the course, I do now understand the concept of dialog and try to use strategies for reaching a dialog.

S19: I think this course went by really fast. The last weeks just flew by but I take this a good sign and like I already said in class today, I really did enjoy our meetings. I liked the interactive and communicative style of the class. It really was a good contrasting program to all my online classes. I have definitely learned something in this class and there are many things I will try to keep in mind. Especially I want to further practice self-awareness. In some way the class opened my eyes for the importance of being aware of one's own thoughts, assumptions, actions and judging processes. I am glad I learned about suspension and became more conscious about having the choice of our own behavior and therefore in some extend of the consequences of it, too. I am happy with the way our final project turned out and I am proud of everybody's contribution to it. I think, that we as a group did a great job. For me the first and the last session were the most inspiring ones. The first session introduced me to the whole thing of dialog and it opened my eyes that dialog can be seen as such a powerful tool of communication with so many meaningful thoughts behind it. The last session today about body language I especially enjoyed because I felt the whole group harmonized really well and I felt really comfortable the whole time.

The above examples of the reflections/critical reflections in the students' blog posts are just a few examples of change of perspective. Reading and analyzing the posts makes it obvious that the students were interested in the course topics and many thought that the whole group changed and not just they themselves:

S12: I think our last meeting was more calm than the previous ones. Everybody was confident with our project and just excited to see the end result. It was amazing to see that everybody was doing the check in confidently and it actually felt really natural, which is doubted when we started doing it! It felt amazing to watch the video, even tho it was greatly amateur level, everyone was laughing and happy. And why not, we hade made it together:)

## 5 Discussion

As a way of describing the potential of English language education to contribute to SD, this study looked at students' experiences of Bohmian dialogue in the English course *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* and at possible new openings in their perspectives. The analysis of the students' experiences of Bohmian dialogue showed that the approach helped them feel comfortable using ELF in the dialogue context. They felt that the atmosphere was safe. It is worth pointing out that as they spent half of the time having dialogue on the group task without teacher interference, they became aware of their own contribution to the atmosphere as well as to working actively and responsibly towards the common goal. In the end, the self-assessments showed that the course experience could open new perspectives in the students' thinking and attitudes towards interaction through ELF in a teamwork context. All the above contribute to developing the competences for ESD (cf. Lozano et al. 2017; United Nations 2015).

As was mentioned in the introduction, dialogue literature has not considered the role of ELF in working life dialogue contexts. The course approach presented here hopefully helps to bridge this gap. With the growing interest in dialogism (Dufva et al. 2014) and dialogic pedagogy (Skidmore and Murakami 2016; Teo, 2019) in language education, this study may add one more perspective to the discussion of how dialogue can enhance awareness of ethical communication and interaction through ELF that is needed in working for SD. The *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* course was part of an English curriculum at a university language center and therefore complied with the goals of teaching English for special purposes. This included acknowledging the concepts of language awareness and awareness of intercultural communication, and at the same time introducing a more holistic approach to interaction in the dialogue circle. The students became aware of how using English as a shared foreign language affects one's way of being with others and how the dialogue concepts or virtues can be practiced, helping overcome anxieties in communicating and interacting through a foreign language.

When bringing up ethics in the context of education, the first thought following the widespread CLIL approach might be that including ethical thinking in foreign language education would mean teaching ethics in that language



(cf. Ogawa et al. 2013). The *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* course started from a different premise. Rather than directly addressing the question of ethics, the approach was to introduce David Bohm's and his followers' philosophy and exercises to the students, to invite them to practice dialogue and reflect on their practice. As the analysis of the blog posts showed, university students are capable of reflection and even critical reflection of abstract concepts that involve not just critical reflection of facts and logical arguments, but personal feelings and emotions related to their way of being in the group that communicated through ELF. The course raised awareness of how thinking affects a person's being in general, and therefore their interaction in all languages.

The analysis of the blog posts brought up one very important aspect of interaction in the group, namely, the fact that the teacher's role was that of an observer most of the time, and this was reflected in the blog posts. The students appreciated the good atmosphere they had in the group as well as the work that they accomplished. Teaching ethical dialogue needs to be ethical in the sense that every learner is included in learning the practice without excluding the teacher as a learner. To appear as an authority who assesses the students' skills in dialogue would destroy the practice of equal dialogue. Therefore, it was appropriate that the course was assessed pass/fail with self-assessment in the blog visible to all participants in the course. Such an approach does not comply with an assessment approach based on measurement, which is common at all levels of education. However, ethical dialogue skills using foreign languages are needed for the world to be able to solve pressing problems for SD. There would need to be room to include non-measurable educational solutions in the curriculum. This would be in line with the idea of teacher as learner as well as so many other goals in language education such as, for instance, mediation in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2018).

Despite the positive results, this case study has its limitations. A case study can never claim its results to be generalizable. In addition, using the Kember et al. (2008) scheme is not quite straightforward, and the role of the assessor is critical. Therefore, it would be better to have several assessors outlining the categorizations for the analysis. Although possible traces of transformation were detected in the students' critical reflections, it was not possible to confirm that permanent transformation had occurred. Kember et al. (2008) acknowledge the difficulty of observing perspective transformation in written work using their four-category scheme, because transformation happens in steps and the process takes time. In their discussion of the process of ethical growth, Isotalus and Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2018: 457) point out that in Aristotle's virtue ethics, virtues become part of one's character through repeating the virtuous action. Thus, students would need to have opportunities to practice ethical dialogue and to reflect on the dialogue

concepts (virtues) repeatedly over a long period of time to achieve real perspective transformation. Combining dialogue skills with ESD in content education would help the transformation process.

## 6 Conclusions

The *Dialogue: Constructive Talk at Work* course approach with the blog post data has showed that teaching English in an HE course could well have the potential to contribute to SD by raising awareness of language, thinking and ethical interaction for collaboration. To find out whether the transformation seen in the students' written reflections affects the students' ways of interaction and behaviors in the long run would need follow-up studies. However, for the time being, the potential that language education has for contributing to SD in HE could be considered in university language centers by taking on the ethical challenge.

**Acknowledgements:** The author would like to thank Matti Rautiainen, Päivi Lappalainen, Marja-Liisa Kakkuri-Knuuttila and Hannele Dufva for their valuable comments and support.

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