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OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND
CULTURAL AWARENESS RAISING DURING
PARTICIPATION IN A TANDEM LANGUAGE EXCHANGE
PROGRAM

presented by

ANNA DRIGGERS

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D.          degree in     Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic,
                             Asian, and African Languages

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND CULTURAL AWARENESS
RAISING DURING PARTICIPATION IN A TANDEM LANGUAGE EXCHANGE
PROGRAM

By

Anna Driggers

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages

2008

ABSTRACT

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND CULTURAL AWARENESS
RAISING DURING PARTICIPATION IN A TANDEM LANGUAGE
EXCHANGE PROGRAM

By

Anna Driggers

The concept of tandem learning involves two speakers of different native
languages, interested not only in language learning, but also in cultural exchange. This
learning method is widely employed at European universities, but still unknown in the
United States. From various theoretical viewpoints, it is assumed that interactional
practices during Tandem may promote not only language learning, but also intense
cultural exchanges. This study investigates if tandem learning actually provides
opportunities for lexical, grammatical, and cultural learning.

To answer the following questions, audio-data collected from 18 tandem learners
at the intermediate L2 level is analyzed. Additionally, questionnaires filled out by the
participants are taken into account.

Results indicate that the tandem method provides learners with substantial
opportunities for lexical learning (ranging from addressing a single word to complex
discussions about idioms and proverbs), grammatical learning (pronunciation and
morphology were frequently addressed), and cultural and pragmatic exchanges.
In addition, tandem participants confirmed through questionnaires their high levels of
satisfaction with the tandem method. Such favorable feedback and the positive results
obtained in this study suggest that the tandem method is a valuable tool for SLA.

TO PROFESSOR DEBRA HARDISON. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Debra Hardison, George Peters, Patrick McConeghy, Debra Friedman, and Elizabeth Mittman, for their help and their support as I worked on this dissertation. The document is stronger as a result of their input. Professor Hardison was especially helpful reading through many drafts of the document, and providing comments and suggestions. Without her support, I would not be able to accomplish this project.

I would also like to thank Professor Debra Friedman for helping me with my data analysis and for challenging my way of thinking. Her knowledge is deeply appreciated.

I am very grateful for all the encouraging words I received from Professor McConeghy and Professor Mittman. Their encouragement made a huge difference, especially on these days when nothing was going well.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor George Peters for being my committee co-chair, taking care of all the administrative issues, and supporting me during my dissertation defense. I can not thank him enough.

The acknowledgments would not be complete without a heartfelt thanks to the members of the Tandem Language School in Berlin and to all participants of my study. The Tandem Language School provided me with a "home-base" while collecting my data. They let me use their computers, phone, printers, and facilities. Their kindness is deeply appreciated.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The concept of tandem learning

The interactions involving a native speaker (NS) and a non-native speaker (NNS) are the central point of many studies in the field of second language acquisition since it is argued that such interactions may advance second language learning (Gass, 1997; Gass & Polio, 1998; Long, 1983; Mackey, 1998; Oliver, 1995; Pica, 1988; Tarone & Liu, 1995). Learning in tandem is an example of such a situation.

The concept of tandem learning involves two speakers of different native languages (and different cultural backgrounds), where both are interested in a language-exchange and in learning about the culture of their tandem partner. They establish a learning-relationship, meeting in most cases at least once a week for two hours or so, and speaking for an equal amount of time in each language. Tandem as a language learning arrangement between two individuals is gratis--there are no fees or tuition costs. Each participant simply gives time to the other. As such, it may be one of the best opportunities to practice and improve one's emerging second language (L2) skills outside of the classroom. Students can use their second language in a true communicative setting, learning new vocabulary and practicing grammar and pronunciation. They are also able to acquire pragmatic and intercultural skills through authentic interaction with a native speaker. This type of learning is very different from a typical classroom instructional environment.

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In some foreign language classes, especially those that are teacher-centered, students are in many instances limited to just receiving information. They may learn all the grammatical rules and memorize vocabulary, but may also have few opportunities to speak and actively practice the learned material (as observed in some of my recent foreign language courses). Knowing grammatical rules does not necessarily mean that students can communicate in their second language. It is not uncommon that language learners are not able to ask or answer a simple question in the L2, largely because, even in more communicative classrooms, the opportunities for oral production frequently take the form of artificial simulations, which sometimes have nothing to do with the students' interests and real life conversations.

In a tandem learning setting, language production and authentic communication are the main goals. During such interactions, both tandem partners are playing an active role, and both are in control and responsible for their own learning. Furthermore, because the choice of topics of the conversation is closely connected with the learners' interests and needs, their mental effort is naturally increased. Also, regardless of the topics of the conversation, in the tandem setting, students are speaking all the time--producing an "output." Swain stressed in her research (Swain, 1995) that output serves second language acquisition in several ways. One of the functions of second language production is to practice the learned material and, as result of the practice, to enhance fluency. A second function is to notice the "gap" in the learners' knowledge. Anytime a non-native speaker wants to say something and experiences difficulty in the process of speech production, the NNS may realize the lack of linguistic resources. This deficiency, as Swain (1995) pointed out, can trigger cognitive processes, which then may help generate

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further knowledge of L2. Feedback from a native speaker, or intensive interaction between a NNS and a NS, may help fill in these gaps of knowledge and thus improve the NNS's performance in the future. For these reasons, conversation between a NS and a NNS often includes linguistic forms which are not generally present in a conversation between two native speakers. It is a special way of communicating, where both parties strive for mutual understanding and conversation flow, especially, as in tandem, where both speakers interact with each other regularly over an extended period of time.

Finally, tandem supports students' sense of independence and autonomous learning. The participants of this learning method are responsible for arranging their meetings and for overseeing their progress. The majority of the participants tailor their tandem meetings according to their interests and current needs, and are usually able to converse about issues and subjects that are relevant to them. Tandem learners may determine not only what is learned, but also how and when it is learned. Secondly, they can manage the frequency and type of corrective feedback they receive from their tandem partner. Tandem meetings allow learners flexibility with regard to the use of time, and because of this, participants of tandem are able to allocate more time during the meeting discussing areas of L2 that may be problematic or of keener interest for them, if desired.

In summary, one of the most significant advantages of the tandem learning method is its personal nature and the substantial opportunities for language production that it affords. Because of this personal aspect, also students expressing a strong aversion to classroom language learning report enjoying their meetings with a tandem partner, as can be observed in the questionnaires collected for this research.

Although the tandem method provides learners with many unique benefits (autonomy, opportunities for language production and practicing of learned material, free choice of conversational topics, among others), it still possesses some limitations. One of the more significant limitations is the lack of formal, structured instruction of grammatical rules. For this reason, the tandem learning method and classroom instruction seem to complement each other rather well. By combining both methods, one can optimize learning. The classroom provides the structured grammatical foundation of the L2, while the tandem method provides a relaxed setting for use, practice, and further learning of the L2.

## 1.2. Previous studies and tandem research

Some studies suggest that interaction is beneficial because language learners may receive negative feedback as a response to their non-target-like speech production (Gass, 1997; Long, Inagaki & Ortega, 1998; Lyster, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Pica, 1994).

A smaller number of studies address communication strategies utilized by a learner who is having difficulties expressing certain concepts because of a lack of lexical resources or because of contextual constraints (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997; Kellerman & Bialystok, 1997). There are also studies focusing on learners' production and analyzing changes in learner output (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Swain, 1995). Their results suggest that interactional feedback motivates learners to modify their output, which may lead to increased fluency and automatization of the learned language. Lyster and Ranta (1997) emphasized that some forms of interactional feedback, such as elicitation and clarification requests, contribute to a learner's uptake and to output modification.

Additional studies addressing the learner's active role in the learning process have been conducted, among others, by Long and Porter (1985) who stressed the numerous advantages of a situation where learners interact and take control of their own learning. The ability to tailor the learning material to one's own current needs is one such advantage, and something characteristic of the tandem learning situation.

However, none of the above studies (dealing with input, output, and interactions between a NS and a NNS) were conducted in the context of a tandem learning situation. Many of them were conducted in classroom settings or in university research settings, with artificial pairs of speakers created for the purpose of the data collection. Addressing some of these previously investigated research questions in a tandem learning environment is of interest to the field of second language acquisition.

Tandem research studies conducted in Europe address mostly the following topics: online tandem learning (Appel, 2000; Brammerts, 1999; Brammerts, 1998; Brammerts & Little, 1996; Schwienhorst, 1997, 1998; St.John & White, 1995; Warschauer, 1995); the place of tandem at German universities (Ehnert, 1986, 1987; Gaßdorf, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Wolff, 1985); learners' autonomy (Brammerts, 2001; Kleppin, 2000; Little, 2001; Müller, 1988; Nodari, 1996); French-German tandem (Neurohr, 1999; Woerner, 1993); and tandem learning as an intercultural activity (Bechtel, 2003; Vences, 1999; Woodin, 2001). There are very few studies that approach tandem from the linguistic point of view and investigate the relationship between tandem learning and traditional foreign language classroom learning.

## 1.3 Importance of this study

The goal of this dissertation is to investigate the linguistic processes linked to opportunities for lexical and grammatical learning in tandem. Additionally, I will research the intercultural exchanges that occur during tandem interactions. In doing so, I will attempt to close the existing research gap in the area of tandem learning, by adding a linguistic context to the pedagogical and cultural findings regarding this method.

Research related to tandem conducted at a university in the United States could open doors to the introduction of this learning method at American colleges and universities. Moreover, through their participation in tandem, American students could benefit from additional, inexpensive, and interactive exposure to authentic foreign language and culture. Tandem learning also presents an attractive solution to the question of how one creates a stronger relationship between classroom instruction and independent learning. Also, American students returning to school in the United States after successful tandem experiences abroad, currently are not able to continue with this learning method because of the lack of tandems at U.S. universities.

In addition to aforementioned benefits, it is important to note that the tandem learning method fulfills all five goals of the National Curricular Standards for the Foreign Languages: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. This strong correspondence between the National Standards and the tandem method could be highly useful for educational purposes.

## 1.4 Tandem and Standards for Foreign Language Learning

As a result of the active involvement of the U.S. federal government and its financial support (1993), a coalition of four national language institutions: the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Association of Teachers of German, and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese developed standards for foreign language education for grades K-12, which were called "Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century."

These standards emphasize not only linguistic learning, but also intercultural communication, which is reflected in the guiding philosophy of ACTFL:

> Language and communication are the heart of human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language. (www.actfl.org/files/public/StandardsforFLLexecsumm_rev.pdf)

To maintain the required proficiency, ACTFL developed a total of eleven standards, divided into five goal areas, which are known as "The Five C's of Foreign Language Education": Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. According to ACTFL, these standards cannot be achieved "overnight," but they should represent a realistic goal for the years ahead. The ideal implementation of

these standards should start in the elementary school and continue beyond high school. It should be a life-long learning experience consisting of formal instruction and autonomous learning.

The Communication goal area addresses learners' ability to use the L2 in any communicative setting. It points out that students should be able to communicate ideas and opinions in the spoken or written form of the L2. Students are encouraged to engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. (Standard 1.1) The communication goal area indirectly emphasizes the importance of comprehensible output. In order to communicate successfully, one should be able not only to understand received input, but also to respond to it.

The Cultures goal area requires that students gain understanding of other cultures. Learners should be able to make the link between how the practices of a culture shape its perspectives. According to ACTFL, learners "cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs." This statement is very significant because it stresses the importance of teaching and learning of all aspects of a language: its structure, lexical items, as well as intercultural elements.

The Connections goal area asks that learners connect with other disciplines and acquire a variety of types of information utilizing the knowledge of the L2. Using the foreign language in various settings, "students can acquire information and recognize distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its culture" (Standard 3.2). Through the employment of this principle, learners should be able to obtain information not available to them in their native language, and thus have a broader access to knowledge.

The Comparisons goal area addresses learners' necessity to develop an ability to compare American language and culture with an L2 and its cultural characteristics. Students are encouraged to compare the familiar environment with the unknown. This approach is necessary in the process of creating an open-minded society, able to face the globalization that is inevitable. As ACTFL pointed out, through comparisons students may "realize that there are multiple ways of viewing the world."

The final objective of the five C's is Communities. It encourages students to become life-long learners "by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment" (Standard 5.2) within an educational setting and outside of it. According to the National Standards for Foreign Language Education, the United States "must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully" in any pluralistic society, abroad and in this country. Educators are required to implement the five C's in order to attain this goal.

The implementation of the tandem learning method could be useful and helpful since tandem is compatible with the new standards. It is a very communicative approach (Communication), where participants are actively engaged in conversations, expressing their feelings and opinions and developing their ability to interact in a culturally appropriate manner. Secondly, tandem allows its participants to gain deep understanding of other cultures, through direct contact with it (Cultures). The non-native speaker can learn directly from a native speaker what to do and what to avoid in the other culture in order to behave "appropriately." Tandem participants frequently demonstrate high interest in the progress of their learning-partners and ensure that they learn the whole spectrum of the L2: the linguistic elements, as well as cultural and pragmatic knowledge,

as can be observed when looking at the analyzed data. Tandem provides learners with direct access to the other culture, through cultural activities which are the essential (although optional) part of tandem interactions: visits to museums, cooking traditional food for each other, discussing customs and traditions of the native cultures.

Thirdly, during tandem interactions, learners are able to use their L2 in various settings. Tandem meetings tend to take place at different locations, among others in private homes, bars, cultural centers, museums. Such a wide range of "instructional" settings leads to situations when learners discuss a variety of topics utilizing their second language, which in this instance becomes "a means to expand and deepen students' understanding of, and exposure to, other areas of knowledge" (Standard 3.1/Connections). For example, a visit to a museum may lead to an intense learning about German history through the means of the L2.

In many instances, above and beyond their usual tandem meetings, tandem partners often introduce each other to their respective friends and family, and in doing so "students can recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and cultures" (Standard 3.2/Connections).

The fourth standard (Comparisons) is also an element of most tandem interactions. It is common for tandem partners to compare the cultures, traditions, and linguistic features of their native languages (examples are discussed in the data analysis chapters). Tandem partners frequently look not only for differences between them, but also for similarities in order to "build a bridge" between their languages and cultures. Through the comparisons of the language studied with their own, tandem learners are able to notice certain features of their native language, which they used before, but were

not consciously aware of. Such comparisons provide tandem learners with opportunities for reflections on their L1, L2, and the relationship between them. Tandem learners frequently "compare and contrast the two languages" as they notice differences, and in doing so, it is possible for them to gain a deeper understanding of their L1 and L2, and to develop critical thinking abilities with regard to "how languages work" (Standard 4.1/ Comparisons).

Since during tandem interactions, linguistic learning is as important as cultural learning, tandem participants frequently compare their own culture with the culture of their tandem partner. As Standard 4.2 states, "they expand their knowledge of cultures through language learning, they continually discover perspectives, practices, and products that are similar and different from their own culture, and they develop the ability to hypothesize about cultural systems in general." All these phenomena can be observed in the further chapters of this dissertation. Analyzed data provide examples of situations when tandem learners engage in discussions and comparisons of their native languages and cultures.

Finally, tandem learning involves a multilingual community of learners who engage in learning outside of the formal educational setting. They use the L2 for personal enrichment. Learners also enjoy the tandem interactions, and some tandems may be the beginning of life-long friendships. This also fulfills the fifth and final standard of ACTFL, Communities, which states that the L2 is "used as a tool for communication with speakers of the language throughout one's life: in schools, in the community, and abroad." (Standard 5.1)

Since tandem learning corresponds with all five standards recommended for foreign language instruction, and since it is relatively unknown in the United States, new research related to it should be of prime interest to language educators.

## 1.5 Research questions and hypotheses

As previously discussed, the tandem method provides opportunities for linguistic and cultural learning in an authentic, communicative environment. Tandem meetings are not only a social gathering--they are much more because their primary goal is language learning.

My goal is to determine what occurs during a typical tandem meeting: what is learned and what causes this learning. This investigation will focus on four features of learning: lexical acquisition, grammatical features spontaneously addressed during tandem learning, error correction, and intercultural learning. The research will analyze tandem-learners' output for the following characteristics: (a) one partner asks the other for help; (b) the NNS calls upon the language expertise of the NS; (c) the partners negotiate meaning; and (d) one or both tandem partners acquire new linguistic awareness about the L2 or about the native language. The research also will identify ways in which the NS signals the NNS that the original utterance of the NNS was unacceptable, grammatically and/or pragmatically. For example, the NS can recast the utterance, complete the sentence for the NNS, or provide a response that demonstrates a target-like way of expressing the original meaning.

The changes in learner output emanating from the tandem-learning process will be one of the focal points of this research. Generally speaking, any change in the

learner's language development will be analyzed. The study will look for an existence of a pattern of changes in learner's language and for eventual repetition of patterns by different tandem partners, investigating in which way tandem participants are learning through interaction and how effective such a learning environment is. I also expect that the data analysis will confirm my hypotheses that:

1- H1: There are substantial opportunities for lexical learning because of students' participation in tandem.

2- H2: There are substantial opportunities for grammatical learning from context and in context due to one's participation in tandem.

Additionally, this research will be one of the first comprehensive studies of tandem language learning as a whole; it will assess not only the linguistic learning in tandem, but also the pragmatic and cultural aspects of learning during tandem interactions. Since tandem partners have the possibility to choose the place of their meetings, many of the native speakers use it as an opportunity to introduce the foreign visitor to the local culture. Tandem meetings can take place in a café, museum, park, zoo, or private home. Each place creates a different context for learning and a unique environment for cultural experiences. This aspect leads to the third hypothesis of the dissertation, which states that:

3- H3: There are substantial opportunities for development of pragmatic knowledge and cultural exchanges because of students' participation in tandem.

Finally, participants' opinions about the value of the tandem learning method will be analyzed. In the current study, tandem participants evaluated advantages and disadvantages of the tandem learning method through multiple questionnaires and thus

provided valuable information about future implementation and improvement of this learning approach. This aspect of data analysis will address the fourth hypothesis:

4- H4: The majority of tandem participants are highly satisfied with the outcome of their learning in tandem, and with the learning progress of their tandem partner, and would recommend this method to others.

To investigate the above research questions, this study will analyze data obtained from multiple audio-tapings of tandem interactions (authentic conversations between a native speaker and a non-native speaker) and the results of four questionnaires, which were administered to measure tandem participants' perceptions about their experiences as tandem learners. By combining questionnaires with audio-tapings of dialogues, I intend to obtain a comprehensive picture of tandem interactions. According to Swain (1994), analysis of dialogues may be very profitable for second language research:

I believe that another source, and perhaps a more direct source of cognitive process data, may be in the dialogues themselves that learners engage in with other learners and with their teachers. If one accepts the Vygotskian perspective that much learning is an activity that occurs in and through dialogues, that development occurs first on the inter-psychological plane through socially constructing knowledge and processes, then it must be that a close examination of dialogue as learners engage in problem-solving activity is directly revealing of mental processes. The unit of analysis of language learning and its associated processes may therefore more profitably be the dialogue. (p.142)

# CHAPTER 2

# TANDEM LEARNING

## 2.1 History of tandem learning

The term "tandem" appeared for the very first time in the second half of the 1960s

and was closely connected with the French-German Youth Exchange Program ("Deutsch-

Franzözischer Jugendwerk," DFJW), which involved regular meetings between French

and German teenagers. The essence of modern tandem learning was established in so-

called "ateliers linguistiques" (Raasch, 1972). DFJW focused not only on the social

aspect of the bi-national meetings (frequently conducted as summer camps), but also on

their educational aspects. Language courses were of great importance to the organizers

and the participants of these meetings. At first, these courses were conducted separately

for each nationality during the summer camps: the German group learned French

together, and the French participants studied German. After some time of separate study,

the idea of mutual learning was introduced, and the concept of the modern tandem began

(Bechtel, 2003). French and German native speakers were brought together to learn the

language of their partner directly with and from the readily available native speaker. This

approach allowed learners to learn from an expert, and to be at the same time the expert

of their L1.

Shortly thereafter, the tandem learning concept was introduced at language

schools in France and Germany. Its communicative approach gained great support among

European language educators. In 1979, J. Wolff established the very first "Tandem-

Agency" in Madrid, whose goal was to bring together German and Spanish learners, who

were interested in learning with a tandem partner (Wolff, 1982). Additionally, the Goethe-Institut in Madrid started to offer German language courses supplemented with Spanish-German tandem interactions (Wolff, 1984). This approach proved successful and the so-called "Tandem-Initiativen" began to exist in Barcelona, San Sebastian, and in various cities in Germany. A few years later, Italy began introducing the tandem learning method at its language schools. These alternative language schools exist to the present day and are part of the "Tandem-Network" (TANDEM ®). All of them offer traditional language courses, as well as the opportunity for tandem learning (Bechtel, 2003). Currently, language schools that are members of the Tandem-Network, function in the following countries: England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Argentina, Chile, and Spain.

Additionally, the tandem method found a significant level of interest and support among the academic community in Europe. Since the mid 1980s, many universities in Switzerland, Germany, and France, among others, have introduced the tandem learning component to their students. In Germany, the University of Bielefeld was one of the first to introduce tandem learning as a part of their formal curriculum and as an extracurricular activity (Bechtel, 2003).

Currently, the majority of German universities offer the tandem learning possibility, as well as support in finding a tandem partner. At most of these universities, interested students are able to fill out an application to indicate their language needs. Applications may be submitted online or personally to a tandem office, which matches tandem partners according to their age, personal interest, and linguistic needs. This service is gratis, and students may use it as often as desired. In most cases, students have

the additional option of posting their own application directly to the blackboard in the front of the tandem office, and to manage their own tandem partner selection process. The learners' autonomy is of great importance for this learning concept although universities frequently provide additional counseling for any tandem participant with questions or doubts.

In addition to the personal tandem meetings, one additional form of tandem learning is currently employed at European universities: network based computer-mediated communication (CMC). One of the most successful networks was created at the University of Bochum-the International E-Mail Tandem Network, a project founded by the European Union, which involves universities from more than 10 countries. It was developed to promote autonomous and intercultural learning, and is considered an extension of the tandem learning method.

## 2.2 Guidelines to a successful tandem

Currently, there is strong support among most German universities for the tandem learning method. Universities provide supplemental guidelines to a successful tandem experience. These materials are readily available, either online or as handouts in language learning centers at the universities. The University of Kassel published on their official web-page the rules for successful tandem learning (http://www.uni-kassel.de/sprz/tandem/Tandem_Initiative/prinzneu.ghk), some of which will be used in this dissertation as an example of what is normally recommended for tandem participants. These rules can be seen as general guidelines, which can be provided by any university to novice tandem participants in order to help them to have a successful learning experience.

Similar rules are posted on web pages of most German universities. I will present a few of these rules with the purpose of illustrating what is generally expected from tandem learners:

1. Both partners should profit equally from tandem learning. Each language should be spoken half of the time.

2. Tandem partners are responsible for their own learning. They should recognize and evaluate their linguistic needs and weaknesses and be able to address them during tandem interactions. Learners have the power to decide how much they want to learn, knowing that their tandem partner is readily available with help.

3. Tandem partners should write down new lexical items, idiomatic expressions, or useful sentences. Taking notes is important!

4. During each tandem meeting, tandem partners should try to correct errors and feel free to discuss them. Nevertheless, each tandem partner should decide how much error correction he/she wants to receive, and which type of correction would be most useful.

5. "Other countries, other cultures." Students should endeavor to be always aware that their tandem partner was born and raised in a different country, with different customs and different traditions. This awareness presents an excellent opportunity for intercultural learning and effective conflict resolution.

6. Students are encouraged to do different things with their tandem partner: go to the movies, visit a museum, or cook something traditional for the other person. Adding extra activities serves to keep the learning experience fresh and fertile,

and importantly, helps to prevent any sense of monotony. (http://www.uni-kassel.de/sprz/tandem/Tandem_Initiative/prinzneu.ghk)

The above suggestions are guidelines for novice tandem learners, who may be unsure or confused about this learning approach. They may also be seen as general guidelines for successful tandem learning for all participants throughout the duration of their tandem interactions.

Learners are encouraged to be responsible for their own learning and to manage it intelligently in order to obtain the maximum benefit from the tandem method. On the other hand, sensitivity to the needs of the other learner is equally important, without which it is impossible to have a successful tandem.

## 2.3 New trends for tandem learning

Until recently, the tandem learning method was offered either as: (a) structured tandem-language courses in an educational setting, or (b) independent meetings of two tandem partners, who were in control of the content of their learning. The latter type of interaction is the focus of this research study.

The first form of tandem learning--the structured language courses-- is conducted with an instructor, who is responsible for the selection of conversation topics and the theme of the course. Tandem courses take place, in most cases, at universities or during binational meetings. Although they have formal structure, they try to remain true to the most important principles of tandem interactions -- two students from different nationalities work together as a team. This approach is a mix of the autonomous and

structured learning. It is autonomous because there is an opportunity for authentic communication between a NS and a NNS, and students can personalize what they want to say about the provided topic.

There are, however, some elements of structured learning. First of all, students have fixed times for their classes. Secondly, there is an instructor who controls the situation (manages the instruction) and who prepares the topics for the conversations and tasks which need to be accomplished. The instructor also sets the time limits for each assignment and, in some cases, has to grade it. For this reason, students may perceive it more as a different form of formal instruction.

The second form of tandem interactions, which I will analyze in this document, is the autonomous tandem learning between two learners, who are completely in control of their learning. In this setting, learners are on their own, without any outside influences. This situation has many advantages: tandem participants can choose topics for their conversations, they have no fixed times to meet, their performance is not evaluated by a third party, and there is nobody else in control of their interaction.

Both approaches have some advantages and disadvantages. Learners participating in the fully autonomous approach have the freedom of doing what they want, but this may present some motivational and organizational difficulties for them. Also, students participating in formal instruction normally receive a grade or at least some form of documentation to acknowledge their effort; autonomous tandem learners do not have this option. Their meetings, although educational, are often not officially recognized as such.

The above problems were recognized by the linguists of the Freie Universität in Berlin, and a new form of tandem learning emerged in 2007. During my data collection

in Berlin, which was partially conducted with students from this university (as well as students from the Tandem Language School), I had the opportunity to have direct contact with Professor Tassinary, who is one of the developers of the new approach to tandem learning.

The new approach to tandem learning retains the element of strong emphasis on learners' autonomy, but additionally provides tandem participants with opportunities for some structure, readily available to them, if they choose it.

The initial phase for this type of tandem is exactly the same as for any other tandem--students submit (or post on a blackboard) an application for tandem and once they have found their learning partner, with whom they want to continue to learn, they can decide if they want to follow: (a) the traditional approach-entirely autonomous learning, without any control mechanism or (b) the "new" approach, which still consists of autonomous learning, but with one major difference--students have to sign a "learning contract." This contract is between tandem partners and the language learning center. Before signing the contract, students are obliged to evaluate their language needs in the following areas: listening, reading, speaking, and writing (language learning centers are able to provide help with this). According to the results of this evaluation, students are required to set goals for their learning and to explain their approach to achieve it. Learners should provide concrete examples of activities they may employ during tandem interactions. Tandem partners also have to state in their learning contract the possible frequency and duration of their meetings. Additionally, they must agree to keep a learning journal, which documents their tandem work: learners' performance during each tandem meeting, accomplished linguistic goals, etc. Finally, students are required to return to the language

learning center by the end of the semester with their learning journals for evaluation of accomplished tasks. After successful evaluation of the learning journals, tandem participants are able to receive an official certificate and accreditation from the university, which documents their tandem work and accomplishments.

This new approach recognizes tandem as a valuable tool in the process of second language acquisition and rewards serious participants with an official certificate. It should motivate tandem participants to think about their linguistic needs right from the beginning of the tandem learning process and to develop an awareness of them. This approach motivates tandem learners to take greater advantage of their interactions through the added element of "forced" self-evaluation and reflection on linguistic needs of each learner; on the other hand, it preserves learners' autonomy--the defining element of tandems. Learners willing to sign the learning contract are not obliged to lock themselves in the library and focus on grammar study; on the contrary, they are encouraged to enjoy their tandem meetings, which should be diverse, fun and educational. The only differences between this new approach and the traditional tandem learning are the contract signed at the beginning of the semester and the frequent self-monitoring/evaluation of progress in the learning journal.

# CHAPTER 3

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 3.0 Introduction

There is no existing literature on tandem learning in the United States. Due to the fact that tandem research has a strong foundation in the interactions between a native speaker and a non-native speaker as a source of linguistic and intercultural learning, some of the studies in second language acquisition (SLA) which focused on interactions between a native speaker and a non-native speaker; issues of output, input, and interactional feedback are considered.

The second half of this chapter will be dedicated to the already existing tandem research conducted in Europe.

## 3.1 Elements of an interaction

## 3.1.1 Input/interaction framework

Research on conversational interactions between second language learners and their interlocutors has been an important element of the second language acquisition field since the early 1980s (e.g., Gass, Mackey & Pica, 1998). One of the first studies leading to questions of the connection between interaction and language learning was conducted by Sato (1985, 1986), who investigated the relationship between conversation and second language learning. In her longitudinal study, Sato observed two Vietnamese brothers during conversations with their teachers, peers, foster parents, and Sato herself. The results of her research suggested there was no connection between input or naturalistic

interaction and the grammatical encoding of past time reference (the focus of her investigation). For this reason, Sato suggested that conversation may be only selectively facilitative in the process of second language acquisition. It was one of the first indications that input alone may not be sufficient for learning.

As Gass and Selinker pointed out (2001):

Input alone is not sufficient for acquisition, because when one hears language, one can often interpret the meaning without the use of the syntax. (...) Little knowledge, other than knowing the meanings of the words and knowing something about real-world events, is needed. This is not the case with language production, or output, because one is forced to put the words into some order. (p.277)

Current SLA research goes beyond the comprehensible input hypothesis of Krashen, which stated that the source of second language acquisition was input which could be understood by the learner (Krashen, 1985). Comprehensible input is still considered necessary, but insufficient for successful language learning (Elis, 1994; Long 1985; Long, 1996). Recently, researchers have focused on more precise understanding of how learners process input and develop their interlanguage competence. The interplay between input, comprehension, and output is of greater importance in the field of SLA (Gass, 1997; Gass & Polio, 1998; Hall, 2000; Long, 1983; Long, 1996; Mackey, 1998; Mackey, Rhonda, & Leeman, 2003; Swain, 1985).

The general idea about the benefits of interactions was formulated by Long (1996) as part of his Interaction Hypothesis, which stated that conversational negotiations trigger linguistic adjustments by the NS (or more competent interlocutor), which, in turn, help

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second language acquisition because they provide opportunities for the connection of "input, learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive way" (p.452). Modifications of input are important because they can increase input's comprehensibility and may facilitate L2 development.

The connection between input and output during interaction was also investigated by Gass (1997) in her work related to input, interaction, and second language acquisition. Gass (1997) proposed the following five stages to account for the conversion of input to output: apperceived input, comprehended input, intake (selective processing), integration (matching input against existing knowledge), and output (p.3-4). It is important to point out the difference between comprehensible input proposed by Krashen, and comprehended input by Gass. As Gass (1997) points out, there are two crucial differences between these inputs: (1) comprehended input--the focus is on learners and their understanding; (2) comprehensible input--the speaker is in control of comprehensibility.

Study conducted by Mackey (1995) suggested that taking part in interaction led to increased production of developmentally more advanced structures, and "more active involvement in negotiated interaction led to greater development" (p.583). Only active participation resulted in development. Observing interactions, without active participation and opportunities for production, was not associated with the emergence of developmentally more advanced structures. Mackey's research supported the interaction hypothesis and provided support for Swain's output hypothesis, and the importance of language production.

### 3.1.2 Output

Studies related to interactions and learners' output have their origin in the research conducted in French immersion classroom settings in Canada. Swain and Harley (1978) observed in Canadian immersion programs, where students were constantly provided with rich, comprehensible input that learners often demonstrated weaknesses in their grammatical accuracy. Observed students had very high listening comprehension skills and communicative fluency, but they displayed a significant amount of grammatical errors in L2.

This suggested that large amounts of comprehensible input were not sufficient for foreign language learners to achieve a very high level of L2 proficiency. Communicatively-oriented, rich in input learning environment did not provide optimal conditions for second language acquisition. Focus on form and language production were necessary to improve learners' performance (Harley & Swain, 1978).

In proposing the Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985) stressed that "producing the target language may be the trigger that forces the learner to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning (p. 249). She argued that students need comprehensible input and comprehensible output in order to achieve accuracy in L2.

### 3.1.3 Three functions of output

Swain's output hypothesis is strongly related to the concepts of language fluency and accuracy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, language fluency does not always correspond to language accuracy. Even very advanced, seemingly fluent speakers of L2

may produce grammatically incorrect structures. Rich input may not be sufficient for learners to achieve accuracy in foreign language study. Comprehensible output may be crucial in the process of L2 learning.

For this reason, the output hypothesis, which addresses three distinct metalinguistic functions of output and their usefulness in the process of language learning, will be of great importance for this research. This hypothesis (Swain, 1995) is based on the assumption that:

> Output pushes learners to process language more deeply (with more mental effort) than does input. With output, the learner is in control. By focusing on output, we may be focusing on ways in which learners can play more active, responsible roles in their learning. In speaking or writing, learners can "stretch" their interlanguage to meet communicative goals. They might work towards solving their linguistic limitations by using their own internalized knowledge, or by cueing themselves to listen for a solution in future input. Learners (as well as native speakers, of course) can fake it, so to speak, in comprehension, but they cannot do so in the same way in production (p.126-127).

In the earlier stages of SLA research, output was viewed as a method to practice already learned skills; it was not considered a useful "learning tool." The idea of output as an important element of the learning process emerged with Swain's output hypothesis. Since the first proposals of the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 1993), Swain has extended its scope and identified three functions of language production, which are related to the aspect of accuracy, rather than fluency. The three functions of output are (Swain, 1995):

1. The noticing/triggering function, or what might be referred to as its consciousness-raising role

2. The hypothesis-testing function

3. The metalinguistic function or what might be referred to as its "reflective" role (p.128)

The noticing (or consciousness raising) function is activated when learners want to say something, and are not able to do so. In such circumstances, they are able to "notice the gap" between their knowledge and their linguistic needs. According to Swain (1995), noticing may bring learners' attention to something they need to discover about their L2. This noticing may trigger further cognitive processes needed to generate new linguistic knowledge or to reorganize learners' existing knowledge.

The second function of output is the hypothesis-testing function. Producing output could be potentially a way of testing one's hypothesis about the L2 and its use. As Swain (1995) points out, some errors which appear in learners' written and spoken production reveal hypotheses held by them about how the L2 works. To test a hypothesis, learners need to do something. Active production of a foreign language enables learners to test the comprehensibility and linguistic correctness of their utterances against feedback obtained from their interlocutors. Obtained feedback may lead either to confirmation that the tested hypothesis was correct, or to its rejection, in case the produced output was not understood.

This leads to the third function of output-metalinguistic function, or the "reflective role." Swain (1995) claims that "as learners reflect upon their own target language use, their output serves a metalinguistic function, enabling them to control and

internalize linguistic knowledge" (p.126). Under certain conditions, learners will "not only reveal the hypotheses, but also reflect on them, using language to do so. It is this level of output that represents its metalinguistic function of using language to reflect on language, allowing learners to control and internalize it" (p. 132).

It is crucial to point out that Swain does not propose that output should be viewed as the only solution for second language acquisition. Her claim is rather that output promotes the recognition of one's capabilities and gaps in knowledge, which, in turn, can motivate learners to engage in language related activities, such as a collaborative dialogue.

### 3.1.4 Studies related to the output hypothesis

There are several studies related to the output hypothesis and to the three functions of output: the noticing function, the hypothesis testing function, and the metalinguistic function.

Pica (1988) investigated interlanguage adjustments as outcomes of negotiated interactions between the NS and the NNS. One year later, Pica, Holliday, Lewis, and Morgenthaler (1989) examined comprehensible output as an outcome of linguistic demands on learners. Both studies demonstrated that learners frequently modify their output as a result of comprehension difficulties.

Swain and Lapkin (1995) investigated the noticing function of output. The research method employed by them was the analysis of "think-aloud protocols" generated in connection with a written activity in a formal classroom setting. Their finding supported the claim that language production (output) resulted in students' recognition of

their linguistic problems. Secondly, they found that such recognition activated cognitive processes, leading to language learning. Learners were able through various thought processes to consolidate existing knowledge, or generate some new knowledge on the base of their current skills.

Another study related to the noticing function of output was conducted by Izumi (2002), who investigated whether language production promoted noticing of formal elements in L2. The results of this study suggested that students who engaged in output-input activities outperformed those exposed to input only for the sole purpose of comprehension. The positive effects of language production were consistent with the output hypothesis.

The most recent studies examining the concept of output have been extended to include its additional function--"as a socially-constructed cognitive tool" (Swain, 2000), and its importance for the collaborative dialogue.

## 3.2 Collaborative dialogue

### 3.2.1   The definition of collaborative dialogue.

The joint effort of native speaker and non-native speaker to construct discourse promotes second language acquisition in many ways. Whenever two speakers meet in order to communicate and to learn through the means of this communication from one another, there is an opportunity for a collaborative dialogue to materialize. As Swain explains (Swain, 2000), a collaborative dialogue is "knowledge-building dialogue." It is a dialogue in which students can outperform their linguistic competence through the help of their conversational partner. In collaborative dialogue, as pointed out by Swain and

Lapkin (1998), the function of language use is also distinct: "Language is simultaneously a means of communication and a tool for thinking. Dialogue provides both the occasion for language learning and the evidence for it. Language is both process and product." (p.320)

In a collaborative dialogue, interlocutors work together on problem solving and knowledge building through the means of language, but "their collective behavior may be transformed into individual mental resources" (Swain, 2000). Learners work together towards linguistic improvement and resolution, but in the process of the collaboration, each learner benefits individually. In a collaborative dialogue, each interlocutor enters the conversation with individual needs and a certain metalinguistic knowledge, which are the basis for learning. Each person learns differently, according to their specific needs, and this converts the collaborative dialogue into an individual learning experience. The collectively accomplished knowledge may be used by an individual learner in second language development. Individual benefits are obtained through this joint activity, which could be viewed as "linguistic problem-solving through social interaction," where saying and responding to it converts into knowledge building mediated by language. (Swain, 2000)

### 3.2.2   Collaborative dialogue and its challenges

As Swain explains (2000):

The role of dialogue in mediating the learning of such substantive areas as mathematics, science, and history is generally accepted. Yet, when it comes to the learning of language, the mediating role of dialogue seems less well understood.

Perhaps this is because the notion of "language mediating language" is more difficult to conceptualize and it is more difficult to be certain of what one is observing empirically (p.110).

Verbalization is commonly used in almost all fields of study. It has several functions: it focuses learners' attention, helps formulate hypotheses, tests them, and is very useful in finding solutions (Swain, 2000). Nevertheless, it is not commonly used in foreign language instruction. In many instances, students are required to produce dialogues just for the purpose of language production. They talk about artificial topics, and do not utilize the language for talking about the language itself.

### 3.2.3 Language Related Episodes (LRE)

Dialogue as a mediator of second language learning found support in the research of Swain and Lapkin (1998), who analyzed language-related episodes from dialogues of two grade 8 French immersion students during their interaction.

Swain and Lapkin (1998) define a language related episode (LRE) as "any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others" (p.326). The LRE can be either "lexis based" or "form based." The lexis based LRE can be observed when learners seek a word in the L2, or when they have to choose between synonyms to find the item with the best fit. The form based LRE is related to syntax, spelling, morphology, or any other grammatical item discussed during an interaction. Language related episodes are connected with the concept of language used as a tool (Swain & Lapking, 1998):

Language serves not only a communicative function, but is itself, a psychological tool. Like any other tool, it facilitates task performance by mediating between us and the accomplishment of the task. The tool may facilitate our performance of the task and may make some things possible that were not otherwise. (p.320)

Assuming that the students were using language as a "psychological tool," Swain and Lapkin (1998) examined their dialogues for any evidence of learning, while speaking was analyzed as a cognitive activity which enabled learners to generate hypotheses and to test them.

The second goal of Swain's and Lapkin's (1998) research was to demonstrate that collaborative dialogue is learning:

Unlike the claim that comprehensible input leads to learning, we wish to suggest that what occurs in collaborative dialogues *is* learning. That is, learning does not happen outside performance. Furthermore, learning is cumulative, emergent, and ongoing, sometimes occurring in leaps, while at other times it is imperceptible. (p.321)

According to the above statement, the collaborative dialogue IS learning in process because using either the L1 or L2 for negotiations creates new knowledge about them.

Data to support the above claims came from an analysis of the language-related episodes isolated in the conversation of two French immersion students (grade 8 students, enrolled in French immersion program since kindergarten). One of the students was female and the other male. According to their teacher's evaluation, the female student was linguistically stronger than the male learner. This proficiency level difference was

considered important for the researchers because it suggested there was an opportunity for an "expert/novice" relationship during their interaction (Swain and Lapkin, 1998).

In their study these learners were asked to carry out a "jigsaw task." During the task, they had to work out a story line from a series of pictures and then write it out. As the students worked together, their conversation was recorded and later transcribed for analysis of the language-related episodes observed during the process of the story line's construction. The presence of the LREs was associated with situations when students encountered linguistic problems and tried to solve them using either their native language or the L2. Observed language-related episodes provided evidence that language was used as both an enhancement of one's thinking and mental processes and as a tool for foreign language learning. It was used to create new knowledge and to overcome communicative obstacles.

### 3.2.3   Scaffolding

Creation of new knowledge because of learners' participation in a collaborative dialogue may be connected to another important learning process—scaffolding, which can be observed as part of the collaborative discourse between two speakers: two native speakers, two non-native speakers, or a native speaker and a non-native speaker. Scaffolding as a term is closely related to the previously discussed topics of output and collaborative dialogue. Language production and mutual assistance among interlocutors are necessary for scaffolding to occur.

Donato (1994) provides the following definition of scaffolding: "in social interaction a knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive

conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence." (p.40)

According to Ohta (2000), scaffolding can be seriously impeded by the incorrect type of assistance--by helping learners with what they are able to do, or by not withdrawing assistance when learners can finish tasks on their own.

Learners' autonomy, an important element in the process of scaffolding, was also addressed in the study conducted by Ellis (1985), which investigated interactions between two learners and a teacher in order to examine students' utterances with new syntactic patterns, which had not existed in their interlanguage. His goal was to identify the first occurrence of two consecutive sentences consisting of new patterns. Secondly, Ellis investigated which processes might have helped learners to produce the new structures. He found that new syntactic patterns emerged when learners were allowed to initiate the topic of their conversation, and were allowed some degree of autonomy. Additionally, new structures were present when the teacher helped the students providing crucial linguistic information at the right moment. The joint effort of the teacher and participating students to construct linguistically correct discourse resulted in collective scaffolding.

Donato's study (1994) on collective scaffolding analyzed selected written protocols of university students in the U.S. who worked together. Students in the third semester of French were required to prepare an oral presentation and were told they couldn't use notes while presenting, but could make notes while preparing. Donato examined students' notes of their planning process for scaffolding. He observed that students were helping each other in order to create linguistically correct forms. They were

making use of their knowledge to help each other extend their existing skills. Donato observed 32 cases of scaffolding in a one-hour class during the preparation process for oral presentations. One week later, during the oral presentation, 75% of the forms learned through collective scaffolding were used correctly. Donato's study provides crucial evidence that collaborative tasks can provide opportunity for language learning. Through collaborative dialogue learners added to their own knowledge and helped their peers to do the same.

Takahashi's study (1998) investigated the development of students' utterances over the period of 3 years in a collaborative context. This study was conducted at an elementary school. Her analysis indicated that students' ability to provide assistance during classroom activities increased with their progress. As they became more experienced foreign language learners, their ability to assist each other increased significantly. In the third-year data, teacher's assistance was reduced and students played a more active role during the class, when compared to the previous two years. There was an increase of student-student exchanges and children took over the scaffolding role, previously executed by the teacher. It may suggest that the children were learning not only the Japanese language from their instructor, but also strategies on how to manage their own learning and the learning of others. They were imitating the techniques used by the teacher in order to construct complex sentences through mutual assistance. In addition, students proved resourceful during their collaborative dialogues and employed, among others, previously learned songs while constructing complex Japanese structures. Takahashi observed that students were able to produce correct structures above their

developmental levels if active assistance by the teacher or the other children was provided.

## 3.3 Corrective feedback (CF)

### 3.3.1 The definition of corrective feedback

According to Ellis (1994), the term feedback refers in the field of second language acquisition to "information given to learners which they can use to revise their interlanguage" (p. 702). Feedback can be implicit (indirect, for example, as a request for clarification) or explicit (direct correction). Corrective feedback usually occurs in situations where the communication between interlocutors is impaired or deviates from linguistic standards. It is a chance for L2 learners to obtain valuable information in order to improve or update their linguistic abilities. However, not all corrective feedback is perceived as such, and not all is noticed. A certain level of learner attention is necessary to benefit from received feedback, and for interlanguage adjustments to occur.

Although some researchers stressed in the past that positive evidence alone was sufficient for learners to acquire the L2 (Krashen, 1982; Schwartz, 1993), increasingly, there is strong support that CF may play a facilitative role in language learning. Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis claims that implicit negative feedback, resulting from negotiation of meaning, gives learners the opportunity to attend to linguistic form. Gass (1997) took it further and argued that learners benefit from such input only if they pay attention to the language forms they hear. According to Gass (1997), "some input may serve no learning purpose. Rather, time or conversational pressures may be such that the input occurs with little attention being paid to it" (p.114). The concept of noticing is of

great importance because it accounts for which features of input (including feedback) will be focused on and so may become intake.

In summary, any situation, in which there is a misunderstanding between two interlocutors may lead to modifications of input and output in order to reach mutual comprehension (Gass, 1997; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey and Philp, 1998; Swain, 1995). In order for such modification to occur, learners must pay attention to the available information.


### 3.3.2 Learners' perception of feedback

In a conversation between a native speaker and a non-native speaker, some type of corrective feedback may be provided, especially in educational settings. This CF is, however, not always noticed or acknowledged by the non-native speaker as such. In this section, I will focus on studies, which investigated why learners may fail to notice CF, which type of corrective feedback is noticed, and which type tends to be left unattended.

Doughty (1994) conducted a study with Australian adults learning French, with the purpose of corrective feedback analysis. She discovered that the observed teacher had a tendency to give feedback on learners' sentences that had only one error and did not frequently correct utterances with many errors. Additionally, the results of her study suggested that the teacher provided feedback for 43% of the utterances with errors. Her findings suggest that teachers are not able to provide feedback to all erroneous utterances; consequently, they must make decisions on what to correct and how to do it. Students have various options in reacting to feedback, which can range from ignoring the feedback to repairing the error.

A study which investigated in depth corrective feedback and learner uptake was conducted by Lyster and Ranta (1997). It was an observational study of French immersion classes, with approximately 100 hours of audio-recordings. Researchers distinguished six different types of feedback used by four teachers participating in this study: (1) Explicit correction (teacher provided correct form or clearly indicated that a student made an error); (2) Recast; (3) Clarification request (indication that repetition or reformulation of a sentence is necessary due to an error, often introduced by phrases "what do you mean by X?"); (4) Metalinguistic feedback (comments, information, questions related to the error); (5) Elicitation ("No, not that. It's a…. – teachers allowed students to complete their sentence; or teacher asked students "how do you say it in X?" Teachers were helping students to come up with the correct answer); (6) Repetition (teacher's repetition of students' utterance with the error; teacher used higher intonation to highlight the error). Also, a combination of various types of feedback in the same turn was observed--multiple feedback (p.48). The goal of this study was to observe the type and frequency of corrective feedback employed by four observed teachers. Secondarily, researchers sought to find which type of feedback would result in students' uptake and which feedback would prove ineffective. Uptake was defined by them for the purpose of this study as: "student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance" (p.49). According to Lyster and Ranta, teachers' feedback could result in uptake or no uptake (continuation of the topic). If there was uptake, the error either was corrected because of the feedback, or the student was not able to fully correct the utterance and it needed further "repair."

Results of this study indicated teachers' overwhelming tendency to use recasts although this corrective treatment had little effect on students' repair. Only 31% of the recasts led to uptake. Metalinguistic feedback, explicit correction, and repetition were used infrequently by teachers although, according to the results of this study, they were followed by more uptake than recasts. Metalinguistic feedback led to 86% uptake, and clarification requests to 88%. Elicitations led to 100% uptake. As Lyster and Ranta pointed out, "both elicitation and metalinguistic feedback proved to be particularly powerful ways of encouraging repairs that involve more than a student's repetition of the teacher's utterance--these feedback moves resulted in student-generated repair."(p.56)

The arguable role of recast and its perception by foreign language learners was investigated in further studies conducted by Lyster (1998a, b), who argued that recast was the least effective type of feedback to promote modified output by learners. Lyster concluded that in content-based classrooms, recasts were not very successful at drawing students' attention to their non-target-like output. Learners perceived it as repetition of what they had said before, as affirmation, or as an alternative form of their utterance, but not as correction.

One of the most significant studies related to learners' perception of corrective feedback was conducted by Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000). Participants were 10 learners of English as a second language and 7 learners of Italian as a foreign language (IFL), who received feedback focused on various linguistic features, including morphology, syntax, lexicon, and phonology. The researchers investigated how learners responded to various types of feedback.

One of the crucial theoretical frameworks for this study was the concept of the acquisition of linguistic knowledge (competence). As Mackey, Gass, and McDonough pointed out, attention is necessary and crucial for learning, and for choosing from the constant flow of input the elements which may be important for one's development und future progress. There are various levels of attention, and not all input is processed in the same manner. Some elements of input and corrective feedback may be perceived as important, while others may "slip by" unnoticed by learners.

Since the goal of this study was to observe learners' perception of interactional feedback, all participants carried out a communicative task (two-way information exchange activities) with a native or near-native speaker, who provided interactional feedback for the non-target-like linguistic features of NNS speech, when appropriate. Not all errors had to be corrected.

Each participant received a picture, which was similar but not identical to the picture of the conversational partner. The task was to find the differences between these pictures. Each interaction lasted approximately 15 minutes and was videotaped for later analysis and stimulated recall. The recall was conducted immediately after the communicative task, in order to elicit learners' perception about the received feedback. The stimulated recall comments were categorized into six groups: (1) lexis (comments about unknown word, synonym, etc.); (2) semantic (general comments with regard to meaning and understanding); (3) phonology ; (4) morphosyntax (sentence formation, word order, structure); (5) no content (subjects did not say anything about received CF); and (6) unclassifiable comments.

The results suggested that the received corrective feedback for the ESL learners consisted of corrections in the following categories: 47% morphosyntactic, 41.5% phonological, 10.5% lexical and only 1% semantic. Quite different results were obtained for the IFL group: 48% of feedback was lexical, 31.5% morphosyntactic, 18% phonological and 2.5% semantic. There are significant differences in the linguistic content of feedback episodes between these two groups. The main difference was in treatment of lexical CF. In both groups feedback about semantic items was minimal.

During the stimulated-recall session, learners had the chance to reflect on the corrective feedback and to comment on it. The ESL learners, who received most of their feedback on morphosyntax, did not pay to much attention to it during the recall. Only 7% of their comments were related to the morphosyntactic category, while 27% addressed phonology, 23% semantic, and 26% lexical items. The IFL learners demonstrated more consistency since 54% of the content of stimulated-recall comments were related to lexis, 15% to semantics, 9% morphology, and 5% phonology.

In summary, learners were most accurate in their perceptions about lexical feedback and about feedback related to their pronunciation. They failed to recognize most of the morphosyntactic feedback or perceived it as other types of CF. ESL learners tended to perceive morphosyntactic feedback as semantic, and the IFLs viewed it as lexis.

The types of feedback given to the ESL group were recast, negotiation, and combination feedback (negotiation and recast). Recast was frequently used to address morphosyntactic errors, while negotiations were employed for pronunciation problems. These findings may suggest that learners do not recognize feedback about morphosyntax

as such or that recast is not a very effective tool while giving CF. Learners may perceive

a recast as repetition of their correct utterance, and not as feedback.

Feedback obtained during interaction between native and non-native speakers

"may benefit lexis and phonology more than some aspects of grammar" (p. 494). Another

possible explanation of results of this study is related to the concept of "cognitive

overload":

> ...if learners were able to correctly perceive all of the feedback that they received,
>
> this would result in a cognitive overload for them; if this is the case, then
>
> perceiving a limited amount of feedback at exactly the right developmental time is
>
> the optimal condition for the learner (p.494).

Ellis (2001) investigated corrective feedback and its uptake among ESL learners

in a private school in New Zealand. He found that 74% of interactional feedback resulted

in uptake. This might be explained by looking at the subjects of this study: highly

motivated adults, who paid for taking classes at a private language school and therefore

wanted to take full advantage of it. Ellis' research points out learners' motivation may be

of great importance. It affects how much (or how little) attention learners pay to

feedback, how the feedback is noticed, and utilized for learning.

Finally, the study by Mackey, Oliver, and Leeman (2003) focused on the amount

of feedback, the existence of opportunities for output to be modified because of feedback,

and the immediate incorporation of corrections. Results of this study suggested that much

of the feedback learners received gave learners the opportunity to modify their output.

The authors pointed out there may be differences in the amount and quality of feedback

depending on interlocutor type, learner's age and L2 level, and the educational context.

According to the authors, results may be very different in a formal classroom and a different linguistic environment, such as without a teacher, who frequently seems to provide information and answers.

### 3.3.3 Recast

One of the six different feedback types identified by Lyster and Ranta (1997) is recast. Gass (1997) defines recast as: "reformulations of an incorrect utterance that maintains the original's meaning" (p.458). Long (1996) referred to it as "utterances that rephrase a child's utterance by changing one or more sentence components (subject, verb, or object) while still referring to its central meaning" (p.434). Baridi (2002) coded corrective feedback as recast, if "it incorporated the content words of the immediately preceding incorrect NNS utterance and also changed and corrected the utterance in some way." (p.20). All definitions point out that the function of recast is error correction, with the retention of the original meaning of the sentence. There is a significant number of studies which investigated recast in both classroom settings (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Lyster, 1998 a; Lyster, 1998b; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Oliver, 2000; Lemann, 2003; Philp, 2003; Sheen, 2006) and experimental settings (Mackey & Philp, 1998; Oliver, 1995). The effectiveness of recasts is also controversial. Research conducted by Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggested hat recasts may not be very effective in obtaining learner uptake; other studies demonstrated positive effects of recasts (Mackey & Philp, 1998) and argued that one should consider delayed effects of recasts as well as directly measurable data in order to assess their effectiveness.

Sheen (2006) intended to bridge these two points of view through exploring the relationship between certain characteristics of recasts and learner uptake. Her study was based on two research questions: (1) What are the main characteristics of recasts found in the adult L2 communicative classroom?; and (2) Which type of recasts lead to uptake and repair? To conduct the study, Sheen used two data sets: one from an ESL classroom in New Zealand, and the other from an EFL setting in Korea. For data analysis, Sheen used Lyster and Ranta's (1997) operationalization of error treatment sequences, which consist of: (a) a trigger—utterance with an error; (b) teacher's corrective feedback (recast for Sheen's study); (c) learners' response to feedback. All recasts were provided by teachers and coded either as a multi-move recast or as a single-move recast.

According to the results of this study, 79% of all recasts were single-move recasts. There was no significant difference in learners' uptake following multi-move and single-move recasts, but as Sheen points out, three characteristics of single-move recasts were of great importance: recasts' length, type of change, and linguistic focus. Short recasts (related to a word or a short phrase) resulted in a higher rate of uptake when compared to recasts addressing a clause. Substitution (occurs when the reformulation replaces one element with another) yielded un uptake rate of 90%, much higher than the 65% rate produced by the addition/deletion type of recasts. Sheen concluded that recasts related to pronunciation resulted in higher uptake (92%) when compared to grammar-oriented recasts (71%). Interrogative recasts were also more effective than declarative corrections. Teachers focused their recasts on grammar, which accounted for more than 50% of all recasts. Vocabulary-oriented recasts were slightly more frequent than pronunciation-oriented corrections. According to Sheen, "many classroom recasts

(perhaps the majority) do not involve any negotiation of meaning. In other words, they are didactic, not conversational (...) Teacher's short, segmented reformulations of the learner's erroneous utterances make the recast seem like explicit correction." (p.387)

In summary, Sheen's study suggests that explicit recasts lead to more uptake and repair due to their focus on a single linguistic feature and the salience of the reformulated item to learners. Classroom recasts tend to be explicit and non-conversational in nature. Philp's study (2003) also confirmed that learners were more responsive to shorter recasts, which resulted in more accurate noticing when compared to longer corrections.

## 3.4 Focus on Form

### 3.4.1 Focus on Form research

Long (1991) referred to focus on form as attention to linguistic forms within the context of performing communicative activities. In such a context, learners acquire linguistic forms as a product of attending to them during meaning-oriented interactions when the primary focus is with the message rather than the grammar. In a focus-on-form approach, there are opportunities for a shift of attention from meaning to form. As Long and Robinson pointed out (1998):

> Focus on form refers to how focal attention resources are allocated. Although there are degrees of attention, and although attention to forms and attention to meaning are not always mutually exclusive, during an otherwise meaning-focused classroom lesson, focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features-by the teacher and/or one or more students-triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production. (p.23)

Long and Robinson stress that such a shift of attention is not only characteristic for second language learners; it also occurs to native speakers when they stop to reflect on an appropriate form during a writing activity, or in any other situation when they have to think about their own language. (This native speaker focus on form can be frequently observed during tandem interactions, when native speakers are pushed to reflect on their own language and its rules.) As Long and Robinson concluded, the native speaker is usually oriented toward meaning and communication, "but factors arise that lead even the fluent language user temporarily to attend to the language itself" (p.24). This temporary attention to a certain linguistic feature, or noticing (registering the occurrence of certain linguistic feature in context), is crucial to the concept of focus-on-form learning. Schmidt (1993b) concluded that "noticing is crucially related to the question of what linguistic material is stored in memory" (p.26). Lightbown (1998) took it further and stressed the importance of timing in focus on form and noticing. According to her, knowing when to offer focus on form is crucial. Explicit focus on form should be provided at precisely the moment when the learners are able "to see the relationship between what was meant and how it should be said. The goal is to ensure that learner notices the difference between his or her own utterance and the target form" (p. 193).

Swain (1998) addressed noticing and focus on form in a study investigating: (1) whether a demonstration of metatalk for students might influence their use of it, and (2) whether there is evidence of a relationship between metatalk and language learning (p. 77). She analyzed learning-related episodes (LREs) produced by pairs of students, who participated in a collaborative activity of reconstructing a passage, which was previously read to them by the teacher. Prior to the activity, students were exposed to a review of

difficult vocabulary and a mini-lesson on certain grammatical features of the text. The results of this study suggested that the LRE during which students reflected consciously on the language they were producing, may be a source of language learning; "thus increasing the frequency of LREs in a pedagogical context through appropriate modeling, and through opportunities for use, may be useful in promoting second language learning" (p.79). Verbalization of linguistic problems gave learners the opportunity and time for conscious reflection, and as a result of it, possible learning. Additionally, as students tried to produce the target language, they had the opportunity to notice not only the new linguistic features in input, but also the gap in their interlanguage. In summary, this study concluded that focus on form through conscious reflection may be beneficial for students, in contrast to focus on formS, which, as Long pointed out, may not be very beneficial.

According to Long (1991), there is a crucial difference between focus on formS and focus on form. Focus on forms refers to grammar-oriented instruction that seeks to isolate certain linguistic forms in order to teach them one at a time, and to test them in the same manner. Focus on form refers to meaning-oriented instruction with occasional shifts of attention to form:

> "Whereas the content of a lesson with a focus on forms is the forms themselves, a syllabus with a focus on form teaches something else-biology, mathematics, (...) the geography of the country where the foreign language is spoken, the cultures of its speakers, and so on-and overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise accidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is meaning or communication." (p.45-46)

It is learning in context and from context, without the pre-planned isolation of each linguistic item from the rest of the language. Long argued that focus on form instruction resulted in a higher level of learners' proficiency and more efficient learning, while focus on formS teaching was counter-productive because parts of the language were deliberately taught separately--converting acquisition into a process of gradual accumulation of parts. As Doughty and Williams summarized (1998):

> the proposed advantage of focus on form over the traditional forms-in-isolation type of grammar teaching is the cognitive processing support provided by the "overriding focus...on meaning and communication" (...) the learner's attention is drawn precisely to a linguistic feature as necessitated by a communicative demand. (p.3)

Even though there seems to be an advantage for participating in focus on form instruction rather than in a grammar focused teaching/learning approach, Doughty and Williams stress that "focus on form and focus on forms are not polar opposites in the way that form and meaning have often been considered to be. Rather focus on form entails a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on forms is limited to such a focus" (p.4).

There are two principal methods for achieving focus on form. Activities can be designed in ways that require learners to communicate while also focusing their attention on certain formal features, or corrective feedback can be provided following learners' errors during the course of communicative activities.

The first method was investigated by Doughty (1991), who conducted a study on the acquisition of relative clauses by 20 ESL learners from various linguistic

backgrounds. The results of her study suggested that the focus-on-form oriented group outperformed the control group in their ability to relativize.

Studies suggest that corrective feedback provided in a communicative context is helpful for second language acquisition (e.g., Doughty and Varela, 1998; Lightown and Spada, 1990; Schachter, 1991; Tomasello and Herron, 1989).

Doughty and Varela (1998) investigated the feasibility and effectiveness of a focus on form approach in a communicative, content-oriented science classroom. The subjects of this study were 34 middle school students from various linguistic backgrounds (in two different classes), who were at an intermediate ESL level of proficiency and lived in the United States. Traditionally, this type of class was conducted as content only, without any linguistic instruction, or corrective feedback related to students' grammatical errors. In the course of this research project, the teacher was asked to continue with her regular routine, with one exception--the teacher should focus on students' incorrect use of past tense forms (both orally and in writing), and provide them with corrective feedback when appropriate, in addition to her regular instruction. The recommended type of corrective feedback was recast, made salient through the teacher's change of intonation. The feedback was provided immediately after discovering a student's error. Only past tense errors were corrected, and there was no metalinguistic discussion. Each correction focused only on one learner error and consisted of two stages: (1) repetition of the error to draw learners' attention; (2) recast to provide correct L2 forms. This type of corrective feedback was slightly more elaborate than a typical recast because of the attentional focus. In some cases the teacher would make a recast more salient through a rise in the pitch of the voice to help the students notice the incorrect forms of their utterances.

Recast was used in instances of incorrect usage of past tense, or in situations where the past tense should have been used.

Results suggested that students exposed to focus on form during meaning-oriented science instruction showed significant gains in oral and written production of correct forms of past time, when compared to the control group. The control group did not make any progress on past tense forms during the time of the study. This contrast indicated implementation of focus on form instruction in a meaning-oriented curriculum was more effective than providing no linguistic instruction at all to the ESL learners, outside of their second language setting.

Additionally, there was evidence of increased awareness on the part of learners of the correct forms of past time. As Doughty and Varela pointed out, already during the second lab, students were beginning to self-correct before the teacher had the opportunity to recast. In some cases, students had started to over-generalize the past tense and were double marking verbs. Also, a few students corrected each other in a way that was similar to the approach the teacher had taken.

In addition to providing corrective feedback, the teacher kept a journal with her observations about the effectiveness of this focus on form method in a meaning-oriented content. According to her, the most important element of successful corrective feedback in a communicative setting was finding the balance between the meaning and the corrective feedback. This involved focusing on what the student was saying, and how to express the correctness of the form. It was not helpful to provide form-related corrective feedback to a student's content-oriented questions. In such a situation, the students' attention tended to be on the information they wanted to obtain from the teacher, and they

were not interested in receiving form-related feedback. Secondly, the teacher emphasized that too many corrections in the same turn should be avoided, and focus on form should be brief and immediate.

Finally, from the students' point of view, some of them were not comfortable receiving more than one or two corrections during one exchange. Students expressed also that they felt capable of paying attention to meaning and communication at the same time, which suggested that focus-on-form in content-based contexts could be very helpful and meaningful. Without some degree of focus on form, even ESL students, surrounded by meaningful input, may not make a lot of progress, as was observed in this study (control group) and in the study conducted by Williams and Evans (1998).

Williams and Evans (1998) conducted a semester long research study to investigate what kind of focus and on which forms would prove meaningful in a second language instructional process. The subjects of this study were ESL students at a large Midwestern university, who were divided into a treatment group and a control group. The results of their study suggested that focus on form was very useful and should be integrated into communicative curricula, due to the fact that the treatment group outperformed the control group in the use of the form in focus. Without any kind of focus on form, learners demonstrated very little progress. As Williams and Evans stressed:

> Their lack of progress came in spite of the fact that they live in a world filled with spoken and written English and received plentiful input in comments, conferences, and conversation with dedicated teachers. This was their last ESL class, and it is unlikely that they will ever again receive consistent corrective

feedback or explicit instruction on their use of English. From now on, only

authentic positive evidence will be available for them. (p.155)

As the authors of this study suggested, positive evidence alone is not sufficient,

and learners, especially at the more advanced level, must receive some type of corrective

feedback or focus on form interaction in order to improve; otherwise they may fail to

progress. Secondly, Williams and Evans (1998) pointed out that not all focus on form

will be effective. It is useful if it corresponds with the developmental level of a learner

and individual readiness for a certain form.

In summary, research related to output, input, interaction, collaborative dialogue,

learning-related episodes, and corrective feedback is relevant to this study, since the

tandem method embodies all of the above. In addition to these linguistic elements, the

conversation between tandem learners represents an example of lexical learning. Studies

related to this aspect will be discussed in the following section.

## 3.5 Lexical learning

### 3.5.1 Introduction

After years of relatively low interest, vocabulary learning has been recognized as

an important element of SLA during the last couple of decades. Knowing grammar is not

enough to communicate in a foreign language. As Gass and Selinker pointed out (2001),

the "lexicon may be the most important language component for learners" (p.372). It

gives students the opportunity to express their ideas, feelings and a wide range of

meanings in a communicative setting, as well as in writing. Vocabulary is the key to

understanding others and to being understood by them. Lexical knowledge, and the

process of its acquisition, is very complex and dynamic. This complexity can be observed in the wide range of studies related to various vocabulary learning aspects: incidental vocabulary learning (Hulstijn, Hollander & Greidanus, 1996; Joe, 1995), semantic and structural elaboration (Barcroft, 2002, 2001), lexical learning strategies (Cohen and Aphek, 1981; O'Malley and Chamont, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Schmitt, 1997), the role of context in lexical learning (Nagy, 1985; Prince, 1996), and attention and vocabulary learning (Robinson, 1995).

Secondly, knowing a word is more than knowing its translation from L1 to L2. According to Laufer (1997), the following elements are necessary for one to know a word:

A. Form: spoken (pronunciation) and written (spelling)

B. Word structure: the basic free morpheme, the common derivations

of the word and its inflections

C. Syntactic pattern in a phrase or sentence

D. Meaning: referential (including multiplicity of meaning and metaphorical

expressions), affective (the connotation of the word), and pragmatic (the

suitability of the word in a particular situation)

E. Lexical relations of the word (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy)

F. Common collocations

Ideally, second/foreign language learners, as well as native speakers, should know all six factors of any lexical item. Frequently, however, they may know only some of them. In summary, word knowledge includes one's ability to recall meaning, infer meaning, and communicate orally and in writing. It has linguistic, psycholinguistic, and

sociolinguistic aspects. No single approach to lexical learning can address all skills needed for full use of a lexical item.

Combining the complexity of a lexical item, and various approaches needed for its acquisition, vocabulary learning presents a challenge not only for researchers, but also for learners. The effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies may depend on many factors: task, the difficulty of the lexical item, the learner, the strategy, and the context.

### 3.5.2 Vocabulary learning strategies

"Learning strategy," as a term, has been defined by many linguists. Ellis (1994) defined it as:

> device or procedure used by learners to develop their interlanguages (...)
> Learning strategies account for how learners acquire and automatize L2
> knowledge. They are also used to refer to how they develop specific skills. It is
> possible, therefore, to talk of both "language learning strategies" and "skill
> learning strategies." Learning strategies contrast with communication and
> production strategies, both of which account for how learners use rather than
> acquire L2 competence (p. 712).

As Schmitt points out (1997), there is increased awareness that aptitude is "not the governing factor in language learning success, implying that language achievement depends quite heavily on the individual learner's endeavors" (p.199) and on how each learner "approaches and controls" his/her learning process and the use of L2.

Schmitt (1997) designed a large-scale study in order to assess which vocabulary learning strategies learners actually use while learning a L2 and how helpful they believe

these strategies to be. He suggested two main categories of L2 lexical learning strategies: strategies for discovery of an unknown word and strategies for consolidation of a lexical item. Schmitt came to the following general conclusions: (1) most learners are aware that vocabulary learning is important; (2) efficient language learners employ a variety of strategies; (3) lexical learning strategies vary with learners' cognitive maturity and language proficiency. Young learners may employ word lists and flash cards, but as they grow older they tend to abandon these strategies because they are no longer seen as helpful.

According to Schmitt's findings (1997), vocabulary learning strategies should be matched to learner's age and language proficiency to be perceived as useful. As he explains, learners should be introduced to a variety of strategies in order to have a choice of which to use according to their developmental level and actual needs. Additionally, Schmitt (1997) brings to our attention that:

> The currently popular communicative style of teaching emphasizes meaningful interactive activities over form. However, given the generally favorable response to strategies utilizing affixes and roots, both to help discover a new word's meaning and to consolidate it once it is introduced, it may be time to reemphasize this aspect of morphology (p.226).

Among 40 vocabulary learning strategies presented by Schmitt to the participants of his research study, the following three were evaluated as most-used to discover the meaning of an unknown word: bilingual dictionary, guessing from context, and asking classmates for meaning. In order to consolidate the meaning of a word, students most frequently employed: verbal word repetition, written repetition, studying the spelling,

saying the new word aloud, and studying the sound of a word. Students also perceived as helpful the learning of idiomatic expressions together, and connecting a word with its synonyms or antonyms. The perception of the usefulness of a vocabulary learning strategy was strongly related to the learners' developmental level. Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Cohen and Aphek (1981).

The research study of Cohen and Aphek (1981) investigated 17 English-speaking students (nine of them were beginners, six intermediate, and two advanced) learning Hebrew over approximately 3 months. According to Cohen and Aphek, there was an interaction between the proficiency level of learners and the type of lexical learning task that worked best for them. Beginners found listing tasks as most helpful, while the intermediate students preferred contextualization strategies. These findings confirm that the sophistication of lexical learning activities should be related to learners' proficiency.

In summary, students perceived vocabulary learning as important, and employed a wide range of strategies to accomplish this task. Frequently, the type of employed strategies depended upon the age and proficiency of learners, or on the perceived difficulty of the learned word.

### 3.5.3 Easy and difficult words

Lexical learning depends on many factors: employed learning strategies, learning context, and also to a large degree, on the level of difficulty of the learned item. Some words are easier to learn than others. Research conducted by Laufer (1997) examined what makes a word difficult or easy to acquire. She focused on several characteristics of the word itself which might affect the difficulty level for its learning. The analyzed

features of a word were: pronounceability, orthography, length, morphology, part of speech, idiomaticity, and multiplicity of meanings.

Pronounceability was linked in Laufer's (1997) study to learners' L1, which may be responsible for one's inability to distinguish between some phonemes and consequently for confusion and false "homophone" perception. According to Laufer, Spanish speaking learners of English may have difficulty distinguishing between pairs like ban/van or day/they. As Laufer stressed, there may be also a gap between learners' ability to "hear" and to pronounce a word. Self-conscious learners may tend to avoid words, which they cannot pronounce. If a language has high levels of sound-script incongruence, then pronunciation and spelling errors are very likely to occur. With regard to the length of the word, Laufer (1997) pointed out that "what can account for better learnability is not the word's length, but the learners' frequent exposure to it. In other words, it is the quantity of input that may contribute to the successful learning of the short words, not their intrinsic quality." (p.145)

Morphological features which were linked to difficulties with new lexical items were, among others: irregularity of the plural form, gender of inanimate nouns, and noun cases. According to Laufer (1997), "the learner's ability to decompose a word into its morphemes can facilitate the recognition of a new word and its subsequent production (...) The awareness of ante- and pre- as being synonymous can help the learner realize that prenatal and antenatal are identical in meaning" (p.146). It can be observed that Laufer, as well as Schmitt (as noted earlier), found it useful to pay attention not only to semantic elements of a word, but also to focus on some of its "forms."

The next lexical feature, and maybe one of the largest obstacles in becoming an accurate L2 speaker, may be idiomaticity. In Laufer's study (1997), teachers and learners pointed out that idiomatic expressions were much more difficult to understand and learn to use than their non-idiomatic equivalents. Not only idioms were hard to learn, they led also to false comprehension.

The final factor related to problems with lexical acquisition, according to Laufer, is "multiple meanings." Multiple meanings related to one word tend to confuse learners; therefore, they must learn to discriminate between various meanings of the same form in order to use each of them correctly. Taking into account all these factors, which may affect the difficulty level of lexical items, Laufer (1997) was able to come up with a list of factors which facilitated lexical acquisition or, on the other hand, caused problems with it.

The following factors facilitated lexical acquisition: familiar phonemes, phonotactic regularity, fixed stress, consistency of sound-script relationship, morphological transparency, and one-form one-meaning situation. The difficulty-inducing factors were: presence of foreign phonemes, phonotactic irregularity, variable stress and vowel change, incongruency in sound-script relationship, deceptive morphological transparency, idiomacity, and one form with several meanings. Laufer also distinguished two factors with no clear effect on lexical acquisition: word length and the part of speech the item represented.

As mentioned before, Laufer pointed out that in order to truly know a word, one should have knowledge of all its elements: form, meaning, collocations, etc. In many instances, only a very educated native speaker may know all aspects of a word. Foreign

language learners frequently master only some properties of a word. As Laufer (1997) pointed out:

> There are words which learners know in the sense of knowing what they mean in
> certain contexts, but which they cannot use productively. Other words vary in
> how easily they can be produced: some words can be retrieved only with effort;
> some are momentarily accessible (the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon) (p.142).

Finally, Laufer stressed that the lexical learning is a complex process, which should be viewed as "a continuum" of knowledge and abilities. In the very first learning stage, learners may be able only to recognize a word in a broader context, but consequently, at some point they may be able to use it actively in communication, or even use all of the word's registers.

To summarize, there are many factors affecting why some words are perceived as easy or difficult to learn. Knowing a word (all its forms and meanings) is complex, and only an educated native speaker, or a very diligent L2 learner, might be able to achieve it.

### 3.5.4  Lexical learning from context and in context

When addressing context and lexical learning, one must distinguish between two types of context: (1) learning context (the learning environment), which can include: learner, teacher, peers, social and cultural context, and the availability of input and output opportunities; and (2) textual or discourse context, in which a particular word or phrase can be found. Textual context has been of great interest for many studies (Hucking and Bloch, 1993; Joe, 1995; McKeown, 1985; Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985; Prince,

1996). For this tandem research, the linguistic and social environment (context) will be of greater importance.

Hulstijn (1997) came to the following general conclusions about lexical learning context and lexical learning in context:

●New vocabulary items should not be presented in isolation (i.e., only with their L1 equivalent and without a verbal L2 context) and should not be learned in rote fashion.

●New vocabulary items should be presented in meaningful context (preferably authentic or quasi authentic contexts, preferably offering enough clues to allow learners to successfully infer their meaning).

●Learners should elaborate on a new word's form and meaning in order to facilitate retention (p. 214-215).

As Hulstijn pointed out, learning words in isolation, out of context, and only with their L1 translation is not enough to retain them and to have them available for future use.

Another study addressing context was conducted by Shu, Anderson, and Zhang (1995), who suggested that significant learning from context was evident only when unfamiliar words appeared repeatedly, and when a context was rich enough to allow the learner to infer the full meaning of the lexical item. Frantzen (2003) took it further and analyzed the interplay among various factors affecting contextual lexical acquisition: context, learner's characteristics, and the type of didactic material.

In her study, students were able to guess correctly the meaning of an unknown word from context only in 30% of cases. She found that, "the context is often not sufficient to determine meaning because it is either vague, ambiguous, or misleading. In

addition, contexts can dissuade students away from the correct meanings they already know and persuade them to infer incorrect meanings." (p.184)

Frantzen also analyzed factors responsible for students' inability to guess from context. Some of them were: (1) learners' inattentiveness--lack of attention; (2) students' certainty about words they think they know, even though the context suggests something else. As Frantzen (2003) stressed, one of the factors of greatest importance for lexical learning, as well as any other type of learning, is certainly attention. This was also addressed in the study by Pulido (2003), who concluded that words which can be too easily guessed from context may not be retained because of the lack of learner's need to allocate sufficient attention to the connection between the word form and its meaning.

We can conclude from above studies that learning from context (textual or the context of a conversation) may not be sufficient for adequate lexical acquisition since students may incorrectly guess meanings of unknown words. In order to successfully learn lexical items, research suggests that combining various learning techniques and allowing for maximal contact with a new lexical item may lead to better learning in context, and from context. In addition to the utilization of various learning techniques, learners' attention and active use of new words may be the key factors to their retention, as noted by Gu and Johnson (1996). Their study indicated that learners' self-initiation, selective attention, and deliberate activation of newly learned words consistently predicted both learners' vocabulary size and general proficiency. Other predictors of success included contextual learning, dictionary use, and note-taking strategies.

In summary, the interplay between various factors (attention, context, and learning strategies) seems to be important in second language lexical acquisition.

Although it seems impossible to single out one and only one factor, which could be viewed as facilitative for vocabulary learning, most researchers tend to agree that multiple exposures to lexical items and opportunities for active use of it are very beneficial for lexical acquisition.

### 3.5.5 Pragmatic and cultural learning

As Crystal (1985) defines:

"Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (p. 240).

Knowing the cultural and behavioral norms associated with the L1 could be viewed as a base on which language learners can start to develop their second language pragmatic skills. It is not uncommon for second language learners to transfer their pragmatic skills from the L1 into their L2. This transfer could include the means of expression of sociocultural values and norms, rules of politeness and appropriateness, and even the physical distance between interlocutors during interaction. In some instances, it can be beneficial; in others, it is a hindrance. Negative pragmatic and discourse transfer may result in learners' failure to communicate successfully in the L2 (Bardovi-Harling, 1996; Kasper, 1981; Tannen, 1994). Pragmatic failure may be the cause of native speakers' misinterpretation of the non-native speaker's actions. The non-native speaker may feel disappointed in the L2 culture because of pragmatically unsuccessful communication. As Kasper (1992) remarked, "in the real word, pragmatic transfer

matters more, or at least more obviously, than transfer of relative clause structure or word order" (p.205). Although pragmatics seems crucial for successful communication, learners frequently fail to notice pragmatic inappropriateness (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998; Rose, 1999). This inability to notice cultural differences may result from learners' previously established knowledge of their native community (Kramsch, 1993; Hinkel, 1999).

Bardovi-Harling and Dörnyei (1998) concluded in their study that Hungarian and Italian EFL learners recognized grammatically incorrect but pragmatically correct utterances more easily than pragmatically inappropriate but grammatically correct utterances. Learners at all proficiency levels demonstrated this tendency. In contrast, ESL participants of the same study (studying in the United States) ranked pragmatic errors as more serious than grammatical errors. Bardovi-Harling and Dörnyei explained this difference as the effect of the learners' linguistic environment. According to them, "residency can be related to the difference, the environment outside the classroom. The ESL learners had the opportunity for additional target-language interaction, although learners take advantage of this to different degrees" (p.253). Through daily contact with native speakers the ESL learners were able to develop significant pragmatic awareness because of "the pressure not only of making themselves understood, but also of establishing and maintaining smooth relationships with NSs in the host environment" (p. 253). Results of their study suggest that the pressure of direct contact with native speakers and of the demands of such interactions seemed to have a facilitative effect on pragmatic learning. It might motivate NNSs to notice the pragmatic elements in the L2. Within the ESL sample in above study, "recent arrivals rated pragmatic violations as less

serious (...) than did learners who spent a longer period in the U.S." (p. 254). In summary,

it seems that authentic input and contact with L2 speakers may facilitate pragmatic

learning and pragmatic understanding.

Wildner-Bassett (1996) and House (1996) stated that pragmatic features are

teachable through awareness-raising activities, which can be accomplished in a formal

instructional setting, or during a conversation with a native speaker. Students

participating in House's study (1996) pointed out they believed that "consciousness-

raising helped them understand how and when they transferred routines from L1 and how

they might counteract negative L1 transfer through noticing and through making attempts

to use alternative, more L2 norm-oriented expressions" (p.247). As House remarked:

> metapragmatic information is essential in counteracting negative pragmatic
>
> transfer and promoting the use of a more varied and more interpersonally potent
>
> repertoire of different discourse lubricants, discourse strategies, and speech act
>
> realizations, thus increasing learners' pragmatic fluency. (p. 249)

House concluded that in formal instructional settings, pragmatic appropriateness

presented for advanced language learners one of the most challenging features of the L2.

In summary, pragmatic and/or cultural knowledge is very important for learners

because lack of it may result in negative presentation of oneself during interactions with

L2's native speakers. Pragmatic features are teachable, and their learning may be

facilitated through direct contact with L2 speakers.

## 3.6 European tandem research

Only a few European studies conducted in the context of tandem language learning investigated the intercultural aspects of tandem learning, or the general validity of such a learning approach.

One of the most interesting investigations (partially related to this tandem research) was conducted by Bechtel (2003). Bechtel investigated the process of intercultural learning during French-German tandem interactions in an official, semester-long tandem language course at the University of Gießen in Germany. His focus was how, and if, language learning in tandem contributes to intercultural learning. In order to answer this question, Bechtel audio-taped and transcribed data collected during interactions between various tandem partners throughout the semester.

Bechtel's investigation was based on the assumption that individuals are constantly influenced by culture to perceive and to do things in a certain way. Cultural norms and rituals are crucial for societies--they tell people what to expect in certain situations and how to react to them. In the case of a change in cultural parameters, a "cultural shock" can occur. For this reason intercultural learning and contact with other cultures should be considered of great importance in modern education, as Bechtel (2003) pointed out.

One of the central features of intercultural learning, according to Bechtel, is the development of one's ability to present a cultural/political/social point of view to members of other cultures, and the ability to understand the points of view of the others. For the purpose of his research, Bechtel distinguished between the "I perspective," and the "They perspective." The first was related to the situations when tandem partners

reflected and talked about their own culture and country; the second occured when the learners talked about foreign cultures. He noted that during tandem interactions, the "exchange" of perspectives frequently was observed, meaning that learners developed the ability to accept and to justify the differences of the "other" culture. As a result, they were able to develop empathy for the perspective of their tandem partner.

Bechtel concluded that intensive intercultural learning is constantly present during tandem meetings, due to the interaction between two learners from different cultural backgrounds. Each person is already a "live" source of cultural information, and at the same time an "object"/representation of his/her culture.

Secondly, Bechtel pointed out that the intercultural aspect of tandem learning is to a very high degree learner-dependent. Each learner enters a tandem with a unique set of linguistic and cultural experiences, which make each interaction unique. Intercultural learning, like all other learning aspects of tandem interactions, arises from context. The intercultural aspect of tandem is always present as the primary focus of an interaction or as the background for linguistic learning.

Bechtel stressed intercultural learning can be observed in an active dialogue between tandem partners, in which they intend to find similarities and differences between their cultures. Additionally, intercultural learning can be observed in the process of conscious evaluation of the opinions of "the others" about one's culture and country, in order to respond to it in a non-confrontational manner, expressing at the same time one's own opinions. In order for intercultural learning to be successful, as Bechtel pointed out, tandem partners should avoid prolonged monologues about their own cultural experiences. Secondly, tandem partners should engage in a topic, which would

be of interest to both of them. Since intercultural learning in tandem is strongly related to the opinions and experiences of its participants, one cannot readily distinguish between correct and incorrect information. This inability to make this distinction could be seen either as strength or as weakness of learning in tandem. In summary, the results of Bechtel's study suggested that the tandem method provided its participants with substantial opportunities for intercultural learning.

Another study related to intercultural learning was conducted by Woodin (2001), who investigated the presence and development of intercultural learning through language learning in tandem. Woodin's investigation is based on a very broad definition of culture. In her opinion, culture is more than countries, their history and languages; each person has her/his own culture and its manifestations. Traditionally, according to Woodin, culture was taught through literature, history and art; but in order to grasp the full meaning of "culture" one should understand that it is dynamic and relative. It changes with the point of view of the learner; for example Spanish culture would be evaluated very differently from the point of view of a German person compared to an Italian person.

According to Woodin, intercultural learning involves not only learning of the facts of foreign culture, but also its pragmatics. One should learn about the accepted behavioral norms and customs in the other cultural setting. As Woodin points out, tandem learning provides an excellent opportunity to accomplish both goals of intercultural learning. One can learn cultural facts and appropriate ways to act in various situations in the other culture. For this reason, the tandem method connects the "old approach" of factual cultural instruction with the new, more practical approach of intercultural learning

through interaction and direct contact with the cultural and pragmatic information. This approach seems to be of great interest among European educators, who are still trying to adjust to the more recent historical developments, such as the expansion of the European Union. Even before the study conducted by Woodin, the need for educational adjustments, due to changing societies, globalization, and new political conditions, was closely investigated in a study conducted by Schratz (1992).

As Schratz (1992) stressed, based on the recent social and political situation, the current approach to education, ecology, and economy might not be sufficient in order to meet growing demands on human beings. In the area of education, new learning methods should be developed in order to address learners' needs as well as sociopolitical demands. As Schratz pointed out, some of the traditional educational approaches may not be very useful in the future; for example, people may not be easily "educable" in large groups only. The knowledge accumulated by humanity is growing so fast that it exceeds the existing possibilities for its dissemination. Due to rapid global changes, it will be increasingly harder to plan careers and future developments of the job market. All these factors call for adjustments in most areas of human life, including foreign language education.

In considering the above conditions, Schartz proposed a more holistic approach to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In general, such approach would include better communication between teachers and learners, increased opportunities for autonomous learning, and a shift from specific goals of individual disciplines to more general educational objectives. According to Schartz, the tandem method represents some of the above aspects of holistic learning, and could be of significant value for future

educational purposes. The tandem learning method truly involves the learners in the learning process and allows them expression of their identity and personality in true communication. Similar conditions could be transferable into a "formal classroom" in order to achieve more authentic learner involvement and to make the instruction meaningful. Similar results were presented in a study conducted by Goebel (1992), who also stressed the need for more meaningful foreign language instruction.

In summary, all the above studies pointed out the potential benefits of the tandem learning method. Bechtel (2003) and Woodin (2001) stressed its utility in the process of intercultural learning. Schartz (1992) and Goebel (1992) highlighted its potential for future educational purposes since learning in tandem allows students more meaningful interactions than the traditional classroom setting.

It is widely recognized that communication in tandem is different from the one in a typical classroom. Apflebaum's (1993) study took a broader look at intercultural and linguistic processes present during tandem meetings. Her focus was on error correction, intercultural learning, and the participants' perception of tandem.

Participants were three French-German tandem pairs; two tandems completed the data collection process, and one withdrew from it (although some of the pair's data appear in the data analysis part of Apfelbaum's study). The task was "story telling" in which participants were free to choose the topics. Audio-recordings and transcripts of these tandem meetings were used for data analysis.

Results suggested tandem partners were able to "tell stories" in the L2 with a linguistic sophistication near the level of their L1. This may be due to the fact that full sets of data were obtained from advanced level participants. Negotiation was employed to

clarify linguistic doubts or for general knowledge questions. Lexical learning was the focus of most learning episodes during interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers. Morphology (i.e. plural forms and articles) was the second most addressed feature in these interactions. Syntax and word order were not addressed at all in any of the dialogues. Although linguistic learning was present during these tandem interactions, it did not have as strong a presence as the intercultural learning which resulted from the meetings. According to Apfelbaum, the participants hoped to gain more grammatical knowledge from their interactions, but it was not the case. Nevertheless, they expressed increased motivation to continue with L2 study because of their participation in tandem.

Error corrections were present during the tandem interactions, but not all participants felt comfortable being corrected by the native speaker. Some preferred self-initiated corrections and self-repairs, which may be explained by the relatively advanced level of the participants. Apfelbaum confirmed that students' comments about error correction were, to some degree, confusing and contradictory. For example, one of the participants regretted she did not correct her tandem partner enough, but simultaneously stated she did not like being corrected during tandem meetings. Finally, the study of Apfelbaum confirmed the bilingual communication in tandem as beneficial. It seems that using both languages in the same conversational setting, helped students develop their abilities in fluent bilingual conversation and interaction.

Despite the limitations of a small sample size and advanced proficiency, Apfelbaum concluded that tandem learners focused primarily on lexical learning, and secondarily on morphological features. Syntax was not addressed at all by students

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evaluated in her data. Errors were corrected, but infrequently and with some resentment

from tandem partners.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE PRESENT STUDY

### 4.0 Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 2, this study is an investigation of the linguistic and intercultural learning aspects of the tandem method. The following four hypotheses are investigated:

H1: There are substantial opportunities for lexical acquisition because of students' participation in tandem.

H2: There are substantial opportunities for grammatical learning from context, and in context, due to one's participation in tandem.

H3: There are substantial opportunities for development of pragmatic knowledge and cultural exchanges because of students' participation in tandem.

H4: The majority of tandem participants are highly satisfied with the outcome of their learning in tandem, and with the learning progress of their tandem partner, and would recommend this method to others.

### 4.1 Participants

#### 4.1.1 Participants' selection

The data to be analyzed in this document were collected from April through August 2007 in Berlin, Germany. Participants for this study were recruited mainly through the help of the Tandem Language School. This school, as a part of the Tandem Network, offers not only the traditional classroom L2 instruction, but also tandem-

interactions for enrolled students. Students enrolled at the school and participating in

tandems were contacted and asked if they would be interested in voluntary participation

in this study. Tandems studying the following language combinations were initially

considered for this research: German-English, German-Spanish, and German-Polish. The

reason for the selection of these languages was my own linguistic abilities—I am fluent

in these four languages and thus able to analyze, transcribe, and understand such data.

However, as there was also interest expressed from speakers of other language

combinations, such as German-Danish, German-Czech, and German-Japanese, I decided

to explore if data collected from them could also be utilized for analysis. I met with each

of these tandems for an evaluation, which was mostly related to my linguistic abilities to

cope with the data than to the quality of their tandem interaction.

Due to similarities between German and Danish, and Czech and Polish, these

tandems were able to participate in this research. The German-Japanese tandem had to be

excluded because of my inability to transcribe and understand anything in Japanese.

There were no other requirements for participation in this study: age, race, gender, and

level of L2 proficiency were not considered factors which could exclude anyone from

participating.

### 4.1.2 Participating tandems

Fifteen tandems (each consisting of two learners or in total 30 learners)

participated in data collection for this study. Among these tandems, there were 13

"regular" tandems (learners were at compatible L2 levels and their age was in the range

of 18-40 years); and two "special" tandems, which consisted of older participants (ages

around 70, intermediate level of proficiency). Among the 13 regular tandems, 9

represented tandem pairs where both learners were at the intermediate level for their L2s;

three tandems were at the advanced level; and one tandem was at the beginner level.

### 4.1.3 Tandems-general information

(The second capital letter after the first initial/initials indicates the native language of the

participant: G=German, S=Spanish, C=Czech, E=English, D=Danish)

**Table 1: General information about regular, intermediate tandems**

| Tandem | Languages | Male/Female |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
| DG/RS | German/Spanish | F/M |
| LC/AG | German/Czech | F/F |
| TG/OS | German/Spanish | F/M |
| RD/AlG | German /Danish | F/F |
| BG/MS | German/Spanish | F/F |
| MG/JE | German/ English | F/F |
| MiG/SE | German/English | F/M |
| NoS/SoG | German/Spanish | F/M |
| MaG/CS | German/Spanish | M/M |

Among these 9 tandems there are:

**A. GENDER:**

1 male-male tandem

4 female-male tandems

4 female-female tandems

**B. LANGUAGES:**

5 German-Spanish tandems

2 German-English tandems *

1 German- Danish tandem

1 German-Czech tandem

> * According to the Tandem Language School in Berlin, there is a strong demand for the German-English tandems, but not enough native English speakers. The strong demand may be due to the historical past of Berlin, where most of the population from the eastern parts of the city had very limited access to the English language. Currently, due to the demands of the employment market, English is a very important part of everyone's curriculum vitae.

## 4.2 Materials

All participants completed four questionnaires (see Appendices A, B, C, and D). They could choose an English or a German version of it.

The first questionnaire asked for general information, such as gender, age, native language, length and quality of previous L2 instruction. It also addressed learners' expectations with regard to tandem learning. It was administered after the first audio

taping. The second questionnaire was closely related to the evaluation of tandem interactions and the relationship of such a learning method compared to traditional classroom instruction. This questionnaire was administered after the second or third tandem meeting. The third questionnaire asked participants to point out the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their typical tandem interactions. It was completed about one week later. Finally, the last questionnaire was a multiple-choice summary of all research questions asked in the previous three questionnaires, with a few additional items related to the participants' satisfaction with their tandem learning experience. It was given to students after the completion of all audio data collection.

## 4.3 Procedure

## 4.3.1 Consent Form

Prior to the data collection process, tandem participants completed an informed consent form. This form indicated that they were voluntarily participating in a study evaluating the tandem learning method. It was explained to them that although widely employed in Europe, tandem learning is almost unknown in North America, and that their participation in this research study could help bring more attention to tandem at universities across the United States and Canada, and broaden the cultural experience of many students in these countries. Secondly, participants were informed that multiple audio tapings of their interactions with their tandem partner would be necessary, as well as completion of four questionnaires. Finally, learners were informed about the confidentiality of collected data and their right to withdraw at any time.

Since consent forms are not widely employed in Germany, their function had to be carefully explained to the participants. Not all participants wanted to sign this form, and for this reason one tandem withdrew from participation in this research prior to the data collection process. All other tandems who agreed to sign the consent forms participated in the data collection.

## 4.3.2 Audio data

In addition to questionnaires, audio data were collected. The tapings were conducted during regularly scheduled tandem meetings. Tandem participants informed me about the time and place of their meetings so that their data could be collected. Learners were encouraged not to change their routines and the style of their interactions for the tapings. For this reason, audio data collections were conducted at various locations, such as universities, museums, a zoo, cafés, bars, private homes, and parks. Although some locations were noisier than others, the technology allowed me to separate the background noise from the participating speakers, and to obtain data which were clearly audible for analysis. The DS-30 Olympus digital stereo voice recorder was used for data collection.

Audio data were collected 4 times from each tandem. The tapings were approximately 45 minutes for each session. Data were collected on average two times a month. I was always present during the first taping for each tandem, taking notes of nonverbal communication and my general observations. During consecutive tapings, I respected the preferences of the learners, either for being alone for the taping, or with me taking notes. My goal was to provide them with a comfortable environment in order to

obtain authentic data. It was more important to obtain authentic interactional data than to be able to observe each interaction.

It is crucial to stress that learners were asked to maintain their routines, and no conversational topics or new learning strategies were introduced to them during the process of the data collection. Their interactions were truly authentic.

Additionally, most tandems had known each other for a fairly long time (an average of 7 months) before participating in this research; therefore, they had established certain routines and traditions related to their interactions, and neither my presence, nor the taping device influenced them significantly. The only time learners appeared aware of the recording process was during the very first meeting, but according to their statements, due to the very small size of the recording instrument, they were quickly able to forget about it. After completion of audio-data collection, all tapings were translated into English and transcribed for data analysis by the researcher, Anna Driggers.

# CHAPTER 5

## RESULTS

### 5.1 Participants selected for data analysis

This research will focus on the nine regular, intermediate tandems. The reasons for the selection of this group are:

1. Most of the learning which occurs in tandems occurs at intermediate levels, where there is still a large "room for improvement" grammatically and lexically. Advanced tandems tend to have different objectives for their meetings; often they have known each other for a very long time (in some cases more than a year) and frequently they are at the level, which could be described as "near-native speaker." Only on rare occasions is there a need for grammatical correction or a new vocabulary item. These types of tandems are already transformed from a learning situation into a friendship relationship, where pragmatic and cultural learning are more important than the lexical and grammatical aspects. Due to this distinctly different nature, advanced level tandem interactions should be investigated separately. The same could be argued in relation to beginner level tandems. First of all, these tandems are in danger of failing because learners generally cannot easily communicate with each other. Secondly, learners may be unable to explain any possible linguistic problems due to limited L2 resources. In summary, beginner level tandems represent a very challenging situation, and only very determined learners can manage it.

2. As previously pointed out, most tandems occur with learners at the intermediate level. At this level, learners can communicate quite well, but they are still actively

developing vocabulary and improving their grammar. Even though they have already learned most of the grammatical theory, learners are frequently unsure how to use the grammatical features in a conversation. They still are working on fluency, and they need a lot of feedback to achieve it. Corrective feedback seems to be important at this level, and is very much appreciated by learners.

For all these reasons, the nine regular tandems at the intermediate level were selected for data analysis. Future studies could potentially address similar research questions at the beginner and advanced levels.


## 5.2 Individual tandem descriptions

In the following section I will shortly describe (in a form of tables) the nine intermediate tandems chosen for this research. **Information was obtained from questionnaires, and is presented in its authentic form—as quotes.** In each table, the following points will be addressed: participants' age and gender, reasons for having a tandem, goals for learning in tandem, learners' subjective feelings about error corrections, and learners' evaluation of their progress.

## 5.2.1 Tandem DG/RS

**Table 2: Tandem DG/RS**

| Participant/Gender | RS /M | DG/F |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 21/Student | 21/Student |
| Reasons for participation in tandem: | "Tandem is more useful to gain L2 fluency than classroom." | "L2 improvement, cultural exchange" |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Lexis and oral fluency. It is hard on one's own to learn new words." | "Lexical acquisition and intercultural learning." |
| Participant's opinion about error correction. | "100% necessary; to recognize one's errors." | "Corrections are important. It is the only way to learn." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "Almost all. Arriving in Germany I couldn't speak (knowing theory!)" | "New vocabulary, colloquial usage of Spanish, Spanish culture." |
| Did you gain cultural knowledge in your L2 through tandem? What did you learn? | "Food culture. Customs and traditions of German people. How families live in Germany." | "I learned about the educational system in Spain, Spanish: food, customs and traditions." |

Both tandem partners were university students, having the goal to become foreign language teachers (RS-English teacher, DG- Spanish teacher). This factor could be viewed as a facilitator for their tandem learning since both had the ability to explain grammar to the other person. Although having a lot of contact with their respective L2 at the university, both RS and DG viewed their tandem meetings as crucial for development of L2 oral fluency. According to them, formal instruction did not provide sufficient opportunities for speaking or addressing a variety of topics.

In addition to their weekly tandem interactions, RS was frequently invited to the home of DG and her parents, which allowed him to experience the way of life of a typical German family, and even more, as he was a part of it while being there. I was able to observe one of these events. Also, RS was introduced to DG's friends, and was frequently invited for social gatherings with them. This allowed him to have direct access to the German culture and be immersed in the German way of life. He reciprocated and introduced DG to his Spanish classmates.

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## 5.2.2 Tandem LC/AG

**Table 3: Tandem LC/AG**

| Participants/Gender | LC/F | AG/F |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 30/Journalist | 38/Student |
| Reasons for participation in tandem: | "Learning from a native speaker, gratis, opportunity for personalized topics." | "Because there are no other possibilities in Germany to use Czech." |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Everyday communication, developing the ability to express ideas, vocabulary." | "I want to read Czech literature in original and understand Czech TV." |
| Participants' opinion about error correction. | "Very important. It is not common during everyday conversations with a NS, but possible during tandem" | "I want my partner to correct all my errors. I'm here not to do small-talk, but to learn." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "Better pronunciation, a lot of new vocabulary and idioms, better grammar." | "Idioms, pragmatics- what to say/not in certain situations, speaking the L2 without fear." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "We compared our both cultures and explored why people do or say things (or not)." | "Yes, but I already knew a lot about Czech Republic before. " |

Both learners (LC and AG) were very motivated, ambitious, and aware of their linguistic needs. They gave each other written homework in addition to their meetings. LC had the habit of paying attention to any problems she had with the L2 at work or in everyday life situations. She wrote them down and then discussed them during tandem meetings. Due to the above factors, the meetings between AG and LC involved intense and in-depth metatalk. Meetings were held twice a week for 2-3 hours. They were very much "work" and oriented toward producing learning outcomes. Lexical learning, grammatical learning, and intercultural learning were observed during these interactions.

## 5.2.3 Tandem OS/TG

**Table 4: Tandem OS/TG**

| Participants/Gender | OS/M | TG/F |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 24/Student | 22/Student |
| Reasons for participation in tandem: | 1) Language learning<br>2) Contact with NSs | "It is more fun to learn L2 and use it directly." |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Vocabulary, prepositions, verbs with prepositions." | "Vocabulary and oral fluency development. " |
| Participant's opinion about error correction. | "Is crucial, but not all errors, only important ones." | "It's crucial; without it I could as well talk to my self." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "Vocabulary, colloquial language usage." | "One to one translations don't work; colloquial L2." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "Understanding of academic life in Germany; German traditions and customs." | "Yes, about family values (Spanish parents are more conservative); traditions..." |

TG and OS were students interested in conversation, development of oral fluency, and contact with native speakers of their L2. Their meetings consisted of "regular" tandem-meetings, in most cases at the university during lunch hours, and of informal socializing with the tandem partner and friends. According to them, tandem was indispensable for oral skills improvement. OS indicated that more than one tandem can be very beneficial because it gave one the opportunity to converse more. Knowing German was very important for his future career, and he knew that through tandem he could supplement his grammar-oriented university courses.

## 5.2.4 Tandem RD/AIG

**Table 5: Tandem RD/AIG**

| Participants/Gender | RD/F | AIG/F |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 27/Student | Mid 30s/Student |
| Reasons for tandem participation: | "To improve L2 and to meet a German person." | "I have family in Denmark and future plans of living there." |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Vocabulary." | "Vocabulary and better writing." |
| Participant's pinion about error correction. | "I like it. My partner shows that she is interested-correcting me; and I can improve." | "I like it. Otherwise I can get used to speaking incorrectly. Is important for pronunciation." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "New words, a lot of facts about Germany; I also have a new friend because of tandem. " | "Vocabulary, colloquial use of L2. I have the impression that my lexicon expanded a lot." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "German history, facts about every-day life in Germany and peoples' problems." | "I learned a lot about the educational system, social problems, and life in Denmark." |

Tandem RD/AlG was unique because of the more formal approach--participants signed a learning contract (see Chapter 2) and were very aware of their learning goals and their linguistic needs. They were meeting each week for two hours at the university's language learning center or at various cafés. Tandem partners also socialized in addition to their regular meetings. They went to the movies, restaurants and bars. Both (AlG and RD) stressed that they were able to learn a lot, and this may be explained through their approach. In addition to their interactions, each tandem partner prepared at home an "essay" with new words learned during the previous tandem meeting. Essays were corrected and discussed at a subsequent meeting.

## 5.2.5 Tandem MG/JE

**Table 6: Tandem MG/JE**

| Participants/Gender | MG/F | JE/F |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 30/Dance student | 31/Student |
| Reasons for tandem participation: | "Fluency in English. I always hated the classroom L2 learning." | "Need for corrections without pressing friends to do so." |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Vocabulary, grammar, but most of all the practice of speaking. One-on-one interaction is very effective" | "Vocabulary. One can not learn words from book and know, if the NS would use it in certain context or not." |
| Opinion about error correction. | "I want to be corrected. Although my partner has good skills, I think, I could improve her pronunciation." | "On the beginning I didn't like it, but once I realized how important it is, I wanted to be corrected. " |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "Vocabulary. I also improved my pronunciation." | "Vocabulary, my grammar and pronunciation improved." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "I knew the USA and its culture before; but still I learned small details." | "I learned a lot about German culture and traditions from her." |

MG and JE were very motivated to learn and to improve their L2 skills. In the conversation with the researcher, MG pointed out that she was aware of JE's relatively high level of German. For this reason she wanted to offer her customized (JE's needs adjusted) instruction, in order to "keep" her as a tandem partner. As a result, MG utilized flashcards with German idioms and proverbs during some of their tandem meetings, and paid increased attention to JE's errors. JE stressed that for her it was much easier to learn German in the "real world" (tandem). It was easier to remember things learned in context and in a casual atmosphere. She also mentioned that although she did not like error correction at the beginning, she changed her mind once she realized how important and beneficial it was.

This tandem was also employing a combination of various tandem meetings. In addition to the learning oriented interactions, MG and JE went together to the zoo (where they learned animals' names), cinema, and a dance show. JE also had a chance to visit MG at her home on multiple occasions.

### 5.2.6 Tandem MS/BG

**Table 7: Tandem MS/BG**

| Participants/Gender | MS/F | BG/F |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age/Occupation | 23/Design student | 31/Student |
| Reasons for tandem participation: | "To have a contact with a local person and to learn the L2 at the same time." | "Because of the good experience with tandem of my other friends. Also, to understand flamenco texts " |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Grammar and vocabulary." | "Speaking/conversation" |
| Participant's pinion about error correction. | "It is important. If not, one thinks that she speaks correctly." | "Good and important for speaking error-free." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "How young people live in Germany." | "Cultural knowledge, vocabulary, pronunciation." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "My tandem partner explained me many cultural aspects of Germany. German food." | "The differences between Spanish and Catalan. How to make typical Spanish food." |

Both learners were at the lower intermediate level at the beginning of their meetings. As MS stressed, she participated in various German courses, but was never able to communicate or to speak. Her participation in tandem pushed her to do it. As she pointed out, she learned "almost everything" through tandem. It allowed her to minimize her fear of speaking the L2, which was very strong before. She described the tandem experience as learning German while having fun interacting with a tandem partner. BG stressed that tandem allowed her to have direct contact with Spanish culture through her tandem partner, in addition to all benefits previously pointed out by MS. She was able to learn not only about Spanish culture, but also about the Catalan traditions since her tandem partner had these two cultural backgrounds.

Although focused on learning, this tandem had quite informal meetings in cafés and bars. Additionally, tandem partners participated in various cultural/athletic activities together, such as kayaking, cooking, parties, cultural events, and a flamenco class.

## 5.2.7 Tandem NoS/ SoG

**Table 8: Tandem NoS/SoG**

| Participants/Gender | NoS/F | SoG/M |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 28/Student | 33/Engineer |
| Reasons for tandem participation: | "It is the best opportunity to speak the L2." | "To practice the L2/ L2's culture with a NS in a relaxed environment." |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Grammar and vocabulary." | "Mainly vocabulary; I learn Grammar in L2 instruction." |
| Participant's opinion about error correction. | "It's important, because if nobody corrects me I will always make the same errors." | "Very important, but not constantly." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "New vocabulary, grammar, facts about life in Berlin." | "I could practice with her my Spanish, so I don't forget it." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "Yes, I learned a lot about Berlin and other parts of Germany through our trips." | "It is hard to say, but for sure, one can get rid of stereotypes. " |

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Tandem SoG and NoS involved not only intense linguistic learning, but also intense intercultural exchanges. Tandem partners (frequently accompanied by other friends) organized many excursions to explore various German cities. Because of it, NoS highlighted that her previous stereotypical opinion about German people changed. She stated in one of the questionnaires, "German people are also nice and dependable. Sometimes Spanish people have a very different idea about Germans. Tandem, definitely, helped me to revise it."

Her tandem partner pointed out that for him tandem provided a more stimulating learning environment compared to a traditional classroom, where one could be exposed to boring topics. However, both (NoS and SoG) stressed that formal learning is important.

## 5.2.8 Tandem SE/MiG

**Table 9: Tandem SE/MiG**

| Participants/Gender | SE/M | MiG/F |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 27/Web developer | 30/Midwife |
| Reasons for tandem participation: | "To improve my L2. One is always engaged during tandem learning." | "L2 improvement--to work and live in Canada." |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Grammar to sound intelligent and vocabulary to understand it." | "Speaking fluently. Vocabulary expansion." |
| Participant's opinion about error correction. | "If I say something incorrectly I want to know it; it's why I'm here." | "I want to be corrected, otherwise I don't learn much." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "Vocabulary; also when I'm stuck trying to say something complicated, she helps me with it." | "Fluency in speaking." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge though tandem? What did you learn? | "I have already been in Germany for few years, so I know a lot." | "I know already the US culture, so I'm focusing on other things – speaking, lexis, pronunciation." |

This tandem consisted of two learners with an "aversion" to formal learning settings. SE did not like them because of very few opportunities to speak. He knew that a receptive understanding of an L2 and speaking it are very different. Because SE lived in Germany, he understood the importance of tandem learning and error corrections. He liked tandem because during such interactions he was actively engaged all the time and could pause for clarification if he did not understand something. During tandem, he could also learn with somebody he liked, "rather than with a random assortment of people in a class." A flexible schedule was also a plus since both learners were professionally engaged.

MiG pointed out that tandem accommodated her individual needs better than formal instruction since she was interested in conversation and error correction more than in formal grammatical instruction, which, as she pointed out, she was able to do at home.

### 5.2.9 Tandem MaG/CS

**Table 10: Tandem MaG/CS**

| Participants/Gender | MaG/M | CS/M |
|---|---|---|
| Age/Occupation | 37/Student/Journalist | 31/Student |
| Reasons for tandem participation: | "I need to pass Spanish exams at the university. Also, to be able to talk to people form Spain." | "I need to speed up my German progress and getting together with a German may help me. " |
| Goals for tandem learning: | "Vocabulary-it's hard for me. I can learn grammar alone at home." | "Vocabulary-to have more resources for communication." |
| Participant's opinion about error correction. | "It's very important, only so I can recognize my errors." | "I like it. The *job* of a tandem partner is to do it. This is a main goal of the tandem activity." |
| What did you learn from your tandem partner? | "Mainly I refreshed/ practiced my previous knowledge." | "Grammar and vocabulary. I think, we both learned grammar from each other." |
| Did you gain L2 cultural knowledge through tandem? What did you learn? | "I learned about Columbia." | "Yes, about life in Germany." |

According to CS and MaG, they liked tandem for the opportunities to be able to clarify linguistic doubts as they arose in context. As CS pointed out, in a classroom he had to share his time with others and was not able to ask questions at any given time. During tandem interactions he fully took advantage of being able to ask questions, and as analyzed data will show, his curiosity resulted not only in his L2 learning, but also in MaG's learning about his native language.

# CHAPTER 6

## DATA ANALYSIS-LEXICAL LEARNING

### 6.0 Introduction

Lexis is of great importance for this study given the strong interest tandem participants expressed in lexical acquisition in the questionnaires. This chapter will analyze opportunities for lexical learning during tandem interactions according to features frequently observed among various tandems, such as single and multi-word learning, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions. For each described phenomena, I will provide a small number of typical interactional examples.

It is important to stress that conversations are transcribed in their original form, with some errors. Their translations into English preserve some of these errors because of focus of this research.

### 6.1 Opportunities for lexical learning in tandem

Lexical learning was frequently observed during tandem interactions. It had various forms and arose on various occasions, but always in an interactional context. Although all data analyzed here were collected from participants at the intermediate level, a full range of opportunities for lexical learning could be observed, from the very basic, explicit, single-word search to the very complex learning of idiomatic expressions. In the following chapter, I will discuss the most common phenomena related to lexical learning in tandem. I will start with explicit learning of a single word. This type of learning is not very complicated and does not involve complex negotiations. In some aspects, it seems similar to lexical learning in other educational contexts (e.g., in a formal

classroom). However, learning in tandem is different, and my goal is to point out these differences. Next, I will address multi-word learning and the learning of idiomatic expressions and proverbs. These situations are more complex. Learners are involved in prolonged negotiations and clarifications of meaning. As a result of it, scaffolding can be observed in such conversations. Learning different types of lexical items involves different processes; for this reason the opportunities for single-word learning and multi-word learning in tandem will be discussed separately. Presenting the full range of types of lexical learning in tandem, I would like to demonstrate that tandem provides substantial opportunities for lexical acquisition.

## 6.2 Explicit, single-word learning

Excerpts 1A, 1B, and 1C are fragments of an interaction between MG and JE. Their meeting began with 45 minutes of a "German session" during which tandem partners talked in German about various idiomatic expressions prepared by MG for JE. After these 45 minutes in German, the "official" tandem language was switched to English. Learners engaged in an informal conversation, during which the explicit question of MG about the correctness of the word *eyebrows* in English started a long conversation about the names of different body parts in English and in German. Both learners ended up learning the same lexical items in their respective L2s. It is important to point out that MG and JE were addressing more specific vocabulary, such as freckles, eyelashes, collarbone, etc. Some of these words were new to them; others were addressed for review purposes. All of these words were addressed spontaneously. MG and JE did not utilize a word list.

In summary, Excerpts 1A, 1B, and 1C were chosen for analysis because they represent examples of direct, very explicit ("how do you say") opportunity for lexical learning during tandem interactions, which was frequently observed in dialogues among all tandems.

**Excerpt 1A**

Interaction between MG/JE

1 MG: What are those, eyebrows? [MG is pointing to her eyebrows.]

2 JE: Eyebrows. Genau. (*Exactly.*). Das sind Augen**bogen**, ja?

(*These are „Augenbogen," yes?*)

3 MG: Brauen. (*Brows*)

4 JE: Augenbaruen↑. Augenbrauen. Ja, das ist genauso auf Englisch.

(Eyebrows↑. *Eyebrows. Yes, it is exactly the same in English.*)

5 MG: Hm... **Eyes Brows?**

6 JE: Just, eye. Eyebrow.

7 MG: Just eye? [MG writes down the word.]

8 JE: [looks at it] Genau. Das ist genau wie auf Deutsch.

(*Exactly. This is exactly the same as in German.*)

9 MG: And this? [MG points to her eyelashes.]

10 JE: Eyelashes.

11 MG: How do you spell it?

12 JE: E-Y-E-L-A-S-H-E-S

13 MG: [Writes it down]

14 MG: Wimper. (*Eyelashes.*)

15 JE: Wimper, ja. (*Eyelashes, yes.*)


The conversation about body parts is initiated by MG during the official "English session" through the use of verbal and non-verbal communication. MG points to her eyebrows and asks for confirmation of her hypothesis that the English word is *eyebrows* (1). JE confirms that what MG said is correct, repeating the word *eyebrows* and saying *genau* (exactly) (2). The word *genau* may have two functions. It re-confirms that MG's hypothesis is correct, and gives JE the opportunity to switch languages from English to German. In the same turn (2), JE asks MG if the word *Augenbogen* would be the German translation of *eyebrows*. JE is testing a hypothesis (2). Her hypothesis is incorrect. As Swain (1998) would point out, hypothesis formulation and testing may serve the language learning process because learners can receive feedback and learn from it. This is also the case in this conversation; JE's hypothesis is incorrect, and MG provides corrective feedback (single-move recast). It is important to stress the recast addresses only the incorrect part of the word, making it very salient (3). JE repeats the correct form two times (successful uptake). The second repetition is followed by her statement *it is exactly the same in English* (4). This statement demonstrates that JE compares English and German and reflects upon similarities. However, in English the word *eyebrows* consists of eye+brows (eye-singular, brows-plural) while in German the word *Augenbrauen* consist of Augen+Brauen (Augen-plural, Brauen-plural). MG says *Hm* (5), which is her direct reaction to the just heard statement of JE that the word *Augenbrauen*

is exactly the same in English as in German. Although MG used *eyebrows* correctly in her previous sentence, she asks, ***Eyes Brows?***

MG's *Eyesbrows* is directly corrected by JE (6), who stresses the singular use of "eye" and repeats the correct form *eyebrows*. MG writes down the word, which is checked by JE for its correctness (8). Since both learners are focusing on lexical items related to "eyes," MG asks about eyelashes, using nonverbal communication and an explicit question about it (9). She receives the correct answer (10). In the following turn, MG asks about the spelling of *eyelashes* (11), writes it down, and translates it into German, *Wimper* (13). JE repeats the word and later says *yes*. It may suggest that the word *Wimper* is not new to her.

This excerpt is significant for understanding tandem interactions for several reasons:

1) It demonstrates that tandem learning is not only small-talk. Most tandem participants seem very much aware of their linguistic needs (here MG, expressing her need/desire for a review of body parts). Learners utilize the interaction with their tandem partner to address these needs, and to create opportunities for lexical learning.

2) This conversation is an example of collaborative dialogue because, as Swain (2000) would point out, a collaborative dialogue is knowledge-building and it constructs linguistic knowledge. According to Swain, through their interaction (dialogue) learners "regulate each other's activity and their own" (p. 111). They have an opportunity to produce the language and to reflect on it. "Their jointly constructed performance outstrips their individual competences." MG's and JE's

dialogue is an example of language learning through collaboration. In this exchange, MG has contact with the new word *eyelashes*, and JE is able to modify her incorrect hypothesis about the word *Augenbogen*. As Swain (2000) stresses, "as each participant speaks, their saying becomes what is said, providing object for reflection." (p. 113). Excerpt 1 is an example of such a situation. JE and MG use the language and reflect on it. Such instances of reflections on "what learners said" are described by Swain (2000) as opportunities for knowledge construction.

3) Learners are actively involved, paying attention to what is said--which unfortunately causes MG to produce *Eyes Brows* as a reaction to the previous statement of JE. They use the information provided by their tandem partner to revise their hypotheses about language. In JE's case, she corrects her incorrect hypothesis about *Augenbogen;* in MG's case, she temporarily revises her (correct) hypothesis. As previously mentioned (Chapter 3), attention is very important in the process of lexical learning (Frantzen, 2003). It is necessary for noticing. Also, there seems to be a connection between learners' motivation and attention (Ellis, 2001). Motivated learners pay more attention to feedback and look for opportunities to learn. In Excerpt 1A, MG is very attentive to feedback and the comments of her tandem partner.

4) Learning in tandem is spontaneous. It is not limited to "pre-planned" words. Although this conversation may look like learning a list of words, these words are of interest for learners and arise spontaneously during the interaction. MG and JE want to know them. Their interest is intrinsic. For this reason, their motivation is

high, and they pay attention to what is said. This may lead to opportunities for lexical learning.

5) Learners are not rushed. They have time to study the spelling of new words and to write them down. This results in the presence of lexis-based LREs, as well as form-based LREs.

## Excerpt 1B

Excerpts 1B and 1C represent continuation of the previous conversation.

16 MG: And this? What's that, which you have? **Springels**?

[MG points to the freckles of JE.]

17 JE: Oh, this. Freckles. [JE points to her freckles.]

18 MG: In German it is "Sommersprossen." (*Freckles*)

19 JE: Sommersprosssen. (*Freckles*) Sommer... [Writes it down.]

20 MG: And „freckles"?

21 JE: F-R-E-C-K-L-E-S

22 MG: OK.

23 JE: Sommersprossen. [Whispering]

In excerpt 1B, tandem partners utilize their environment, in this case, the freckles on the face of JE, and the previous conversational context (talking about the human body) to address a new word. This exchange starts as MG asks JE through the means of verbal and non-verbal communication, *what's that, which you have?* (16), by pointing to her

freckles. At the same time, MG is hypothesis testing by calling freckles *springels*. However, her hypothesis is incorrect. JE recognizes, through the nonverbal communication, which word MG is searching for, saying *Oh, this* and touching her face. Consequently, she provides the correct word (17). In the next turn, MG translates *freckles* into German, even though JE has not asked for it (18). It is important to stress that in both excerpts (1A and 1B) each lexical item is addressed in both languages. JE repeats *Sommersprossen* and writes it down. MG waits patiently for her to finish, and then asks *and freckles*. JE interprets this as a request for the spelling, which she provides (21). The conversation ends with JE repeating the word *Sommersprossen*. This can be seen as consolidation of the new lexical item.

This excerpt also represents collaborative learning, as described in Excerpt 1A. New knowledge is created through interaction. Both tandem partners address at the same time the same lexical item. Their learning pattern is quite similar; they hear a new word and write it down. As Swain and Lapkin (1998) would state, there is a presence of lexis-based and form-based LREs since learners address the meaning and the spelling of the words.

**Excerpt 1C**

1 MG: What is this? [MG points to her collarbone.]

2 JE: Collar. Collarbone.

3 MG: How do you spell it?

4 JE: C-O-L-L-A-R-B-O-N-E

5 MG: [Writes it down.]

6  MG: Schlüsselbein. (*Collarbone)*

7 JE: Schlüsselbein. S-C-H-L

8 MG: Ü-S-S-E-L-B-E-I-N

 I think it has this name because it looks a little bit like a key, its end. It looks like a key, the end of an old key.

9 JE: OK

10 MG: What is "Oberarm"? (*Upper arm*). Do you have special word?

11 JE: Do we have a special word? Upper arm. And what is this? [Points to her forearm.]

12 MG: Unterarm. (*Forearm)*

We have two bones there. Do you know their names in English?

13 JE: I should know what they are called, but…One is… I don't actually know. I really should know it, but I don't know. Sometimes I don't know these things. This is anatomy.

14 MG: It's OK because when I'm interested, I can look it up in a dictionary. But this, what is this? [MG touches her wrist.]

15 JE: This is your wrist.

16 MG: Handgelenk. (*Wrist)* And these are fingers and fingertips? [MG touches her fingertips.]

17 JE: Yes. What's that in German?

18  MG: Fingerspitzen. (*Fingertips)*

19  JE: Fingerspitzen. Ja. (*Fingertips. Yes.)*


Excerpt 1C represents a collaborative dialogue rich in lexical LREs. It demonstrates the extensive length and complexity of the LREs during tandem

interactions. When looking at Excerpts 1A, B, and C, there is evidence that tandem learners are able to spend a considerable amount of time discussing topics chosen by them. During these interactions, which start with an explicit question about the correctness of the word *eyebrows*, participants are also able to focus on vocabulary related to other body parts. They do not have to move on to another topic. They can study in depth new lexical items; this is one of the advantages of tandem learning. Having no schedule to follow, learners are able to devote sufficient time to any lexical or grammatical item chosen by them.

Similar to Excerpts 1A and B, Excerpt 1C represents an opportunity for mutual lexical learning. New words are repeated aloud and then their spelling is addressed. In addition, metatalk is employed by MG (8), when she tries to explain the possible source for the German name of a collarbone, which consists in German of two parts (key+leg).

After discussing the collarbone, upper arm, and lower arm, learners continue with fingertips, and further in the conversation, with other body parts. Although the topic was initiated by MG, both learners benefit from its introduction by addressing the same words in their L2s.


In summary, Excerpts 1A, B, and 1C represent a collaborative dialogue related to mutual lexical learning of body parts. This conversation allows MG and JE to notice gaps in their lexical knowledge and to address them. This opportunity for lexical learning has arisen directly from their conversation. As Swain (2000) would point out, their saying and responding to what is said represents language learning.

New words are frequently addressed through their loud repetition and annotation. This pattern can be observed in all three excerpts. Such repetition is important. It suggests that learners have a strategy when approaching new or/and difficult words. Although their learning is spontaneous (MG and JE do not have a plan with regard to lexical items they will discuss, as they arise from their conversation), learners have a strategy for how they address problematic words, studying their form and their meaning.

Second, and importantly, tandem learners are able to test hypotheses during interactions. In above excerpts, MG asks about various words she seems to know, but is not sure about them. In Excerpts 1A (1) and 1C (15), her hypotheses are correct, whereas in Excerpt 1B (1) it is not the case. MG creates a word which is incorrect in English. Through JE's feedback, she is able to modify her hypothesis. The same applies to JE (e.g., Excerpt 1A, 2). As Swain (1993) would stress, this process of modification represents second language learning.

Finally, learners frequently employ nonverbal communication in their conversation. The nonverbal communication is mainly utilized for word-search because it facilitates communication. It is easy for learners to point to an object and ask for its name. From the language-economical point of view, it is quicker than description of a searched item.

All the above excerpts represent typical lexical learning situations, which could be observed among all participating tandems.

**Excerpt 2**

Excerpt 2 is a fragment of a conversation between RD (native speaker of Danish) and AlG (German native speaker). RD and AlG developed a very interesting routine for their tandem interactions. During each tandem meeting, they wrote down the unknown L2 words. Later, at home, RD and AlG prepared essays with these words. During a subsequent tandem meeting, they discussed these assignments with each other.

Excerpt 2 represents a fragment of an essay-related discussion, which is conducted in German. Since RD wrote about the refugees in Denmark, she felt that the overall tone of her essay was very depressing....

1  RD: Ich mache sehr depressive **Sentences. Sentences**, was ist das?

(*I made very depressing sentences. Sentences, what is this?*)

2  AlG: Sätze. (*Sentences*)

3  RD: Sätze. (*Sentences*)

4  AlG: Der Satz. Sätze. (*The sentence. Sentences.*)

5 RD: Sätze. (*Sentences*)

6  AlG: Und wie heisst das auf Dänisch?

(*And how do you say it in Danish?*)

7  RD: Setnig. (*Sentence*)

8  AlG: Setnig, ist ein Satz?

(*Setnig, is a sentence?*)

9  RD: Ja. (*Yes.*)

10 AlG: Wie schreibt man das?

(*How do you spell it?*)

11 RD: S-E-T-N-I-G

12 AIG: [Writes the word.]


Excerpt 2 starts with RD's comment about the depressing sentences of her homework (1). Communicating her idea in German, RD uses the English word *sentences* in her utterance, not being able to come up with the German equivalent of it. Directly, in the same turn, RD continues in German, and asks AIG about the German translation of the English word *sentences*. AIG translates the word (2); RD repeats it (3). In the next turn, AIG provides the basic, singular form of the noun, its article and then repeats the plural form. RG repeats only the plural form, which was the focus of her previous word search. In turn 5, AIG uses this context to ask RD about the Danish translation of the word *sentence*. In the following turn, it is provided to her (7). AIG asks for confirmation if *setnig* means *sentence* (8). She receives it (9). Finally, AIG asks for the spelling of the new word and writes it down.


Excerpt 2 represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) It confirms that processes observed in Excerpts 1A, B, and C (explicit lexical learning, focus on spelling, and mutual learning of the same lexical item) can be observed as well during other interactions and are not limited to one particular tandem (MG/JE).

2) It suggests that there is a pattern related to the explicit, single-word learning context. The other partner is asked directly about the unknown or forgotten word, and the answer is provided; consequently, the new word is repeated and often

written down by the learner. Frequently, if the word is also unknown in the L2 of the other learner, he/she asks for it and repeats all the above processes (similar pattern was observed among all other tandems).

3) It represents mutual learning in collaborative dialogue. RD and AlG talk about their essays. During their conversation, they encounter linguistic problems, notice them, and address them. As Swain (2000) would point out, the act of attempting to produce language focuses learners' attention on their linguistic deficiencies and imperfections. With the help of their partner, they are able to overcome these difficulties and in doing so, they create opportunities for language learning. Since the tandem learning setting is based on mutual exchanges, frequently, both learners learn the same word and/or expression. The linguistic deficiency of RD (not knowing the word *sentence* in German) created an opportunity for its learning not only for her, but also for her tandem partner. Although AlG does not need the word *setnig* for communicative purposes, she asks about it and creates an opportunity for learning. This phenomenon occurs frequently during tandem interactions. It suggests that during tandem meetings, learners are exposed to opportunities for learning resulting not only from their immediate need for certain word and/or grammatical item (communicative needs), but also from the needs of their tandem partner.

4) Excerpt 2 introduces a new element to the concept of lexical learning in tandem, which is connected with linguistic economy, and exactly, with the usage of English as a "lingua franca." Although RD has enough linguistic resources in her L2 to engage in negotiation of meaning using only German, she chooses not to do

it. Her preference is the use of English. From the economical point of view, it is a very successful decision. There is no miscommunication between RD and AlG, and the communication continues. Even more, both tandem partners learn the translation of the word *sentence* in their respective tandem languages.

The use of English has one more function--it is one of two methods utilized by tandem learners for a quick word-search. In Excerpts 1A, B, and C, learners utilize nonverbal communication for word search because they can point to objects.

In summary, Excerpt 2 represents an example of a single word learning event during collaborative dialogue in tandem. The same lexical item is learned in both L2s. English, used as a "lingua franca," is employed in the process of word-search. Similar processes can be observed in the next excerpt.

## Excerpt 3

Excerpt 3 represents a fragment of a conversation between BG and MS, who are discussing MS's project for the university. MS, a design student, is in the process of preparing an innovative project for one of her seminars. MS is experiencing a lot of difficulties finding the right idea and often talks about it with BG.

During this particular tandem meeting, MS presents her recent idea, and both tandem partners are in the process of analyzing it. This project was later successfully accomplished with significant assistance from BG, who helped her Spanish tandem partner with the whole technical part of it due to her expertise in the area.

1 MS: Meine Richtung ist. Wie ist, war auf Deutsch die „olores"?

(*My direction is. How is, was in German "olores"?*)

2 BG: Geruch.( *Smell)*

3 MS: Geruch? (*Smell?)*

4 BG: Geruch. Riechen. *(Smell. To smell.)*

5 MS: Riechen ist das Verb, aber das... The smell of?

*(To smell is the verb, but the... The smell of?)*

6 BG: Geruch. *(Smell)*

7 MS: Geruch. *(Smell)*

8 BG: Geruch ist das Substantiv von riechen. Riechen, Geruch.

(*Smell is the noun from to smell. To smell, the smell.)*

9 MS: Wie schreibt man?

(*How do you write?)*

10 BG: G-E-R-U-C-H. Wie riechen nur mit „u." Riechen, Geruch.

(*GERUCH. Like to smell, only with „u." Riechen, Geruch.)*

11 MS: So, **Geruche**.

*(So, smells)*

12 BG: Gerüche. *(S*

*mells)*

13 MS: Gerüche. Die Gerüche sind sehr wichtig für unsere „**memoria.**"

(*Smells. The smells are very important for our „memoria.")* [memoria=memory]

14 BG: Gedächtnis. *(Memory)*

15 MS: Gedächtnis. Du kannst hier sein und etwas riechen…

*(Memory. You can be here and you can smell something…)*

16 BG: Hm…


This conversation was continued for a very long time afterwards. MS explained to her tandem partner the whole idea of the importance of the "memory of a smell," and how she wanted to execute her project (through smart-tech clothing, which she needed to design and prepare herself). Since MS was in an early developmental stage of it, both learners engaged in a very intense brainstorming about possible solutions for her design. Throughout its whole duration, this tandem interaction represents not only language learning, but also language used as a cognitive tool. This tandem learning could be viewed as a joint problem-solving activity. During this conversation, the problems were not only linguistic, but also more practical; they were directly related to the execution of MS's project.

Excerpt 3 represents language learning closely interconnected with learner's environment. Such situation should be viewed as one of the major differences when comparing classroom learning with tandem learning. Students participating in a foreign/second language classroom setting are often limited to language learning in isolation from the real world. The authentic needs of each student are seldom addressed in the traditional learning environment; on the contrary, tandem offers more possibilities for a practical approach since during tandem learning, the learners' environment is an important part of their interaction. As van Lier (2000) stated, "the learner is immersed in an environment full of potential meanings" (p. 246), and as observed in this excerpt, and

many other excerpts discussed in this dissertation, learners "act and interact within and with this environment" (p. 246). Here, MS is inspired through her project (university environment) to talk about it, thus making her environment an important part of the tandem learning. During typical classroom interaction, it would not be possible do this to such extent.

Excerpt 3 begins with MS's explicit question about the German equivalent for *olores* (the smells) (1). The conversation is conducted in German, but MS uses the Spanish word to express her thoughts. BG translates it as *Geruch* (2). In the next turn (3), MS repeats *Geruch* with a questioning intonation, implying that she is uncertain about it. In turn 4, BG confirms the word by repeating *Geruch* and adding the corresponding verb *riechen*. MS confirms her understanding that *riechen* is the verb, but she again asks for the noun, this time in English *the smell of* (5). BG repeats the same German noun *Geruch* (6), which this time seems to be accepted, as MS repeats it (7) without any questioning in her voice.

As observed so far, although BG used the correct noun 3 times before, MS did not immediately accept her translation. The question arises as to why this happens. The data does not provide a clear answer to it, but there is one additional factor worth considering. BG was at the lower intermediate level in Spanish (and a much higher level in English), which could have caused MS to perform the word search twice, first in Spanish, then in English, where she was more confident that BG would have understood her better. Secondly, the noun form *Geruch* seems at first glance to be different from the verb form *riechen*, which could have caused MS to question this word at first. In languages that MS

knows, the noun and verb forms are very similar (English: the smell-to smell; Spanish: oler-el olor), but not in German. BG provides an explicit explanation of it in lines 8 and 10.

As observed in this excerpt, finding the correct word is not the end of lexical learning during a typical tandem interaction. Frequently, the word's spelling is addressed (9, 10), and learners talk about lexical items and reflect on them.

Two types of language-related episodes are present in this exchange: lexis-based and form-based. The lexis based LREs could be observed in the process of MS's search for the lexical item. The form based LREs are observed in the focus on the spelling and morphology (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). The first part of this conversation represents the lexis-based LREs, and the second part represents the form-based LREs. It means that learners are interested not only in learning the meaning of an unknown word, but also in its orthography, and sometimes morphology. During tandem meetings, lexis-based LREs lead frequently to opportunities for further elaboration on an unknown word.

The second part starts with BG's explanation that *Geruch* is a noun related to the verb *riechen* (8). Secondly, its orthography is explicitly explained (10). In the next turn (11), MS tries to produce the correct plural form of the noun. She manages to add successfully an "e" to the end of the noun, but fails to produce the umlaut. BG immediately provides corrective feedback in the form of a recast (12). It is understood as such, and there is direct uptake (13). At this point the next LRE starts. It is again a lexical one, where MS asks about the translation of the Spanish noun *memoria* (13). BG directly provides a correct translation for it (14), which is accepted immediately this time, seen in direct repetition of the new word by MS (14).

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In summary, all the above excerpts (1A, 1B, 1C, 2, and 3) represent instances of opportunities for single-word learning during tandem interactions. As observed in described conversations, word searches are frequently utilized in the process of learning a new word in the L2. In Excerpts 1A, B, and C, nonverbal communication, or the question *what is this,* or a combination of both are employed in the process of lexical search. Excerpts 2 and 3 add a new element--English is used as lingua franca for lexical searches. Both the nonverbal communication and the use of English as lingua franca suggest that learners are interested in quick solutions while searching for an unknown L2 word.

Although each excerpt is in its own way unique, there is a learning pattern related to single-word learning in tandem, which could be observed among all of the analyzed tandems, as well as in other collected data. This pattern consists of: question about an unknown word, its provision, word's repetition, and focus on spelling (and on occasions on morphological features of learned words, such as their plurals, morphological irregularities, etc.)

Lexical learning is constantly present during tandem interactions, but as observed, it is learning in context, and often resulting from the learners' environment. Lexical learning in tandem is closely related to the authentic and direct learner's needs and occurs in the context of an authentic interaction, where learners rely on the linguistic expertise of their tandem partner. For example, learners use explicit word search markers, such as *How do you say it in Danish?* (Excerpt 2, turn 6) or *Do you know their names in English?* (Excerpt 1C, turn 12). These markers initiate the word search and point to the hearer's expertise. Through the cooperation of both learners, new knowledge is constructed. As

Swain (2000) would state, learners jointly constructed performance outstrips their individual competencies.

Although the lexical learning of a single word is strongly present during typical tandem interactions, tandem offers many other approaches to vocabulary learning. Some of them will be discussed in the following sections, which will address idioms, proverbs, and multi-word interactional learning.

## 6.3 Idioms

In the previous section, I looked at opportunities for single-word lexical acquisition during tandem interactions. It is a process characterized by the NNS's direct question or hypothesis about a lexical item in the L2, the NS's answer to it, repetition of the learned word (sometimes accompanied by a question about its spelling), and writing it down. Frequently the same learning process is repeated for the other learner, if the lexical item is unknown to him/her as well. Although addressing a single word appears to be an easy and relatively uncomplicated task, learning of idiomatic expressions is just the opposite. Research conducted in the field of SLA tends to support this claim. Laufer (1997) pointed out that, "Both teachers and learners will admit that idiomatic expressions are much more difficult to understand and learn to use than their non-idiomatic meaning equivalents" (p.151). According to Laufer, idioms are perceived as the biggest obstacles for advanced learners in the process of the acquisition of L2 accuracy. When addressing idioms, there is more than one word to learn and little clue to the meaning of the idiom from the meaning of each individual word that constructs it.

The tandem method, as a holistic approach to language acquisition, makes it possible for learners to experience various aspects of L2 learning. For example, with regard to lexical acquisition, it can range from explicit single-word-learning to complex idiomatic discussions, even during the same tandem meeting. The excerpts below represent a few examples of idiomatic learning observed during tandem interactions.

**Excerpt 4**

This excerpt is a fragment of a dialogue between MiG and SE. Prior to this interaction, learners were conversing about SE's weekend camping trip. SE tells his tandem partner that he was the only one who was using a sunscreen during the trip. Two other of his friends not only did not do it, but were making fun of him, until the moment when they got very badly sunburned.

1  SE: Die beide haben **an mir gelacht**.

   (*Both of them laughed about me.*)

2  MiG: Sie haben dich ausgelacht. (*They made fun of you.*)

3  SE:  Ausgelacht, SPF 40, **ho, ho, ho...** (*Made fun of, SPF 40, ho, ho, ho*)

4  MiG: Ha, ha, ha...

5  SE: Aber sie sind beide dann rot wie **Lobsters** geworden.

   (*But later they turned red as "lobsters"*)

6  MiG: Wie was? (*As what?*)

7  SE: Lobsters. [Laughs]. Was ist „Lobster" auf Deutsch?

   (*Lobsters.[Laughs]. How do you say "lobster" in German?*)

8   MiG: Ist das ein Krebs? (*Is it a crab?*)

9   SE: Wie ein Krebs, aber länger. (*Like a crab, but longer*).

10  MiG: Ah, ein Hummer, vielleicht. (*Ah, a lobster, maybe.*)

11  SE: Ja, genau. Hummer, ja. **Rot wie Hummer.**

*(Yes, exactly. Lobster, yes. Red as lobster.)*

12 MiG: Das würden wir nicht sagen. Wir würden dann krebsrot sagen.

Oder noch besser knallrot.

*(We would not say that. We would rather say crab-red. Or, even better, bright red.)*

13 SE: Ja, knallrot. (*Yes, bright red.*)


Although German and English may have many similarities, sometimes, these

similarities are not enough to successfully produce a correct idiomatic expression in the

L2, especially when the NNS is transferring idiomatic knowledge from the L1 into the

second language. This seems to be the case in the above abstract, where SE is confused

because in English he is able to use the expression *red as lobster*, whereas in German the

correct form of it should be *crab-red*. In English, the redness would be compared to the

color of a lobster, and in German to the color of a crab. Also, the German expression

(crab-red) is quite different syntactically from its English equivalent (red as lobster).

Excerpt 4 starts with SE's grammatically incorrect utterance. He wants to express

that his friends were making fun of him (1). He accomplishes the communicative task

with his linguistic resources and is understood, but from a grammatical point of view, his

expression is incorrect. MiG recognizes the grammatical errors and corrects them with a

single-move, declarative, and non-reduction recast (2). Three errors are corrected in this

recast: the past participle form of the verb (*ausgelacht* rather than *gelacht*), the personal

pronoun (accusative *mich* rather than dative *mir*), and the unnecessary preposition (*an*).

According to Sheen (2006), "reduced recasts and one-change recasts were related to

higher rates of repair than non-reduced recasts and recasts involving multiple changes"

(p. 382). This seems to be the case in the conversation between MiG and her tandem

partner. MiG's recast (involving multiple changes) may not sufficiently highlight the

elements of SE's sentence that are problematic. SE responds to the recast with a partial

uptake--only the past participle is corrected, as he continues with his story, which seems

at this particular moment of greater importance to him than his grammatical errors. He is

eager to tell it because it is something personal, and for him, it is funny (7). He imitates

how his friends were making fun of him *ho, ho, ho*, which may be his personal way of

expressing laughter, but it is not really a common expression in German. MiG corrects

even this "imperfection" with *ha, ha, ha* (4). It is clear that this is a correction and not

laughter as the tone of her voice is very factual. It may suggest that MiG is very serious

about her role as a teacher and does not want SE to speak less than perfect German. In the

following turn (5), SE translates word for word the English idiomatic expression *to be*

*red as lobster,* which, as previously mentioned, has a different form in German (crab-red

or red as cooked crab, but not as lobster). Translating this idiom from English into

German, SE demonstrates that even a quite advanced and experienced language user can

put himself into linguistic danger using idiomatic expressions in the L2, and even more,

translating these from one language to another. Not only does he translate this idiom from

his L1 to L2, but he does not know, or forgets, how to say *lobster* in German, so he just

keeps this English word in his German translation, which leads to the clarification request

from MiG (6), *As what?* In turn 7, SE repeats the English word, laughs about the story, and then asks MiG how he can say *lobster* in German. His direct request for assistance is not immediately successul since MiG is apparently not sure what *losbster* means. MiG's question *Is it a crab,* suggests that maybe she does not know the English word *lobster*; however, she knows the German expression *crab-red*, and thus MiG may be guessing that *lobster* may be a *crab* (8). Her attempt to guess the meaning of *lobster* in German is an example of hypothesis testing. At this moment, SE offers his assistance and knowledge to further negotiate the meaning of the unknown word, and explains to MiG that what he is searching for is similar to a crab, but longer (9). This explanation leads to further, this time correct, guessing on MiG's part. Although her guess is correct, MiG is not sure about it, which can be observed in her use of the word *maybe* (*Ah, lobster, maybe*) (10).

This collaboration, and the knowledge, of both learners results in a successful outcome of the negotiation. Once SE hears the German word *Hummer* (lobster), he indicates recognition and acceptance of it (*Yes, exactly. Lobster, yes*) and repeats the idiomatic expression, in the same form as before, with the exception that he replaces the English word *lobster* with its German translation *Hummer* (11). At this moment, MiG provides direct, explicit corrective feedback (12) stating: *We would not use this expression. We would say crab-red. Or better bright red.* MiG not only provides corrective feedback about the idiomatic expression, but also an alternative, saying that *red as lobster* can be expressed as *bright red*. SE accepts her second suggestion by repeating *bright red* (13).

This excerpt represents the following characteristics of tandem interactions:

1) There is a presence of opportunity for idiomatic learning, which results from conversational context. Although at first the idiom is used incorrectly, its correct alternative form is obtained through the collaboration of both learners. SE learns that the English idiom does not translate directly into German.

2) Mutual learning is present; both tandem partners notice something new. SE is exposed to a new expression in German *krebsrot* and receives an opportunity to reflect on the incorrectness of his direct translation from English into German, since he receives negative evidence. Also, he is able to find out that *krebsrot* may not be as common in German as its English version (*red as lobster*), and different expressions may be preferred (i.e., *bright red*). Additionally, SE is able to hear the German translation for *Hummer* (13). He notices is, and there is uptake of this word. MiG is able to come in contact with the English word *lobster* (which is apparently new to her), and the idiomatic expression *red as lobster*.

3) Corrective feedback is constantly provided. No error is left unattended. The grammatical errors and *ho, ho, ho* are corrected either through recast (in case of *ho, ho, ho*), or in the case of the idiomatic expression, through very explicit direct feedback (*we wouldn't say that*).

4) Tandem participants learn through hypothesis formulation and testing. SE produces the following expression *Rot wie Lobsters*. He mixes English and German. MiG provides corrective feedback. After successful negotiation of meaning for the word *lobster*, SE is able to modify his hypothesis to *Rot wie Hummer*. Again, he receives negative evidence and is able to produce the correct

form of *knallrot*. As Swain (1995) would state, learners may produce output just to see what works and what does not.

Excerpt 4 demonstrates that the usage and acquisition of idiomatic expressions are highly complex and difficult processes. One can not always translate an idiom from L1 into L2, as SE tries to do. Regardless of these challenges, the tandem learning setting could be the appropriate place for idiomatic hypothesis testing because both learners are equal in this situation, and they do not need to worry about their mistakes or the other person laughing at them, which is highly possible with an incorrect usage of an idiomatic expression in other learning environments. Tandem provides a safe environment to try things out and to learn, as observed in Excerpt 4. Learners view tandem as a perfect place for error corrections, and think that "the job" of their tandem partner is to correct them. This is evident in their questionnaires, and summarized in the chapter on participants' background information. For this reason, tandem may be one of the best environments to learn idioms and to try using them in conversation. The second benefit of tandem for idiomatic learning is that there are no externally imposed time constraints. Idioms can be discussed, compared, and used in examples, as observed in Excerpt 4, and can be observed in Excerpt 5.

## Excerpt 5

Excerpt 5 is a fragment of a conversation between DG and RS. The learners are discussing various idiomatic expressions during this interaction. They talk about the most commonly used, or the funniest idioms in each language, compare them to similar idioms

in the other language, and in the process of doing it, learn not only new idiomatic expressions, but also other lexical items and grammatical features.

1  DG: Und dann: Jemandem etwas hoch und heilig versprechen.

*(And then: To promise something somebody „high and holy")*

2  RS: Heilig?↑ Was ist heilig?

*(Holy? What is holy?)*

3  DG: Heiliger es el santo.

*(A Holy man is "el santo.")*

4  RS: Ah. So es ist, mit alles versprechen, oder?

*(Ah. So it means to promise with everything, or?)*

5 DG: Genau. *(Exactly.)*

6 RS: Prometer el oro y el Moro.

*(To promise the gold and the Moor.)*

7 DG: Prometer el?

*(To promise the?)*

8 RS: El oro y el Moro.

*(The gold and the Moor.)*

9 DG: El Moro?

*(The Moor?)*

10 RS: El Moro, es Muslimo, der Muslim, der Gold verkauft. Du versprichst eh..., Gold und der Verkaufer. Das Gold, der Gold?

*("El Moro," is a Moslem, the Moslem, who sells gold. You are promising eh..,. the gold*

*and the salesperson. Gold, it is „der," „das"?*

11 DG: Das Gold.

12 RS: Und el Moro, como es? Der Muslim, oder Muslima?

*(And the Moor how is it? Der Muslim or Muslima?)*

13 DG: Der Muslim.

14 RS: Also, das benutzen wir viel.

*(We use it a lot.)*

15 DG: Das benutzt ihr? Ok. Das schreibe ich mir auf. Auf jeden Fall.

*(You use it? Ok. I will write it down. For sure.)*

16 RS: Besonders, zum Beispiel in einer Beziehung, wenn die, die... das Paar hat schon

Schluss gemacht.

*(Especially, in a relationship, when the, the... the couple already is separated.)*

17 DG: Das was?

*(The what?)*

18 RS: Das Paar. *(The couple.)*. Hat schon Schluss gemacht. *(Has already separated.)*

19 DG: Ja. *(Yes.)*

20 RS: Aber einer von ihnen war sehr verliebt in dem anderen, aber dann kommt diese

**decepcion.**

*(But one of them was very much in love with the other one, but then comes this*

*„decepcion.")*

21 DG: Enttäuschung. *(Deception.)*

22 RS: Enttäuschung. Er sagt, oder sie sagt: Me prometi el oro y el Moro y nada.

*(Deception. He says, or she says: "Me prometi el oro y el Moro," and nothing.)*

23 DG: Ah, so. Also, er hat ihr alles versprochen und dann war gar nichts.

*(Ah, so. He promised her everything, and there was nothing)*

24 RS: Ja. Ja. Enttäuschung.

*(Yes. Yes. Deception.)*

25 DG: Hm. Das ist cool mit dem oro y Moro.

(*Hm. This is cool with the "oro y Moro."*)

Excerpt 5 begins with DS bringing up the German idiomatic expression *Hoch und heilig etwas versprechen* (To promise something somebody high and holy). This idiomatic expression includes two adjectives: high (hoch) and holy (heilig). Once the idiom is introduced by DG, RS repeats the word *heilig* with higher pitch, followed by an explicit question about what the word means (2). Although the question is posed in German, the answer to it comes in Spanish, when, in the following turn (3), DG explains the meaning of a related word, *Heiliger* "holy man" as *santo* "saint." RS indicates understanding by saying *ah*, and then he gives his interpretation of the idiom (4), which is confirmed by DG (5). Immediately afterwards, RS finds a similar Spanish idiom *to promise the gold and the Moor* (6). At this moment, the tandem's language is switched to Spanish again. DG seems to be unfamiliar with this expression and with one of the words in it, *el Moro* (7, 9), which she explicitly addresses, asking about it. In turn 10, RS explains in Spanish that *el Moro* means a Moslem (*el Muslimo*), and also RS translates it into German. He then explicitly explains its meaning in this particular idiom (the Moor is the salesperson who sells gold). To do so, he changes the language from Spanish back to

German. The same code switching can be observed in turn 3, when DG switches from German to Spanish in order to explain the meaning of *heilig* to RS.

In both of these instances (lines 2-3 and 9-10) learners have code switch into the native language of their tandem partner to explain the meaning of a problematic lexical item. In both cases (turns 2/3 and 9/10) they address comprehension problems. An explicit question is asked about the unknown/confusing word, and as result, its translation is provided. In turn 2, RS asks *Was ist heilig?,* and DS answers *Es el santo* (4). In turn 9, DG asks *El Moro*, and RS answers *es Muslimo, der Muslim...*

In turn 10, a new element emerges in the context of lexical learning between DG and RS--focus on form. RS asks about the correct article for the word *Gold* in German (10). Translating the meaning of the Spanish idiom into German, RS is able, as Swain would point out, to notice the gap in his knowledge. This noticing of the gap is expressed through *eh* and a short hesitation before using the noun. It is, as if he is leaving a "blank" where the article should go. Not being sure which article to use with the word *Gold*, RS does not use any in his sentence. Instead, he asks DG directly about it (10). DG immediately answers RS's question, supplying the correct article together with the noun (11). It is important to stress that in the context of teaching a Spanish idiom, the Spanish "expert" also learns something about German. The same situation repeats in the next turn. Although he used the word correctly in turn 10, RS indicates that he is still not sure about the correct form of the noun *Moslem* in German (12). He asks about it, testing two possible hypotheses: *der Muslim* and *Muslima.* Again, his request for assistance is directly met when DG provides the correct form of the word, and the article, as well (13). On both occasions, there is no repetition of the correct form, but rather continuation of

the content-oriented conversation. The conversation shifts again to the idiomatic expressions, as RS (14) comments that the one he just introduced is used a lot in Spain. This motivates DG to its annotation (15). Typical of a tandem interaction, this conversation is continued, and RS provides an example of a situation in which the idiomatic expression could be used (16-24). In doing so, RS encounters a lexical problem, using the Spanish word *deception* in his German utterance. We do not know why he is doing it, or if his use of the Spanish word in the German sentence is accidental. Immediately he receives the correct German translation (*Enttäuschung*) (21). This is the first time when he repeats the received feedback (22). RS repeats the word *Enttäuschung* in turn 24. DG likes the new idiom saying *this is cool with the "oro y Moro."*

In summary, E xcerpt 5 represents an example of opportunities for idiomatic learning. Both learners introduce a new idiom, and are introduced to one, which results in their mutual exchange of knowledge. In the process of talking about these idioms, additional lexis-based and form-based LREs emerge.

Finally, there are three examples of single-word search in Excerpt 5. These word searches are different from the single-word-learning situations described in the previous section (6.2). In Excerpt 5, the single-word searches are not the main goal of the interaction, but rather the by-product of it. They are short, and learners do not always focus on one-to-one translations. In turn 2, RS asks *What is holy?,* and DG answers *A holy man is a saint.* Her translation is not very exact. RS asks about an adjective, DG answers with a noun. The learners' focus is meaning and communication, and not the precision of their translations. A similar situation can be observed in turn 9, DG asks, *El*

*Moro*, and RS answers, *El Moro, es Muslimo, der Muslim, der Gold verkauft*. The translation includes additional information, crucial for the understanding of the idiomatic expression. In both cases the learners' focus is comprehension and communication, and not as much the single-word search. In other words, as long as the sense of the word is communicated, the exact form does not seem to be necessary. In Excerpts 1A, B, C, 2, and 3, learning a new word was the focus of the interaction. There was a pattern of learning, learners addressed the meaning of the word, and at least its spelling. This pattern does not exist in Excerpt 5.

## Excerpt 6

Idiomatic expressions are hard to learn, and even harder to use, because if only one of the elements is changed, the whole meaning of an idiom is changed. Also, if the form of the idiom is correct, but the use not, it could have embarrassing consequences for the non-native speaker, although it may be very entertaining for the native speaker.

Excerpt 6 represents such incorrect use of a very colloquial German expression. This expression appears to be quite easy and its form is uncomplicated; nevertheless, non-native speakers of German tend to have frequent problems with its correct use.

The following excerpt is a fragment of a conversation between MaG and CS. This particular tandem meeting took place in the afternoon in a café, which did not have air conditioning. The temperatures outside and inside were very hot, and the German non-native speaker (CS) wanted to express this discomfort, asking his tandem partner:

1 CS: Bist du heiß?

*(Are you „hot"?)*

2 MaG: [Laughs]. Eh...

3 CS: Ah, ich habe verstanden. **Hast du heiß?**

*(Ah, I understood. Do you have hot?)*

4 MaG: Nein. Ist dir heiß? Nein. Ein Moment. Ist dir warm? Das Wetter ist heiß, aber es

ist mir warm.

*(No. Is it hot to you? No. One moment. Is it warm to you? The weather is hot, but it is*

*warm to me.)*

5 CS: Bist du warm?

*(Are you warm?)*

6 MaG: Nein. Ist dir warm.

*(No. It is warm to you.)*

7 CS: Ist dir warm? Tienes calor? Tienes calor en Español.

*(Is it warm to you? "Tienes calor?" In Spanish it is "tienes calor.")*

8 MaG: Tienes calor. Si.

*(Tienes calor. Yes.)*

Excerpt 6 starts with CS asking his tandem partner if he is "hot." In German, the
expression "du bist heiss" (you are hot) has a sexual connotation. In this example, this
expression was used inappropriately. One could assume that CS does not mean to ask his
tandem partner if he is *hot* in a sexual sense, but *hot* in terms of temperature (1). This
question causes MaG to laugh. His first answer (laughter) is followed by hesitation, as
expressed by *eh,* and a pause. At this moment, CS suspects that there is something wrong

with his previous utterance. He claims that he understands the reaction of MaG, and he then attempts to self-correct by rephrasing his question as *Hast du heiss?* (Do you have hot), which appears to be a translation of the Spanish *tienes calor?* (3). CS may be testing whether the German expression is similar to the Spanish one. However, CS fails to produce the correct expression, which this time results in the explicit negative feedback *no*, followed by an example (4). Almost at the same instance, MaG starts to reflect on his own output and his L1. He wants to have time to do it, saying *moment*. MaG reflects on his L1 and comes to the conclusion that the weather may be hot, but the more correct form of asking a question in German related to how one's body temperature is, would be expressed with the adjective *warm*, and not hot. Although both forms are correct, MaG tries to find the best one. CS understands the concept of *warm* instead of *hot*, but still uses the incorrect structure, exactly as he started this exchange. It suggests that he notices the adjective (which MaG has made quite salient through his metatalk), but does not notice the recast structure (which is not so salient). In turn 5, CS uses a subject + copula+ adjective construction (you are warm*)* instead of the impersonal dative construction (it is warm to me). For the second time, he receives corrective feedback in the form of an explicit no and a recast (6) and an explicit *no*. This results in immediate uptake, followed by CS's Spanish translation of the German expression (7).

Excerpt 6 represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) It is an example of how a correct form of an expression can be used in an incorrect context. More precisely, the used expression, *you are hot*, has a sexual connotation that was not intended by CS while talking to his tandem partner. In

this particular example, it initially caused some amusement for MaG. Secondly, explicit corrective feedback, followed by metatalk, was provided. It is important to stress that although the misuse of the idiom caused mild amusement during this particular tandem meeting, it could have more serious consequences (such as insulting somebody or being taken as a sexual invitation) in a different context.

2) These data introduced a new element of tandem learning (which will be further addressed in the "focus on form" chapter); that is, the interaction caused MaG to analyze his L1, which means that the tandem method not only provides opportunities for L2 learning, but it is an opportunity for reflections on one's native language.

This reflection on one's native language may be observed as well in the next excerpt, which will address another form of complex lexical learning--the learning of proverbs.

## 6.4 Proverbs

The opportunities for language learning in tandem are almost unlimited; everything depends on learners and their individual needs. For this reason, all lexical features can be addressed, if needed. As learners advance and become ready for linguistic "adventures," they increasingly become interested in idioms and proverbs.

All participants, whose data are analyzed in this dissertation, were at least at the lower intermediate level and could communicate quite well in their L2. For this reason, most of them were interested in learning more sophisticated lexical items, such as low-frequency words, idioms, and proverbs.

Idiomatic expressions and proverbs were used only during some tandem meetings, which seem consistent with the regular use of these items, since most native speakers do not employ them in every conversation.

In the previous section, I focused on the use of idiomatic expressions, this section will discuss proverbs. According to the Longman Dictionary of American English (1997), a proverb is "a short statement that most people know, that contains advice about life" (p. 643). Proverbs are addressed in tandem in two ways: they arise accidentally from context (Excerpt 8) or learners pre-plan their study for their meetings (Excerpt 7). It is important to point out that only proverbs and idiomatic expressions were prepared at home by some tandem participants in order to discuss them with the other learner during their meeting. It may be due to the fact that learners perceived them as more difficult to teach and to learn. Additionally, it could suggest that tandem learners are interested in learning proverbs and idioms, and view them as worth their time. This section will start with an interaction between MG and JE, during which learners utilize flashcards in order to discuss German and English proverbs.

## Excerpt 7

It is important to highlight that MG and JE were interested in learning as much as possible during their tandem interactions. For this reason, they occasionally prepared a more formal set of educational materials (e.g., flashcards with proverbs and idiomatic expressions) which were utilized and discussed during their meetings. Excerpt 7 represents a learning episode stimulated by the use of the flashcards. It starts when JE asks MG if a certain proverb would be used in German:

1 JE: Man sagt dann: „Man sollte das Fell des Bären nicht teilen eher man ihn erlegt hat?"

(*Do you say: You shouldn't divide the skin of the bear before you have killed him?*)

2 MG: Moment. Warte mal, ich glaube das ist...

(*Moment. Wait, I think this is...*)

3 JE: Sagt man das?

(*Do people say it?*)

4 MG: Ich glaube, das sind sehr gebildete Sachen. Sachen, die man nicht ständig sagt, aber die im richtigen Moment passend wären. Hm... Ich habe dieses, glaube ich, noch nie verwendet, aber .... was würde ich statt dessen sagen? Warte mal, lass mich mal kurz überlegen. Ich würde sagen...

(*I think, they are very sophisticated things. Things, which are not used every day, but they would be proper at the right moment. Hm...I have never used this one, but...what would I say instead? Wait, I have to think for a while. I would say...*)

5 JE: Zum Beispiel, also wenn jemand sagt, sie haben eine neue Wohnung, aber sie haben sie noch nicht.

(*For example, if somebody says that they have a new apartment, but they still don't have it.*)

6 MG: Genau. Das stimmt. Freu dich nicht zu früh. Das sagt man in dem Zusammenhang.

(*Yes. It's right. Don't get too happy too soon. You could say it in this context.*)

7 JE: Ja. Genau. (*Yes, exactly.*)

8 MG: Oder noch besser: "Noch ist nicht aller Tage Abend." Das sagen wir eigentlich.

(*Or even better, "The day is not over yet." Actually, we say it.*)

9 JE: Noch ist nicht aller Tage... [Talks very quietly]

(*The day is not over...*)

10 MG: Noch ist nicht aller Tage Abend. (*The day is not over yet.*)

11 JE: [Writes it down]

12 MG: Soll ich es dir aufschreiben?

(*Should I write it down for you?*)

13 JE: Stimmt das so? (*Is that correct?*)

[JE shows MG what she has written.]

14 MG: Noch ist nicht aller Tage Abend. Ja. Das ist wirklich ein Sprichwort das wir oft sagen. Das heisst, der Tag ist noch lang.

(*The day is not over yet. Yes. This is really a proverb that we use a lot. It means, the day is long.*)

15 JE:Hm.

16 MG: Es kann immer noch was passieren.

(*Something can still happen.*)

17 JE: Genau. Wir würden sagen: Don't count your chickens before they've hatched.

(*Exactly, we would say: Don't count your chickens before they've hatched.*)

18 MG: Don't count your chickens before they've hatched. Ok. Jut.

[Writes it down]

19 JE: Man kann auch sagen: don't get too excited yet. Das ist nicht idomatisch, aber man sagt das.

*(You could say also: don't get too excited yet. This is not an idiom, but you can say it.)*

20 MG: Kannst du es mir aufschreiben? Oder warte, ich mache es selbst.

*(Could you write it down for me? Or wait, I will do it myself.)*

[Writes it down]

21 JE: Don't get too excited.

22 MG: Freu dich nicht zu früh.

*(Don't get happy too soon.)*

Excerpt 7 starts with JE reading from the flashcard the German idiom *You shouldn't divide the skin of the bear before you have killed him,* and asking MG if it is used in German(1). It is an example of a situation when the NNS relies on native speaker's linguistic and/or socio-cultural expertise. Presumably, JE understands the idiom because she is not asking about its meaning. JE's question is related to the use of this particular expression in modern German. She demonstrates a high level of metalinguistic awareness, having the ability to understand that learning idioms from a book does not guarantee their proper use, or more exactly, that knowing the form and/or meaning of an idiom does not guarantee its proper implementation. As Gass and Selinker would point out (2001), JE's metalinguistic awareness allows her "to consider language not just as a means to express ideas or communicating with others, but also as an object of inquiry" (p.302).

MG signals that she needs time to think about the question, saying, *wait.* (2). Finally, MG admits that she has never used this proverb herself because, as she points out, *some expressions are very sophisticated* and can be useful, but only in a very exact

context (4). Although MG has never used this particular proverb before, she tries to come up with an example of its possible use. JE tries to help out, and she is able to provide an example of a situation in which the above expression could be used (5). This is a very important contribution, which immediately helps MG to come up with other, more common, expressions which could replace this seemingly low-frequency proverb (6, 8). JE repeats and writes down one of them, which, as MG points out, is used. In the following turns, MG provides further explanations about the introduced proverb *The day is not over yet,* trying to clarify its meaning (14, 16). MG focuses on this particular proverb because, according to her, it is often used in Germany. Finally, in turn 17, JE provides a similar English proverb: *Don't count your chickens before they've hatched.* The same procedure is employed: MG repeats the new proverb and writes it down (18). Finally, one more expression related to the meaning of the previously discussed proverbs is introduced (19), *don't get too excited yet.* In the same conversational turn, JE points out that although it is not an idiomatic expression, it is used in English. MG writes it down (20).

In summary, the proverb from the flashcard stimulated metatalk related to proverbs and their use in English and German. Both tandem partners actively contribute to the creation of new knowledge. JE discovers that the German proverb *Man sollte das Fell des Bären nicht teilen eher man ih erlegt hat* is not frequently used in modern German and that there are better alternatives (*Noch ist nicht aller Tage Abend*) to express the same idea. MG is able to learn the English proverb *Don't count your chickens before they've hatched.* JE and MG may even be learning something new about their L1; MG's

statement *I have never used this expression before* suggests that during the tandem interaction she was forced to reflect on her native language and its use. This is a very different learning situation when compared to the foreign language classroom, where learners are in most instances discouraged from using their L1. In a traditional instructional setting, there is often a strong separation between learners' L1 and L2; whereas in tandem, both languages are equally important in the process of one's learning. Learners are constantly making connections between them. For this reason, they notice linguistic and lexical features not only in their second language, but also in the first one, as observed in Excerpts 4, 5, and other further discussed examples.

Learning proverbs with a native speaker of one's L2 has one more advantage. The native speaker can tell directly if a proverb is still used in the modern version of the L2 or if other alternative forms would be more appropriate. Since most of the proverbs were created many centuries ago, some of them may be a little archaic today. That is, they are understood by most native speakers, but their modern use may be very limited or they may have been replaced by newer forms. Learning proverbs and idiomatic expressions from a book does not provide learners with the direct access to native speakers and their linguistic experiences in their use. For all the above reasons, addressing proverbs during interaction with a native speaker is very beneficial, regardless of whether they arise from the pre-planned activity (Excerpt 7) or spontaneously.

In summary, in this section I described the learning of proverbs during tandem interactions. As previously mentioned, the learning of idioms and proverbs is more complex and difficult than the acquisition of a single word because the meaning of the

whole expression is not the sum of the meanings of its parts. For this reason, the learning of proverbs and idioms can be confusing, but an accurate L2 speaker should be familiar with the full range of existing lexical items, even if their learning presents some challenges. As Arnaud and Savignon (1997) pointed out, "Knowledge of rare words is a valuable tool as it enables an L2 learner to access the meanings (…) effortlessly and immediately, without having to devote too much energy to lexical guessing" (p.159).

The tandem method allows learners the exposure to authentic language use, and the occasional, sometimes incidental, exposure to idiomatic expressions or proverbs. Although the introduction of the multiword phrases during tandem may be incidental, tandem learners frequently tend to pause and pay attention to these complex structures. As observed in previously discussed excerpts, they have prolonged discussions about idioms and proverbs in order to better understand their meaning and usage. One could argue that this intensive metatalk makes learners more aware of them.

As Hucking and Coady (1997) concluded, multiword phrases constitute a significant part of ordinary language use, but they are not learned well through purely incidental exposure and should be addressed directly. The tandem method allows learners such direct addressing of multiword phrases, which is often not the case in a traditional classroom. Arnaud and Savignon (1997) concluded that the foreign language classrooms were inadequate for the acquisition of multiword phrases because (a) the non-native foreign language teachers did not always have sufficient knowledge of idiomatic expressions; (b) incidental exposure during lessons to multiword phrases was insufficient for their acquisition; (c) in the foreign classroom setting, there was an occasional "lack of awareness of the nature and importance of complex units leading to reduced attention to

them" (p.168). The tandem learning method provides learners with (a) a competent native speaker, who is familiar with many proverbs and idiomatic expressions in the L1; and (b) incidental or pre-planned contact with idioms and proverbs during tandem meetings. Such contact frequently results in direct and explicit addressing of them. When comparing both environments, advanced language learners may have more opportunities for intense, prolonged contact with multiword phrases during tandem interactions when compared to the traditional classroom setting.

The tandem environment allows students to spend a lot of time on difficult lexical items, as observed in the above excerpts, and which can be also observed in the next few conversations related to the instances of complex lexical learning in tandem. In Excerpts 8, 9, and 10, I will focus on multi-word learning: learning of similar sounding/looking words or learning of seemingly easy, but still confusing L2 lexical items.

## 6.5 Multiword lexical learning

Chapter 6, related to lexical learning processes observed during tandem interactions, started with examples of relatively simple, single-word learning. As observed in Excerpts 1-3, this type of situation is not very difficult for tandem learners. The non-native speaker can easily ask for the unknown word or its translation (verbally or non-verbally), and the native speaker usually is able to provide a quick answer. Often, both learners learn the same lexical item in their respective native language.

This is not always the case when learners want to address multiple words in the same conversational turn, or words which are confusing for them because of their form or sound similarity. According to Laufer (1997), "there is a wealth of evidence that L2

learners confuse words that sound and/or look alike."(p.146) These words can be difficult

for learners, and their learning requires more negotiation/clarification of meaning than

learning of a single word. Addressing multiple, or confusing/difficult, lexical items in the

same conversational turn represents more challenges for both learners, as shown in the

next three excerpts. As result of it, learners are not always able to discuss and learn these

items in both native languages at the same time, as it was observed during single-word

learning exchanges. Complex issues require more attention, and tandem learners focus, in

most cases, only on one language when discussing them. Additionally, when addressing

multiple words in the same turn, learners do not always focus on their exact translation

(as they do when learning single-words in tandem). In case of complexer lexical

discussions, learners' focus seems to be on understanding and communication, rather

than on the exact translation of each single word.


## Excerpt 8

The following excerpt is a fragment of a conversation between DG and RS. It is

important to point out that RS majors in English and wants to become an English teacher.

Although during the time of data collection for this study he spoke German very well, his

knowledge of English was much stronger. On some occasions a linguistic transfer from

English into German could be observed in his utterances. Prior to this excerpt, RS

explained to his tandem partner a Spanish idiomatic expression. Specifically, he

explained how to express the discomfort one has when there is something in one's eye.

This prompted DG to pose the following question:

1 DG: Como se dice blinzeln?

(*How do you say to blink?*)

2 RS: **Será, no ver nada.**↓

(*It would be "not to see anything."*)

3 DG: Ha?

4 RS: **No ver nada.**

(*Not to see anything.*)

5 DG: No, blinzeln ist wenn du so machst...

(*No, to blink is used when you do so...*)

[Opens and closes his eyes a few times]

6 RS: Parpadear. (*To blink.*)

Ah, blinzeln. Und blinken?

(*Ah, to blink. And to use the turn signal?*)

7 DG: Blinken ist wenn du Auto fährst und dann blinkst du mit ..... , mit dem.... , mit

(*To signal is when you drive a car and then you signal with the..., with the..., with*)

Wenn du abbiegst, dann blinkst du.

(*When you make a turn, then you use the turn signal.*)

8 RS: Blinken und blitzen.

(*To use the turn signal and to flash.*)

9 DG: Blitzen ist wenn du zu schnell fährst, dann wirst du geblitzt.

(*To flash is, when you are driving too fast, then they „flash" you.*)

10 RS: **Aber blitzen ist auch das, oder ?**

(*But "to flash" is also this, or?*)

[RS opens and closes his eyes]

11 DG: Nein, das ist blinzeln.↑

(*No, this is to blink.*)

12 RS: Und blitzen?

(*And to flash?*)

13 DG: Blitzen ist wenn ein Messgerät irgendwo auf der Strasse steht und du fährst

zu schnell mit dem Auto, dann blitzt es dich. Dann musst du eine Geldstrafe zahlen.

(*To flash is when there is radar on the street, and you are driving too fast,*

*then you are being "flashed.." Then you have to pay a ticket.*)

14 RS: OK

Excerpt 8 is initiated by DG, who wants to know how to say in Spanish *blinzeln*

(to blink) (1). The question is expressed in Spanish, even though the unknown lexical

item is in German. RS translates the verb incorrectly, as to be blinded/not able to see

anything (2). There are a few signs that he is not sure what to say. First, RS's falling

intonation, which could signal that he is not so sure of himself in this particular context.

Second, he chooses to use the verb *será,* which could be utilized in Spanish to express a

future time or something one is not sure about (e.g., a guess or a hypothesis). RS's

answer (*not to see anything*) is received with *ha?* (3). The use of *ha* suggests that there is

a problem. In turn 4, RS repeats his previous, incorrect answer. It may suggest that he has

understood *ha* as an indication of a problematic hearing. RS's repetition of the incorrect

translation of the German verb *blinzeln* leads DG to conclude that he had no understood

her question (i.e. that RS has not understood the word *blinzeln*). In response to it, DG

uses nonverbal communication to help explain what she means (5). She opens and closes her eyes a few times, to demonstrate nonverbally the meaning of the verb *blinzeln*. At this moment (6), RS provides the correct Spanish translation (parpadear-to blink). Although there are some difficulties at the beginning of the negotiation, both partners succeed in communicating and learning from each other, using both the verbal and the nonverbal means of communication. DG accomplishes her goal and hears the correct Spanish translation of *blinzeln*, and RS "accidentally" is exposed to the German version of it. More precisely, RS notices what *blinzeln* means.

After acknowledging that to blink is *blinzeln*, RS asks what *blinken* would mean in German (6). Knowing that RS is majoring in English and his knowledge of this language is much stronger than his German, one can understand that there is potential for confusion because English and German can often be similar.

*Blinken* in German means to use the turn signal, but the similar English word *to blink* has two meanings: to open and close one's eyes (German *blinzeln*) or to use the turn signal (German *blinken)*. For this reason, RS's confusion could be related to negative transfer from English into German. DG uses an example to explain the meaning of the word *blinken* (to use the turn signal), (7). In the next turn, RS adds one more similar word to the discussion. This time he wants to know what the difference would be between the German words *blinken* and *blitzen*. Since the word *blinken* was explained before, DG concentrates on *blitzen* (to flash), and again through the very common example of being "flashed" through the police radar, she tries to explain the meaning of this particular verb (9). However, RS still seems to be confused, asking whether *blitzen* (to flash) means to blink (10). He does not use the German verb *blinzeln*: RS communicates its meaning non-

verbally. DG provides explicit corrective feedback. First, she rejects the hypothesis that *blitzen* could mean *blinken,* saying *no.* Second, she provides the translation for the non-verbal use of the verb *blinzeln* (11). RS is still confused about these three verbs. He asks one more time for the explication of *blitzen* (12), which is provided (13). DG explains, this time with more details, the meaning of the word *blitzen.* RS acknowledges his understanding with an *OK* (14).

Excerpt 8 represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) Excerpt 8 represents an opportunity for lexical learning and clarification of meaning of three very similar German verbs. This exchange is not initiated by RS in order to learn these verbs; it is DG who wants to know the Spanish translation for the verb *blinzeln*--her explicit word search starts the whole process. Since RS is not able to translate the German verb *blinzeln* correctly into Spanish, negotiation of meaning takes place, verbally and non-verbally. Once the meaning of *blinzeln* is clarified, considerable effort goes into resolving RS's problems with regard to the verbs *blinken* and *blitzen,* which are confusing for him. RS is comfortable with posing multiple questions to clarify the meaning of these verbs. As Gass (1997) stated, linguistic negotiations are likely to happen between individuals whose status (or power relationship) is similar. In tandem, both partners are equal. For this reason, most tandem learners are not embarrassed about asking questions or correcting each other.

2) Conversational interaction allows learners to notice the gap in their knowledge. DG's request for a translation of the word *blinzeln* is the result of noticing the gap

in her knowledge. She is also able to notice the gap in RS's knowledge of German, as he is unable to accomplish the translation task. One may wonder if RS also notices the gap in his knowledge at the same moment, since the tone of his voice is definitely falling while incorrectly translating the verb *blinzeln* (to blink with one's eyes) as *not to see anything*. Surely, there is some confusion since RS not only provides the incorrect translation, but also repeats it. His next question, about the connection between the verbs *blinzeln* and *blinken* suggests that he has noticed his linguistic problems (6). As Swain and Lapkin (1995) would state, learners notice their linguistic deficiencies attempting to produce the target language (DG is not able to say *parpadear* in Spanish). It may direct their attention to something they need to learn about their L2 and trigger cognitive processes that may generate linguistic knowledge, or consolidate the previous knowledge. In the case of RS, hearing that his hypothesis about the meaning of the word *blinzeln* is incorrect directs his attention to this particular verb and to other similar sounding verbs. According to Swain (1998), noticing, hypothesis testing, and metatalk may represent learning in progress.

3) Although this excerpt addresses three very similar German verbs, possibly only one of them is new to RS, *blinzeln*. *Blinzeln* is a relatively low-frequency verb in German--its meaning is limited only to the action of opening and closing one's eyes. RS has been previously exposed to the other two verbs (since he produces them on his own during this excerpt), but without context he is not able to distinguish them from each other. It is also possible that RS has misunderstood

(confused) the meanings of *blinken* and *blitzen*. His interaction with DG and talking about these verbs may help RS to distinguish them.

4) The focus on lexical items represents a temporary shift from the communicative-oriented conversation to the discussion of these three lexical items. Once the task is accomplished, the conversation shifts again to the communicative setting and the previously discussed topic is continued. As mentioned in the introduction to Excerpt 8, learners were discussing idioms prior to their focus on these three verbs. Such situation demonstrates that tandem learning can create opportunities for LREs within the context of "real" communication.

## Excerpt 9

Excerpt 9 is a fragment of a conversation between NoS and SoG. The learners talk about SoG's visit to a pizzeria on the day prior to their tandem. According to SoG, although he was hungry and enjoyed the pizza, it was not very good.

1 SoG: Also gestern war die Pizza gar nicht so...[SoG makes an „unhappy" facial expression.]
*(And yesterday the pizza was not so...)*

2 NoS: Nein? *(No?)*

3 SoG: Na ja, die war gross, aber, *(Well, it was big, but,)*

4 NoS: Es hat nicht **Geschmack, Geschmeck.** *(It didn't have taste, tasted.)*

5 SoG: Geschmack. *(Taste.)*

6 NoS: **Geschmeck.** *(Tasted.)*

7 SoG: Geschmack.*(Taste.)*

8 NoS: Aber es hat dir nicht **geschmackt,** geschmeckt? *(But it didn't taste to you?)*

9 SoG: Geschmeckt schon, aber der Geschmack war, sagen wir, so lala.

*(It did, but its taste was, let's say, just ok.)*

10 NoS: Das ist der Geschmack. Und so lala? Sagt man das?

*(This is the taste. And "so lala"? Do you say it?)*

11 SoG: So lala, das heisst nicht so gut.

*(„So lala" means not so good.)*

12 NoS: Nicht so gut. So lala.

*(Not so good. So lala.)*

13 SoG: Ja, es war nicht lecker. Der Rest war auch so lala.

*(Yes, it was not very tasty. The other things were also not so good.)*


This exchange starts with SoG's comment that the pizza he ate the previous day was not so… (1). He does not use any adjective in his sentence, which makes it a little abrupt, but he is still understandable since his facial expression does not look very happy. SoG's facial expression "fills in" for the missing adjective and completes the sentence. NoS seems surprised and asks *no?* SoG explains that the pizza was big, *but* (3). The word *but* ends his conversational turn because at this moment his sentence is finished by NoS (4). Trying to say that the pizza did not have taste or did not taste good to him (her sentence could mean any of these two possibilities), NoS comes across her own linguistic limitations not knowing which form to use *Geschmack* or *geschmeck* .Since she produces two forms, NoS is testing a hypothesis. SoG repeats the noun *Geschmack,* which is one of

the possibilities (did not have taste) (5). There may be an explanation of why he focuses

on this possibility. The first used word, the noun *Geschmack* (the taste) was used

correctly. The second word *geschmeck* was not. *Geschmeck* does not exist at all in

German, and it could mean either: an incorrect variation of *Geschmack*, or possibly, the

past participle which is not *geschmeck* but geschmeckt. SoG focuses on the correct use of

the noun (the taste) by his tandem partner. NoS does not repeat *Geschmack*, instead, she

repeats only the second, incorrect option *geschmeck* (6). SoG repeats again the noun

*Geschmack* (7). He focuses on the noun (the taste--the pizza did not have taste); whereas

NoS on the verb (did not taste good). A verb fits her sentence structure better than a noun

since NoS uses *Es hat nicht,* which normally should be followed by the past participle

(geschmeckt) (4,8). In turn 8, NoS introduces self-correction as a part of this negotiation

of meaning. She repeats the original utterance (from line 4), but adds this time a "t" to the

ends of both words. She is again testing a hypothesis. She creates an incorrect noun

(*Geschmackt*) and a correct past participle (*geschmeckt*) (8). Adding the "t" to the end of

these words shifts SoG's focus to the past participle form. In turn 9, SoG uses the

participle –*geschmeckt,* while answering NoS's question, *Did it taste to you?* (8). In

addition, he uses the related noun, stating that although the pizza had flavor, the taste was

not good. In this answer, SoG uses both lexical items (the noun and the past participle),

which were the cause of the previous confusion (9). In the following turn (10), NoS

repeats the noun and the corresponding article, acknowledging the previous efforts of her

tandem partner (since he previously has used the noun *Geschmack* three times).

Secondly, she asks about the expression used by SoG --*so lala,* which apparently was

new for her. NoS wants to know if it is really used in this form in German (10). SoG

explains to her the meaning of this idiomatic expression (11), and NoS repeats both: SoG's explanation *nicht so gut*, as well as the corresponding idiomatic expression *so lala* (12). This repetition of both lexical items in the same turn is an example of learner connecting her previous knowledge with the new one. It represents an opportunity for learning. In turn 13, SoG uses the idiom *so lala* again to talk about other things that he ate, providing one more opportunity for NoS to hear it and to see how it can be used.

Excerpt 9 is an example of a lexical learning situation during tandem interaction. This learning situation is initiated by NoS's confusion about the correct form of the past participle *geschmeckt*. Accidentally, instead of the past participle, she produces a correct noun form (the taste), which apparently, is also understood by SoG as such. Tandem partners manage to work out their different perceptions and understand each other after a few conversational turns of apparent misunderstanding. NoS is able to notice the difference between the noun *Geschmack* and the related past participle *geschmeckt*. In addition, she is able to have contact with a new idiomatic expression, *so lala*, which has been used spontaneously by SoG during their conversation. Processes similar to these described in Excerpt 8 are observed: noticing the gap, hypothesis testing, and negotiation of meaning. In the process of communication, NoS is able to discover her linguistic deficiencies: she is not able to produce the correct form of the past participle *geschmeckt*. Noticing the gap in her knowledge motivates NoS to test a hypothesis about the correct form of the participle. Her first approach is not successful: NoS produces the correct noun *Geschmack* and the incorrect form of the participle *geschmeck*. Her tandem partner focuses on the correct noun, repeating it. His feedback does not help NoS with the correct

form of the searched participle. For this reason a second hypothesis is tested in turn 9: NoS adds a "t" to both, previously produced words. Doing so, she creates an incorrect noun *Geschmackt,* and the correct form of the past participle *geschmeckt.* The German native speaker responds, using *geschmeckt*, and NoS is able to obtain confirmation with regard to her hypothesis.

It is important to stress that the primary focus of this conversation is neither lexical learning, nor focus on form. It is communication. SoG is talking about his experience at the pizzeria, and even in this short excerpt, interrupted by the temporary shifts to the LREs, the communicative purpose is the main goal. We are able to obtain the information that the pizza was big and that its taste was not very good. Finally, we know that the other aspects of this restaurant visit were not very good either. Even when occasionally interrupted, the conversation always shifts back to communication. This is an example of incidental, contextual learning in tandem. As mentioned in chapter 3, one can distinguish between two types of context: learning context (learning environment) and textual or discourse context, in which a particular word can be found. Learning in tandem is strongly connected with the first one, since learners' life and their experiences are the context and the topic of their interactions. This is also one of the strengths of tandem interactions. Learning in tandem occurs in an authentic context. It is not forced, and students do not have to perform role-plays. As van Lier (2000) pointed out, learners are "immersed in an environment full of potential meanings," which become available for them as learners "act and interact with their environment" (p. 246). The interaction between active learner and the environment leads to learning. "To look for learning is to look at the active learner in her environment." (p. 246-247)

## 6.6 Conclusion

In Chapter 6, I have shown the complexities of lexical learning in tandem, which range from instances related to single-word learning to complex discussions about idioms and proverbs. Lexical learning in tandem is strongly related to authentic language use and often results from context, as observed in all discussed excerpts. Idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and words with similar form proved to be challenging for learners of different native languages. Nevertheless, the tandem learning environment allowed learners to address these difficulties and to clarify their doubts. The assistance of the other learner (tandem partner) was always crucial in these processes. Finally, it was observed that during tandem interactions one cannot isolate the lexical learning from the grammatical or the intercultural aspects of such a learning environment. The tandem method is a holistic approach to language learning, and there is a constant interplay between the grammar, lexis, and culture, as well as between the learners and their environment.

As Hulstijn (1997) concluded, contextual learning is of great importance for successful lexical acquisition, especially when it allows learners to elaborate on new words. It facilitates their retention. Examples of extensive negotiations of meaning and/or elaboration on lexical items were frequently observed in described excerpts. As van Lier (2000) pointed out, negotiation of meaning is highlighted as being a strong indicator for learning opportunities. Tandem interactions provide opportunities for learners' negotiations, as observed, for example, in Excerpts 4, 8, 9.

Finally, all observed excerpts represent collaborative dialogue. The learners talk and doing so, they produce utterances that can be responded to—by others or themselves. As Swain (2000) would stress, "what is said, is now an objective product that can be

explored further by the speakers or others" (p.102). "It is language learning (knowledge building) mediated by language (semiotic tool)" (p.104). Through dialogue, learners regulate their activity, and create opportunities to reflect on their own language, and on the language of their tandem partner. These features of collaborative dialogue (and tandem learning as an example of it) can be observed in all conversation presented in this dissertation. In all excerpts, learners engage in problem solving and/or knowledge building. In Excerpts 1-9, learners focus primarily on their lexical problems. In the next chapter, learners focus on form in their exchanges.

# CHAPTER 7

# FORM-FOCUSED LREs

## 7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focused mainly on the lexical LREs. The tandem

method allowed learners to be exposed to a wide range of lexical learning opportunities

ranging from LREs representing single-word learning to contact with complex, multi-

word structures. A similar situation was observed with regard to grammatical learning

during tandem interactions in which a variety of topics was addressed. Form-focused

LREs discussed in this chapter include instances related to pronunciation, plural forms,

articles, and other morphological features. It is important to stress that both the lexical

LREs and the form-related LREs observed during tandem interactions arise from

learners' individual needs and reflect these needs. The LREs discussed in this chapter are

examples of authentic interactions and represent a true communicative setting, in which

learners shift their attention to form when needed in order to return to their conversations

as soon as the issue is resolved.

For the purpose of this analysis, this chapter is divided into two types of

situations: (1) pronunciation and issues related to spelling, and (2) all other grammatical

aspects (morphology and syntax).

## 7.1 Pronunciation and spelling

The data provide strong evidence of a significant presence of corrective feedback

and LREs related to pronunciation during typical tandem interactions. This may be

explained by the fact that errors related to pronunciation are easy for native speakers to detect and relatively easy for them to correct. This fact does not mean that such errors are easily recognized by NNSs. Often, as excerpts discussed in this chapter will demonstrate, NNSs do not notice the incorrect pronunciation, and perceive the corrective feedback as being about something else. Sometimes, it takes a few conversational turns to correct pronunciation errors.

**Excerpt 10A**

Excerpt 10 represents a fragment of a conversation between NoS and SoG. During this conversational setting, NoS tells SoG about her recent flight from Spain to Germany, during which she did not like the fact that everybody around her was reading books. It gave her the impression that these books were "right in her face." In the process of telling this story, the Spanish native speaker (NoS) has problems with differentiating between two phonetically similar German words: Geschichte (history) and Gesichte (faces).

1 NoS: Du hast diese **Bucher in dein Geschicht.**

(*You have these books in your "face."*)

2 SoG: Gesicht. (*Face.*)

3 NoS: Dein **Geschicht.** („*Face.*")

4 SoG: Gesicht. (*Face.*)

5 NoS: Gesicht. (*Face.*)

6 SoG: Nicht Geschichte. Gesicht. (*Not history, face.*)

7 NoS: Gesicht. (*Face*). Ich glaube, wir Spanier haben diese Probleme. (*I think we Spaniards have these problems.*)

Excerpt 10A starts with an incorrectly produced utterance. There are three errors in this sentence. NoS does not pronounce the umlaut in the word *Bucher*, which should be said "Bücher." Second, there is a grammatical error *in dein Geschicht* (Accusative) which should be "in deinem Gesicht" (Dative). Finally, there is NoS's incorrect pronunciation of the word *Gesicht* (face) as *Geschicht*, which sounds almost like the German word "Geschichte" (history). SoG focuses on only one error, probably the most important for the understanding of this sentence, which is the incorrect pronunciation of the word *Gesicht*. The corrective feedback is provided in the form of a single-move, reduced recast (2), which is followed by its repetition by NoS (3). Although NoS tries to repeat the word *Gesicht,* she still is not able to do it correctly. She repeats just what she had said. It causes one more recast (4), which results in successful uptake this time (5). Nevertheless, SoG provides additional, more explicit corrective feedback, saying that the correct word is *Gesicht* and not *Geschichte* (6). NoS repeats *Gesicht*, acknowledging that Spanish speakers may have problems with such words.

Excerpt 10A represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) A native speaker will not always address all errors committed by the "novice." Sometimes the native speaker chooses some errors to focus on, and does not discuss the others. According to Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000), "perceiving a limited amount of feedback at exactly the right developmental time

is the optimal condition for the learner" (p. 494). Learners may not be able to correctly perceive and process all feedback they receive. Too much feedback may lead to cognitive overload. Thus, SoG's decision with regard to reduced feedback seems to be correct, in order for NoS to benefit from it. He reduces his recast only to one word and is able to help NoS with its pronunciation.

In this case the "chosen" error is the incorrect pronunciation of the word *Gesicht,* which could be the cause of a possible communicative misunderstanding because the listener could understand NoS's sentence as: (1) People had books in NoS's face, or (2) People had books in NoS's story (if she were reading). Although there is one more mispronounced word *Bucher*, this does not have much effect on the communicative understanding, and its correction appears to be of secondary importance for communicative purposes. It is also not addressed/corrected by SoG, who focuses only on the word *Geschicht*. It is corrected through a reduced, single-move recast, which involves one change. According to Sheen (2006), a reduced recast produces significantly higher uptake than a clause-length recast. Uptake is also present in the conversation between NoS and SoG (5, 7). SoG is persistent with his corrections and even after hearing NoS's improvement, SoG provides additional, explicit corrective feedback, which emphasizes the difference between the words *Geschichte* and *Gesicht* (6).

2) NoS admits that Spanish speakers may have problems with making the distinction between these two words: *Geschichte* and *Gesichte*. This statement could be viewed as a learner's reflection on the relationship between her L1 and L2. Understanding the similarities and differences between one's L1 and L2 can

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be beneficial for language learning because it allows learners to become more aware of these factors. As already observed in Excerpt 4, learners occasionally try to utilize their L1 in the process of the SLA. Sometimes, such transfer can be helpful, but frequently it may cause learners to produce incorrect utterances in the L2, as SE did (Excerpt 4). Reflecting on the relationship between their L1 and L2, allows learners to discover the features they are transferring from their L1 into the L2, and to see if such transfer is possible and/or correct. The feedback obtained from the native speaker is very valuable in this process, as it can be observed in the next excerpt.

**Excerpt 10B**

Excerpt 10B represents direct continuation of the previous conversation. NoS and SoG are still engaged in the discussion about the difference between the words *Geschichte* and *Gesichte*. This time the focus is not only on pronunciation, but also on other grammatical items directly related to the discussed words.

1  NoS: Aber kannst du mir verstehen? Oder es kling sehr..

(*But you can understand me? Or does it sound very...*)

2  SoG: Nein, nein. Ich kann es verstehen.

(*No, no. I can understand it.*)

3  NoS: Ges.. Ges... Geschichte und **Gesichte.**

(*Ges..Ges... History and faces*)

4  SoG: Die Gesichter. (*Faces.*)

5  NoS: Gesichter. (*Faces.*)

6  SoG: Gesichter. (*Faces.*)

7  NoS: Aber meinst du cara oder historia?

(*But do you mean face or history?*)

8  SoG: Ja. Ja. Ja. Ich meine cara. [Laughs]

(*Yes, yes. I mean face.*)

9  NoS: Ja. Ja. Ja.

(*Yes, yes, yes.*)

10 NoS: **Gesichte** ist die Historia.

(*Geschichte is history.*)

11 SoG: Geschichte. (*Geschichte.*)

12 NoS: Und Gesichte ist cara.

(*And Gesichte is face.*)

13 SoG: Hm.

Excerpt 10B starts with NoS's question as to whether SoG can understand her, or not (1). This question may be directly related to the previously discussed corrective feedback regarding NoS's pronunciation and to the possible confusion because of mispronounced words. SoG reconfirms that he can understand NoS (2). At this point, when the whole interaction related to the difference between *Geschichte* and *Gesicht* seems to be finished, NoS decides to take it further. She pronounces both words in the same conversational turn, contrasting them, as was previously done by SoG (3). Doing so, NoS has two "false starts" (*Ges...Ges...*). This is evidence that she is focused on the problematic sound distinction between these two words. It also demonstrates that she has

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benefited from the previous exchange. NoS has noticed the difference between *Geschichte* and *Gesicht,* as well as the problems with her own pronunciation. Although she is able to pronounce correctly both words, she uses the plural form *Gesichter* and does it incorrectly (3). NoS says *Gesichte.* In the next turn, SoG provides the correct plural form *Gesichter* (4). His correction results in uptake (5).

The rest of the excerpt (7-13) is directly connected to the lexis-based LRE, as learners discuss and clarify the meaning of the previously introduced words (*Geschichte* and *Gesicht*). NoS is not yet clear on the distinction between these similar-sounding words and uses Spanish to ask for clarification (7). SoG clarifies the meaning in her native language (8). NoS continues to use Spanish two more times to confirm words' meanings (10, 12).

Excerpt 10B describes direct conversational continuation of excerpt 10A, and although its focus is still strongly related to pronunciation, it demonstrates other form-related and lexis-based LREs. Additionally, this excerpt represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) Noticing the gap and negotiation/clarification of meaning (similar to processes observed in Excerpt 8). NoS produces the incorrect plural form *Gesichte* (3). SoG corrects it *(Gesichter)*. His correction results in uptake (5). Above fragment demonstrates that SoG notices the gap in NoS's knowledge of German, addresses it, and creates an opportunity for learning. His corrective feedback results in successful uptake, which suggests that NoS has noticed it. Once the plural form *Gesichter* is noticed, NoS still wants to clarify its meaning. She asks in Spanish if SoG means the face or the history. SoG confirms that he means the face (*cara*).

The clarifying word *cara* is provided in Spanish, even though the rest of the

sentence is in German (*Ja. Ja. Ja. Ich meine cara).*

2) Knowing the native language of the tandem partner is beneficial during tandem

exchanges. SoG can clarify in Spanish to his confused tandem partner (NoS) the

differences between the nouns *Geschichte* und *Gesichter*. During tandem

interactions, both learners are always familiar with the native language of the

other person, and this may be beneficial, as we can observe in this excerpt, where

SoG's knowledge of Spanish is being utilized by NoS to clarify her doubts about

lexical meaning.

3) There is improvement in NoS's performance as a result of the tandem interaction.

NoS produces correctly, on her own, the words *Geschichte* and *Gesichte*, which

were previously discussed and problematic for her (3). This offers evidence that

tandem learning contributes to noticing and, maybe, learning. This exchange also

leads to an extended LRE that goes well beyond the simple correction and uptake

of pronunciation. Learners dedicate enough time to clarify the meaning of the

problematic word and to focus on them.

4) In the interaction between SoG and NoS, as in most other excerpts in this

dissertation, explicit focus on learners' errors is provided exactly when needed, in

most instances after an incorrectly produced utterance, or part of it. It allows

learners to notice the difference between their incorrect use of the L2 and the

target form. Sometimes, it takes a few turns for them to notice or to use the

corrected form correctly, as observed in Excerpt 10. NoS needs two corrections to

produce the target-like form of the word "Gesicht." As Lightbown (1998) would

state, her reformulated utterance gives some reason to believe that the mismatch between her incorrect utterance and the target utterance has been noticed, representing "a step toward acquisition" (p. 193).

In order to provide evidence that tandem interactions lead to noticing and, possibly learning, I will discuss a fragment of a conversation between LC and AG. As result of learning with a native speaker, LC is able to notice the gap in her L2 knowledge and improve her performance, producing on her own a target-like form of the previously incorrectly pronounced word *Probleme.*

### Excerpt 11A

\* The German noun „Probleme" should be pronounced with a long e [e:]. Since this sound does not exist in Czech, LC seems to have difficulties with its pronunciation, saying [ɛ].

Excerpt 11A represents a fragment of a conversation between LC and AG. LC stated in the previous turns that she had some problems at work. AG jokingly asks if she is about to be fired. As this excerpt begins, LC explains that she is referring to her problems with German.

1 LC: Aber ich meinte vorher, ich hatte Sprachprobleme. [ɛ]

*(I was thinking before, I had language-problems.)*

2 AG: Sag noch mal: Probleme. [e:]

*(Say one more time Probleme.)*

3 LC: Probleme. [ɛ] Probleme. [ɛ] Das E war nicht richtig.

*(Probleme. Probleme. The e was incorrect.)*

4 AG: Ja, du hast Probleme gesagt. [ɛ]

*(Yes, you said Probleme.)*

5 LC: Soll ich das, soll ich das...

*(Should I, should I...)*

6 AG: So wie Kaffee. Probleme. [eː]

*(As Kaffee. Probleme.)*

7 LC: Ich habe Sprachprobleme. [eː]

*(I have language problems.)*

8 AG: Hm.

The focus of Excerpt 17A is the incorrect pronunciation of the German word *Probleme* by the Czech native speaker. In turn 1, LC pronounces it incorrectly. In response, AG asks LC to say the word *Probleme* one more time and demonstrates its correct pronunciation (2). This feedback indicates there is a problem with the word, but does not specify what is wrong. Although in turn 3, LC repeats the problematic word twice; she is not able to pronounce it correctly. However, LC manages to recognize her problem, saying that the "e" was not correct. As LC says the word, it becomes an object for reflection. In turn 4, AG indirectly confirms that LC's hypothesis about the "e" is correct. Also, AG demonstrates LC's incorrect pronunciation by repeating the word *Probleme*, as it was said previously by LC. In turn 5, LC is reflecting on something she

should do… We do not know exactly what she is looking for here, but we can observe that AG interprets this as a request for help in making the correct sound. AG helps LC out, providing her with an example of a very common German word with a similar "e" (*Kaffee*), and then repeating the word *Probleme* in the same conversational turn (6). This time, AG's explanation results in successful uptake, as LC is able to produce the sound [e:] correctly. LC redoes her own problematic utterance, this time with the correct pronunciation.

Twenty-five minutes later, during the same tandem meeting, LC uses the word *Probleme* again. At first, she uses it incorrectly, but she realizes it and immediately corrects herself. This instance of self-correction provides evidence that the previous extensive negotiation related to the pronunciation of the sound [e:] resulted in noticing the error.


## Excerpt 11B

In Excerpt 11B, LC is telling AG about one more of her challenges related to the correct use of German. Since LC has to write e-mails to customers of the magazine she is working for, sometimes, she is not sure about the best way to express herself. Therefore, during her tandem interactions, LC would refer to such instances, asking AG for help. Excerpt 11B is an example of such conversations. Its most important element is LC's self-correction (1).

1 LC: Diese Probleme[ɛ], Probleme [eː], habe ich ganz oft. Das stimmt wahrscheinlich nicht. Das ist wahrscheinlich nicht in Ordnung. Wieviele Exemplare möchten Sie geliefert haben?

*(These problems, problems, I have quite often. I don't think that this is correct. It is probably incorrect. How many examples would you like to have delivered?)*

2 AG: Geliefert bekommen.

*(To receive delivered.)*

Excerpt 11 B starts with the incorrect pronunciation of the word *Probleme.* LC says the word incorrectly, then immediately self-corrects. This is evidence that the previous exchange with her tandem partner about the correct pronunciation of this word resulted in learning.

In summary, Excerpts 10 and 11 provide evidence that corrective feedback that occurs during tandem interaction leads to noticing and production of target-like forms. Explicit focus on form provided by the native speaker resulted in both interactions in improved performance of the non-native speaker. In both examples, there is a temporary shift from focus on meaning to focus on pronunciation. As Lightbown (1998) stressed, sometimes it is necessary to stop the communicative activity for a while to make the focus on form explicit. It is beneficial for language learning, and allows learners to notice language forms that they may not notice when focusing on meaning only. The benefits resulting from focusing on form which occurs within tandem interactions can also be observed in the next excerpt.

## Excerpt 12

Excerpt 12 represents a fragment of a conversation between MiG and SE. After returning from a trip to Spain, SE is sharing his travel experiences with MiG during their tandem meeting:

1 SE: Da haben wir in eine alte…. Oh, was heisst das? Ich kenne das Wort.
Wo **Mönchen** leben?

(*There we have an old… Oh, how it is called? I know this word. Where the monks live?*)

2 MiG: Wo was leben? Was?

(*Where what lives? What?*)

3 SE: **Mönchen**? (*Monks?*)

4 MiG: Mönche! Mönche meinst du. Kloster.

(*Monks. Monks, it is what you mean. Monastery.*)

5 SE: Ja, ja. Kloster ist das Wort das ich vergessen habe. [o]

(*Yes, yes. Monastery is the word I have forgotten.*)

6 MiG: Klo↑ster. Klo↑ster. [o:] (*Monastery. Monastery.*)

7 SE: Kloster. [o]

8 MiG: Klo↑ster.[o:]

9 SE: Kloster. Das war ein **alte** Kloster. [o:]

(*Monastery. It was an old monastery.*)

10 MiG: Ein altes Kloster. (*An old monastery*).

11 SE: Das Kloster? [o:]

12 MiG: Ja.

Excerpt 12 starts with SE's explicit request for assistance during a word-search. SE apparently has forgotten how to say the word "monastery" in German. He asks MiG: *How do you say it?* describing the searched word. According to SE, he knows the missing word: *I know this word*, but is not able to produce it (1). SE explains to his tandem partner that this is a place where monks live. He uses the incorrect plural form of the word "monks" (*Mönchen* instead of Mönche), and MiG does not understand him. She points out which part of the sentence is not understood, saying *Where what lives?* (2). At this moment, SE becomes uncertain about his output. He repeats the noun *Mönchen* with the rising intonation of a question (3). MiG finally understands him (4), *Monks! Monks, it's what you mean. Kloster.* The lexis-based LRE is successfully accomplished. MiG supplies the missing word, monastery, which is confirmed by SE in the following turn as what he was searching for (5).

Since German vowels can be pronounced either as long or short, and the noun *Kloster* requires a long vowel [o:], which often is problematic for foreign learners, MiG corrects the pronunciation of her tandem partner. In turn 6, she repeats the correct pronunciation twice. She makes her multi-move recast salient, through rising intonation on the problematic vowel. Repeating the word twice gives SE the opportunity to have more exposure to it. Although the recast is made very salient, SE fails to pronounce the word *Kloster* correctly (7), which causes MiG to repeat her corrective feedback (8). After the third exposure to the same word, SE manages to produce it correctly (9). It is a sign that he has noticed the focus of the corrective feedback. In the same conversational turn, a new form-based LRE begins. In German, the gender of a noun must be reflected in the

article or adjective ending. SE commits an error, using the incorrect adjective ending *alte* (9). SE's error results in a recast by his tandem partner (10), which allows SE to conclude that the noun *Kloster* must be neuter. His question, *Das Kloster*, suggests that SE is focusing on the article of the noun, and not the adjective ending. SE's recast also includes a correct pronunciation of *Kloster*, which provides evidence that the previous focus on pronunciation resulted in its noticing and possibly learning.

Excerpt 12 demonstrates the following features of tandem learning:

1) It confirms that learners receive frequent feedback related to their pronunciation during tandem interactions. It also confirms that words with sounds non-existing in learners' native languages may be difficult for them. In both excerpts (11 and 12) learners fail to produce relatively easy words (*Probleme* and *Kloster*) correctly, due to the difference in vowel articulation between their L1 and L2. These words required multiple repetitions/corrections in order to be produced correctly. The tandem setting seems to provide a good environment for such learning since its participants can allocate enough time for practice of pronunciation. Such extensive focus on pronunciation could happen in a classroom, but might be unusual in everyday conversation. Also, there is a significant difference between addressing pronunciation in a formal classroom and in tandem. In tandem, words that are practiced are not from a word list. They always arise from context, in situations when the non-native speaker uses an incorrect pronunciation. Due to it, pronunciation can be corrected in the exact areas that require attention. It is a highly personalized approach. Additionally, corrected words can be directly utilized by the non-native speaker in further

conversation, giving him or her opportunities for further practice, reflections on previously learned material, and self-corrections, if necessary (Excerpts 10, 11, 12). The non-native speaker has opportunities to reflect not only on word's pronunciation, but also, occasionally, on their grammatical or lexical aspects (Excerpt 10, 12).Various LREs can be observed during this interaction: the lexis-based LRE (word search) and the form-based LRE (article of the noun *Kloster*), which provide evidence for the tandem method as an example of holistic learning.

2) LREs occur within the context of meaning focused conversation. This shift from meaning to form can also happen during classroom conversation, but the difference between these two settings (tandem vs. classroom) is that during tandem learning, the shift from meaning to form and back is initiated and negotiated between the participants, who are peers and not student and teacher. This shift from meaning to form is generally triggered by: (1) the novice not being able to say what he or she wants to (Excerpt 12), and/or (2) the expert noticing the gap in the interlanguage of the novice (Excerpts 10, 11, 12). As Excerpt 12 demonstrates, the first shift from meaning to form (LRE) is initiated by SE through his explicit request for assistance, and the second LRE is initiated by MiG reacting to the incorrect sentence of her tandem partner.

It is interesting to observe that although SE positions himself as a novice asking explicitly about the lexical item he cannot recall, he signals at the same time that he knew this word before (2, 5). This may suggest that he may not like being treated as a novice and wants to preserve some elements of the position of a semi-expert, even when asking a question. It is important to stress that other

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participants as well (regardless of their gender or age) demonstrate a similar behavioral pattern. They liked to preserve some degree of the semi-expert feeling during their language learning (questionnaires confirmed it). The tandem setting allows it since both learners have equal power. In a typical classroom setting, the teacher is the expert and the students are novices. In tandem, the roles (expert vs. novice) change frequently during each interaction. It allows learners to have a low affective filter—no fear of speaking, asking questions and correcting/challenging each other. As Gass (1997) stated, differences in status influence the amount of negotiation that will take place in an interaction. Negotiation initiated by the NNS is highly unlikely between individuals whose status or power relationship is different. According to Gass, familiarity of interlocutors is also an important factor having influence on the amount of conversational negotiations. There is less negotiation between unfamiliar interlocutors than familiar pairs. As observed in all previously described excerpts, there is a significant amount of negotiations between tandem learners and many of them are initiated by the novice.

In summary, Excerpts 10, 11 and 12 describe a similar phenomenon, when the non-native speaker has problems with the correct L2 pronunciation. In all cases, learners (NoS, SE and LC) are fully engaged in their interaction, but not able to detect their incorrect pronunciation. Their output is not enough for better pronunciation. Multiple corrections and feedback from the native speaker are necessary to improve their performance. Once correct pronunciation is achieved, learners seem to be aware of the previous corrections and use the previously addressed forms correctly.

## Excerpt 13

Excerpt 13 represents a fragment of conversation between NoS and SoG. The tandem partners are comparing various factors of their native languages with their L2s. One of the discussed factors is pronunciation and sounds that exist or not in each language. As observed in this excerpt, such sounds are often problematic for learners, and may lead to miscommunication.

1 NoS: In Spanien wir haben „Z." Zorro, zorro.

*(In Spain we have „z." Zorro, zorro.)* [*zorro means „fox" in English]

2 SoG: Ja, wir haben es auch in Deutschland.

*(Yes, we have it as well in Germany.)*

3 NoS: Ja, weil du sagst Zauber. [zaubər].

*(Yes, because you say "Zauber.")*

4 SoG: Nein. Sauber [zaubər] ist mit „s"geschrieben.

*(No „sauber" is written with an „s")*

5 NoS: Mit „Z"?

*(With „z"?)*

6 SoG: Z?

7 NoS: Zauber. [zaubər].

8 SoG: Nein, Sauber [zaubər] gibt es nur mit „s." Ah, du meinst Zauber.

*(No, „sauber" is only with an „s." Ah, you mean "zauber.")*

9 NoS: Ja.

10 SoG: Ah so. Ja Zauber[tsaubər] ist mit „ z“ geschrieben, und sauber [zaubər] ist mit „s.“

Sauber. Zauber. Was ist Zauber auf Spanisch?

*(Ah yes. Yes, „zauber“ is written with an „z,“ and “sauber” is with an “s.” How do you say “Zauber” in Spanish?)*

11 NoS: Ich weiss nicht. Ein Moment. Ein Moment. [Looks in her notes.]

*(I don't know. One moment. One moment.)*

12 SoG: Zauber. Sauber, zauber. [Whispering]

*(Zauber? Sauber, zauber.)*

13 NoS: Wo habe ich es? Ah, hechicero, mago.

*(Where do I have it? Ah, wizard, magician.)*

14 SoG: Magia? *(Magic?)*

15 NoS: Hechicero. Mago. *(Wizard, magician.)*

16 SoG: Mago. *(Magician.)*

17 NoS: Zauber. Aber wie sagst du das? [zaubər]

*(Zauber. But how do you say it?)*

18 SoG: Zauber. [tsaubər].

19 NoS: Es ist... ? *(It is...?)*

20 SoG: Zauber, mit „z.“ *(Zauber, with an „z“)*

21 NoS: Zauber. [tsaubər].Für mich es klingt gleich. *(Zauber. It all sounds the same to me.)*

22 SoG: Ja? *(Yes?)*

23 NoS: Sauber und zauber. OK.

24 SoG: Zet.

Hechicero? (*Magician?*)

25 NoS: Ja, hechicero, mago. (*Yes, wizard, magician.*)

El mago. In dieses Film „Der Herr der Ringe."

(*The magician. In the movie „Lord of the rings."*)

26 SoG: „Der Herr der Ringe"? (*„Lord of the rings?*)

27 NoS: Ja, ich glaube, ich habe dieses Wort dort gesehen. Zauber.

(*I think I saw this word there. Magic.*)

28 SoG: Ah, so.


Excerpt 13 starts with NoS's statement that the Spanish sound system has the
sound "z" [z]. As an example of this sound, she uses the word *zorro* [zoro] (1). SoG
responds that this sound exists as well in German. NoS agrees with him, saying that it
must be true, since there is a word *Zauber*. This word is pronounced by her as [zaubər],
following Spanish pronunciation. However, according to the German phonetic rules,
*Zauber* should be pronounced [tsaubər], and not [zaubər]. Upon hearing [zaubər], SoG
assumes that NoS has said *sauber* (correctly pronounced as [zaubər]) and states that this
word is written with an "s" (4). NoS is confused, and asks *with a "z?"* (5). At this
moment, SoG seems to be as much confused as NoS is (6) and asks "z?" (6). NoS repeats
*zauber* (7), and receives corrective feedback from her tandem partner that *sauber*
[zaubər] is written with an "s" (8).

Until this moment, each tandem partner means a different word: NoS  *Zauber*
(magic) and SoG *sauber* (clean), but both pronounce it the same [zaubər]. In turn 8,

immediately after his corrective feedback, SoG realizes that NoS means the word *Zauber*. NoS confirms it (9), and SoG explicitly explains there is a difference between these two words, because *Zauber* is written with a "z" and *sauber* with an "s." At the same time, he pronounces one more time the minimal pair *Zauber-sauber* [zaubǝr]- [tsaubǝr], and asks for the Spanish translation of *Zauber*. Turn 10 signals the shift in roles; SoG becomes the "novice" while asking for the unknown Spanish word. It is also a shift from a form-focused LRE to a lexical LRE.

Interestingly, NoS cannot provide a direct translation for the word *Zauber*. It seems that she saw it before, in a written form, and is able to recall it orally, but does not remember its meaning (11). Since she has it written, and she knows about it, she looks in her notes for it (13), asking SG for time *one moment, one moment*. In the meantime, SoG repeats the minimal pair *sauber-Zauber*. This whispering could represent his conscious reflection about his native language. As previously seen, tandem language learning provides participants not only with opportunities for L2 learning, but also with frequent opportunities for reflection on their L1. Finally, NoS finds the Spanish translation of the word in her notes, and provides SoG with two translations of it. The first one is *hechicero* (wizard), the second *mago* (magician). SoG understands from the Spanish translation that it is something related to *Magia*. He is not repeating both words: *hechicero* and *mago* (14, 16). SG's recast is only partial, reduced to one of these two words, "mago."

Turn 17 represents again a shift in roles. The lexical LRE is over, and form-related learning is again the focus of the learners' attention. NoS is the learner again, and SoG the expert. NoS wants to know how SoG pronounces the word *Zauber* (17). SoG fulfills her request, but it seems to be difficult for NoS to grasp the pronunciation

difference between German "s" and "z," which she admits in turn 21, saying that it is all the same to her. SoG seems surprised (22), but NoS finally manages to pronounce both forms correctly (23), which demonstrates that enough attention was paid to them. NoS says *OK* (23), and SoG shifts the conversation to lexical learning, actively using and pronouncing the previously introduced word *hechicero* for the first time (24). Since he uses this word with the intonation of a question, it is understood by NoS as such (25). She confirms that what SoG said was correct. At the same time, she starts to remember where she previously encountered the word *Zauber.* It was in the movie "The Lord of the Rings."

Excerpt 13 represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) Mutual learning is evident. NoS is noticing the difference between the pronunciation of the sound "z" in German and in Spanish, and the difference between the two German words *sauber* and *Zauber.* In addition, she re-discovers the meaning of *Zauber.* SoG is experiencing an opportunity for lexical learning in terms of translation of the word *Zauber* in Spanish. His focus is first on the easier word *mago,* and then on the more difficult word *hechicero.* When presented with two synonyms at the same time, SoG's attention is first on the easier word, and later he focuses on the more difficult item. The tandem method allows this flexibility. Participants can manage their own learning and choose what they want to focus on, and in which order. Second, the tandem method allows learners to focus on multiple learning features during the same dialogue. As observed in Excerpt 13, during the same conversation each learner benefits differently. NoS

focuses mainly on pronunciation and understanding the differences between the Spanish and German sounds. SoG's focus is on vocabulary. Although SoG and NoS are focusing on different features, the base for their learning is their conversation. Both learners are focusing on the same items, but for different (personal) reasons. NoS is learning the correct pronunciation of the word *Zauber*, and SoG focuses on its meaning. The same word is utilized by each learner differently. There is one more aspect related to the mutual learning in tandem, which can be observed in this conversation. NoS actively uses the word Zauber. She is able to produce it on her own, and makes the impression to know it. However, when asked by SoG about the Spanish translation of *Zauber*, NoS is not able to provide it. She has to consult her notes to find the translation. SoG's question about *Zauber* resulted in a possible mutual learning of its meaning.

2)  Excerpts 11, 12, and 13 suggested some learners are not able to hear the difference between certain L1 and L2 sounds. It may impair learners' ability to articulate correctly and/or lead to miscommunication, as observed in Excerpt 13. As Laufer (1997) pointed out: "The L1 system may be responsible for the learner's inability to discriminate between some phonemes and subsequent confusion of words differing precisely in these problematic phonemes." (p.142). In Excerpt 13 (turn 21), NoS says *It all sounds the same to me*. Although it is very difficult for NoS to hear the difference between *Zauber* and *sauber*, she is able to pronounce the problematic for her word *Zauber* correctly (after a few episodes of hearing it). Participation in tandem provided NoS with opportunities for improvement of her pronunciation.

3) The status of NoS and SoG is equal and this leads to intensive linguistic

negotiations (also described in the discussion of the previous excerpt). The

learners are comfortable during their tandem meetings since they know each other

for a long period of time, almost a year. The familiarity of learners allows SoG

and NoS to have low affective filter, which can be observed in their willingness to

ask questions (5, 10), admit their lack of knowledge (11), and negotiate.

In summary, Excerpts 10-13 describe tandem interactions related to focus on

pronunciation. On all occasions, learners received multiple instances of corrective

feedback with regard to their incorrect forms. All learners succeeded in improving their

pronunciation. Their progress suggested that participation in tandem provides learners

with substantial opportunities for improvement of their pronunciation and for noticing

instances when their utterance is not exactly the same as the target form. Corrective

feedback is important in this process. It is challenging for learners to address their own

incorrect pronunciation (Excerpts 10, 11, 12, and13). Focus on form (pronunciation)

proved to be important.

## 7.2 Other Form-based LREs

In the previous section, I discussed the form-based LREs related to learners' focus

on pronunciation. Often, the examples of a focus on pronunciation were closely related to

other forms of learning, such as the lexical LREs (Excerpt 10,12,13) or other form-based

LREs, when learners addressed, for example, the plural forms of nouns or their articles

(Excerpts 10,12).

In the second part of this chapter, I continue to address examples of conversations representing the shift from meaning to form. I will focus on conversations related not as much to pronunciation, but to other aspects of focus on form observed in tandem.

## Excerpt 14

Excerpt 14 is a fragment of a conversation between CS and MaG. Tandem partners jokingly comment about their censorship-free tandem situation since they were left alone for the duration of their interaction. I (the researcher) left, to allow them an uninterrupted tandem interaction.

1 CS: Es **moglich** ohne Zensur sprechen.

(*It possible talk without censorship.*)

2 MaG: Es **ist** möglich ohne Zensur **zu**↑ sprechen.

(*It is possible to talk without censorship.*)

3 CS: Es **moglich** ohne Zensur zu sprechen.

(*It possible to talk without censorship.*)

4 MaG: Ja, aber es↑ ist↑ möglich ohne Zensur zu sprechen.

(*Yes, but it is possible to talk without the censorship.*)

5 CS: Es ist **moglich** ohne Zensur sprechen.

(*It's possible to talk without the censorship.*)

6 MaG: Es ist möglich↑.

(*It's possible.*)

7 CS: Es ist möglich ohne **Zensur sprechen**. Ohne Zensur zu sprechen.

(*It's possible talk without censorship. To talk without censorship.*)

8 MaG: Este es possible, or es possible?

(*This is possible, or is possible?*)

9 CS: Es possible. Es possible hablar sin censura.

(*Is possible. It is possible to talk without censorship*)

10 MaG: Im Deutschen musst du "es ist" benutzen.

(*In German you have to use "it is."* )

11 CS: Es ist möglich ohne Zensur zu sprechen. Gut. Die Zensur ist mit „ c"?

(*It's possible to talk without the censorship. Good. The "Zensur" is with a "c"?*)

12 MaG: Nein. „Z."

(*No. „Z"*)

13 CS: Mit „z." OK. Und das zweite „s"?

(*With „z." Ok. And the second „s"?*)

14 MaG: Zensur, ja das ist ein „s." En Aleman normalmente usamos „z" **[tsɛt]**

(*„Zensur," yes this is an „s." In German we normally use a "z"*)

15 CS: La „zeta"

(*The „z."*)

16 MaG: La zeta. *(The „z")*

The previous fragment starts with a very understandable, but grammatically and phonetically incorrect utterance by CS: *Es moglich ohne Zensur sprechen.* There are three errors: (1) The word *möglich* is mispronounced, (2) The verb "ist" is missing from

the structure "es ist möglich" (it is possible), and (3) "zu"is missing from the infinitive "zu sprechen."

In the following turn (2), MaG corrects all three of the errors through recast, but puts a special emphasis (through rising pitch of his voice) on the missing "to" in front of the infinitive. This strategy of making at least part of his recast more salient seems to work because CS corrects only this one feature of the recast, adding in the following turn "to" in front of the infinitive "to talk" (3). However, the uptake is only partially successful; there are two other errors, which have not been corrected by CS: his pronunciation of the word "möglich" (which is still pronounced as *moglich*), and the phrase *es ist* (which is still incomplete) (3). In the following turn (4), MaG acknowledges the correction of *zu sprechen* made by CS through *yes*; on the other hand, he makes salient the other two, not yet corrected errors. MaG uses two different linguistic features to do so. First, he signals through the word *but* that there is something wrong with the rest of the produced sentence. MaG uses *but* to signal that what is to come contrasts with the *yes* that he has just uttered (and is therefore presumably something negative). Second, he uses rising intonation to signal to CS where the errors are (4). The rising intonation is on the words *es* and *ist*. Making the feedback salient leads in turn 5 to the next stage of uptake. CS corrects the second error; the missing verb *ist* in the structure "it is," but still does not address his incorrect pronunciation of the word *möglich*. Since MaG is paying a lot of attention to the uptake and seems to have a goal of obtaining a perfect structure from his tandem partner, he repeats in turn 6 only the part of the sentence with the consistent pronunciation error. Again, he utilizes the rising intonation to make *möglich* salient. This results in the correct pronunciation by CS (7), and more precisely, it is followed by CS's

repetition of the entire original sentence. In the process of focusing on the correct

pronunciation and the correct production of *it is*, CS forgets to employ his very first

uptake--the "to" in the front of the infinitive. This "forgetting" of the "to" in the front of

the infinitive may be caused by the cognitive overload at this particular moment. CS is

trying to work on improvement of three different errors at the same time. Although this

task is quite difficult, CS manages to correct himself immediately after his error, and

produces a perfect German structure *ohne Zensur zu sprechen* (7). This is a sign that he

has noticed the previous corrective feedback.

Turn (8) represents the change of the tandem language from German to Spanish,

and the change in focus of the conversation. MaG is not anymore the teacher and the

expert. Through his question "It's possible or is possible?" (*Este es possible, or es*

*possible*) he wants to clarify his linguistic doubts with regard to his Spanish. MaG's

question is directly related to the previous conversation and to the problematic for CS

structure *Es ist moeglich;* he is re-addressing the same structure, but this time in Spanish.

Relying on the expertise of CS, as the native speaker of Spanish, MaG wants to know

whether the Spanish equivalent to the German *es ist* requires a subject (*este*) as it does in

German (*es*). In turn (9), CS provides the correct form *es possible*. He uses it as he

translates into Spanish the previously discussed in German sentence *es possible hablar*

*sin censura*. In the following turn (10), MaG returns to the German language, and to his

role as a teacher, and explicitly explains that in German one has to use "it is." His

statement suggests also that MaG reflects on the difference between the two languages:

he is noticing the difference for himself as well as for CS. This type of explicit metatalk

is typical of the interactions between CS and MaG, and was also frequently observed among other tandem learners.

In turn 11, CS repeats again, correctly, the utterance that was previously problematic for him. All three of his previous errors are corrected. CS's voluntary repetition suggests that he noticed the previously received feedback, benefited from it, and became more aware of the L2. In the same turn, CS uses the contextual opportunity to clarify his doubts about the spelling of the word *Zensur*. Since *Zensur* is written in German with a "z" and in most other languages preserves its Latin roots and spelling with a "c," CS wants to know how to spell it in German, and if it is spelled as well with a "c." MaG explains with a clear *no* that in German it is written with a "z." In turn 14, MaG gives additional information about the general spelling rule in German. He states that most words are written in German with a "z." MaG is doing this explanation in Spanish. While using Spanish, MaG fails to do it correctly in all aspects of the sentence, pronouncing the letter "z" [tsɛt] like a German person would do. CS recognizes it and corrects this imperfection, in order to make the sentence truly Spanish (15). CS says the correct Spanish sound for "Z" (la zeta). Uptake follows the corrective feedback when MaG repeats the Spanish version of "Z" (16).

In summary, Excerpt 14 represents the following features of tandem learning.

1) Language is used for communication (the topic started in context when I left the participants alone so they could talk without "censorship"), and as cognitive tool to discuss various linguistic issues. It is a collaborative dialogue, as are all other previously discussed excerpts. CS clearly outperforms his linguistic competence

through the help of his tandem partner. He starts this conversation with an incorrect sentence, and manages to correct all of his errors because of the corrective feedback and attention received from MaG. As Swain and Lapkin (1998) would state, MaG and CS use language simultaneously as means of communication and a tool for thinking.

2) There is a mutual objective of correct output, and one could argue it is of perfect output, as no error is left unattended by the tandem participants. Each of the learners is very attentive to the performance of the other person. This attention to the needs of the other learner is not exclusive for this particular tandem (MaG and CS): it could be observed among other tandems, as it is evident in this dissertation.

3) Self-correction is evident (7). Learners notice corrective feedback, respond to it, and modify their output. This presence of self-corrections provides evidence that tandem learners benefit from their interactions.

4) There is no evidence that CS notices the difference between his incorrect pronunciation of *moglich* and the pronunciation of the German native speaker (MaG) *möglich* until the corrective feedback concerning it is made salient. This failure to notice one's own incorrect pronunciation is consistent with all Excerpts described in section 6.1. Tandem (one-on-one language learning) provides learners with substantial opportunities for focus on their individual problems with the L2.

5) Metatalk is present throughout this dialogue (and was frequently observed among other tandems). As Swain and Lapkin (1998) stress, the metatalk may be a source of second language learning. CS and MaG use language to reflect on language use (10, 14), to solve their linguistic problems, and as Swain (1998) would state, "to understand the relationship between meaning, forms, and function in a highly

context-sensitive situation" (p.69). In turn 10, MaG explicitly explains that in German one has to use the structure *es ist*. Further in the conversation, learners discuss some aspects of the German spelling (14). Again, MaG stresses the frequent use of "z" in German. According to Swain (1998), learners faced with a difficult language production task (e.g., CS in Excerpt 14) should be encouraged to talk about it because talking about the L2 helps learners to understand language learning processes. Metatalk represents "language learning in progress" (p.69). As observed in Excerpt 14, MaG and CS are able to generate and to test hypotheses (1, 8), notice their errors, and talk about them. Additionally, metatalk in tandem is beneficial for one more reason—there is always an expert, the native speaker, who can provide corrective feedback and monitor the output to ensure it is error-free. In a traditional classroom, students often engage in metatalk with their peers. In such situations, no one may have sufficient expertise allowing learners to formulate incorrect hypotheses and utterances. As Swain (1998) stressed, the availability of experts/teachers during collaborative activities and their attention to the accuracy of learners' utterances "are potentially critical aspects of student learning" (p.80). One can argue that without MaG's help, CS would not have been able to notice his errors and improve his L2 performance. The tandem method allows learners to have constant contact with an expert, creating optimal conditions for learning, which is true not only for the interaction between MaG and CS, but also for all tandems in general.

Excerpt 15 is a fragment of a conversation between RD and AlG. During their typical tandem interactions, tandem partners wrote down for each other the unknown L2 lexical items in order to address these words later. After their meetings, each learner wrote an essay at home based on this vocabulary list. Typically, RD wrote during the "Danish" interaction the unknown Danish words for her German tandem partner, and during the "German" interaction, AlG did the same for RD. As explained by RD and AlG, this approach made a lot of sense for them because they did not have to focus on writing down the new words during a conversation with their tandem partner. They could just focus on speaking in the L2, and the other person took care of making a vocabulary list. According to RD and AlS, the native speaker could write the words quicker than the non-native speaker, and the list prepared by the native speaker was error-free. The only problem related to this approach was that RD was not always able to read the handwriting of AlG. Excerpt 15A represents a fragment of a conversation in German during which RD addresses this issue. RD explains to AlG that sometimes she cannot read her handwriting, and she should try in the future to write it more legibly. In the process of communication, the learners encounter linguistic difficulties and address them. Similarly to the previous excerpt, metatalk is employed.

1  RD: Kann man sagen, du must mir deutlich **sreiben**?

*(Can I say: You have to write for me clearly?)*

2  AlG: Ja. Deutlicher. Die Grundform davon ist deutlich.

*(Yes. More clearly. The basic form is clearly.)*

3 RD: Deutlich. OK.

(*Clearly. OK.*)

4 AlG: Deutlicher schreiben. *(To write more clearly.)*

5 RD: OK.

Excerpt 15A starts with a direct question posed by RD. She wants to know, if she could use the following expression: *you have to write for me clearly* (1). The sentence is understandable, although not perfect. RD does not pronounce the word "schreiben" [ʃraɪbən] correctly, saying *sreiben* [sraɪbən]. However, this error is not addressed at all by AlG, who focuses on other aspects of RD's question and the answer to it (2). AlG's answer could be divided into 3 stages. In the first stage, she says *yes,* thus confirming that it is possible to say what was proposed by RD. In the second stage, AlG provides an alternative to it, the comparative of the adverb "clearly" (i.e., *more clearly--deutlicher*). In the third stage, AlG explicitly explains to RD that the basic form of the adverb is *clearly*. RD repeats the basic form of the adverb *deutlich*, and says *OK*. Since RD's repetition is only partial, and does not include any improvement of her previous sentence, AlG repeats *to write more clearly (deutlicher schreiben)*. RD acknowledges the received feedback again with an *OK*, but does not repeat the corrected structure. Although RD receives a very explicit explanation about *more clearly*, her first repetition is just the basic adjective form, and she never repeats the comparative.

After this temporary shift to form, the learners return to their communicative orientation of their conversation and talk about their goals for their next tandem meeting. RD wants her German tandem partner to bring to the next tandem a German book, which

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they could read together. Excerpt 15B represents a fragment of their conversation, when RD and AlG discuss which type of book would be useful. During this dialogue the incorrect usage of the word "short stories" by RD in German shifts the focus again from communication to form:

**Excerpt 15B**

6  RD: Aber hast du eine Buch wo es gibt **Novelle**?

(*But do you have a book with **Novelle**?*)

7  AlG: Erzählung. (*Short story.*)

8  RD: Ja. Das ist einfach für mich. (*Yes. It is easy for me.*)

9  AlG: Einfacher. (*Easier.*)

10 RD: Einfacher. Nicht so... *(Easier. Not so...)*

In turn 6, RD wants her tandem partner to bring to the next tandem meeting a book with short-stories. She uses the incorrect word *Novelle* instead of *Erzählung* and directly receives corrective feedback (7) in the form of a single-move recast of the incorrect lexical item. RD does not repeat the corrective feedback, but there is some acknowledgment of it. She says *yes* before shifting the conversation back to the meaning. In turn three, RD says that short stories are easy for her. In doing this, RD avoids using the word *Erzählung* and uses a pronoun instead. Since tandem partners had discussed earlier various possibilities of reading materials which could be useful for their tandem meetings, AlG corrects RD's *easy* to its comparative form *easier* (9). Again, her feedback is provided as a single-move recast. This time RD repeats the corrected form and begins

to continue with the conversation (10) when AlG decides to address directly and in depth the feedback related to the comparative of adverbs and/or adjectives, saying:

**Excerpt 15C**

11 AlG: Das ist schon das zweite mal. Wir haben auch schon deutlich und deutlicher gehabt. Wir machen die Steigerung im Deutschen mit einem „er."

(*This is the second time already. We have already had "clearly" and "more clearly." We are changing the grade of the adverbs in German with an "er.")*

12 RD: Steigerung? Was ist das? (*The grade of an adverb? What is this?*)

13 AlG: Steigerung, Komparativ heisst das. Sagt es dir was? (*It's called comparative. Are you familiar with this term?*)

14 RD: Ah, ok. Ja, ja. (*Ah. OK. Yes, yes.*)

15 AlG: Das ist eine Vergleichsform. Im Verhältnis dazu ist es leichter, einfacher. (*It is a form used for comparisons. Compared to it, it's easier, better.*)

16 RD: Ja, ja. Ok. *(Yes, yes. Ok.)*

17 AlG: Und das wird immer mit dem „er" gemacht.

(*And it is always constructed with an „er."*)

18 RD: Nicht immer, oder? *(Not always, or?)*

19 AlG : Ja, es gibt auch Ausnahmen. *(Yes, there are also exceptions.)*

After the second correction of the comparative form of *einfach* during the same tandem meeting, AlG brings it to the attention of RD (11), stating very explicitly that *this is already the second time*, and that she already had corrected *clearly* to *more clearly*. In

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addition to pointing out that RD has a problem with the comparative form of adjectives, AlG provides her with a very general rule on how to create a comparative in German and uses the term *Steigerung* (11). However, RD's reaction shows that this word is unknown to her, as she wants to know what *Steigerung* is (12). In the next turn (13), AlG explains this term to RD and wants to know if RD is familiar with it. RD confirms it as *Ah, ok, yes, yes* (14). The use of *Ah* may indicate that RD is remembering or realizing that she does, in fact, know about this feature of German grammar. Once it is confirmed that RD is familiar with the concept of the comparative, AlG continues with an example of its use (15). AlG explains to RD that the comparative is used to compare things in a relationship to each other. Finally, AlG generalizes that the comparative is always created through the ending "er" (17). At this moment, RD questions this statement or more precisely the word *always*, saying that this is not always the case (18). AlG confirms it as true and admits that there are exceptions (19).

Excerpts 15A, B and C represent the following features of tandem learning:

1) Excerpts 15A, B and C are related to the avoidance of the use of the comparative forms by RD. This avoidance prompts corrective feedback until uptake occurs. Processes similar to those observed in Excerpt 14 are observed in the above conversation between RD and AlG. The expert (AlG) is very persistent with corrections and does not stop until the issue (RD's avoidance of the comparative use) is resolved. The native speaker repeats the corrective feedback, making it more and more salient, until it is recognized by the other person as such, and uptake follows. As observed in Excerpt 15, sometimes each tandem participant

has his/her own agenda in mind. In Excerpt 15, AIG is interested in explaining to RD the correct comparative form of German adverbs (after RD makes the error), whereas RD is not too interested in paying attention to it, while reacting at first to the corrective feedback only with an *OK*. Nevertheless, AIG is very determined because although RD gives the impression of knowing the grammatical rule (not being very responsive to AIG's corrective feedback), she is not able to apply it in practice. AIG's determination results in metatalk about the comparative, and RD's noticing.

2) Excerpts 15A, B and C are examples of metatalk during tandem interactions. This metatalk is not used to solve a communicative problem. These tandem partners understand each other. Metatalk employed by AIG has another function; she wants her tandem partner to improve her L2. AIG's goal is to deepen RD's awareness of the comparative in German. AIG's use of metatalk that includes the explicit statements of rules and the use of metalinguistic terminology engages RD in a discussion about it. Such discussion brings RD's attention to the problematic for her feature of the L2, and creates an opportunity for learning.

Form-based LREs in tandem can take many forms. They can be very long and complex (Excerpt 14), involve explicit metatalk (Excerpt 15), or be rather short. The next excerpt represents such a short shift from meaning to form.

## Excerpt 16

\* The correct form of the past participle of the German verb "schwimmen" (to swim) is geschwommen.

1  LC: Ich habe geschwummen\* *(I have swimmed.)*

2 AG: Was? *(What?)*

3 LC: Geschwummen. *(Swimmed.)*

4  AG: Geschwommen. Du bist geschwommen. *(Swum. You have swum.)*

5  LC: Ich bin geschwommen. *(I have swum.)*

6 AG: Ja. *(Yes.)*

7  LC: Ich bin geschwommen. Also: schwimmen, schwam, geschwommen.

*(I have swum. In this case: to swim, swam, swum.)*

8 AG: Ja. *(Yes.)*

9 LC: [Writes it down]

Prior to this fragment of a conversation between AG and LC, the tandem partners were talking about what they did recently in their free time. The shift from the meaning oriented conversation to the focus on form is caused by the incorrect utterance produced by LC, who says *ich habe geschwummen* (1). Both the auxiliary verb *habe* and the past participle *geschwummen* are incorrect. These errors prompt AG to ask for clarification. Saying *what* she signals that something is wrong with the sentence. In response, LC does not repeat the whole sentence, only the past participle. Since AG's question *what?* could mean: (1) that she did not understand and/or hear the sentence of her tandem partner, or

(2) that there was a problem with the produced utterance, it does not provide LC with a specific indication of what the problem is. She answers *geschwummen* (swimmed), using again the incorrect past participle. LC's incorrectly produced past participle (3) prompts a recast from her tandem partner. The recast consists of two parts. First, only the correct form of the past participle is repeated, as a direct reaction to LC's previous turn. This is followed by the recast of the whole sentence, which addresses all errors: the past participle, and the auxiliary verb. The recast results in successful uptake, where LC correctly uses the auxiliary verb and the past participle (5). When responding to AG's recast, LC does not simply repeat AG's sentence: she changes the subject from second person singular to first person singular. It indicates that she noticed, processed, and understood the correction. LC adjusts the corrected sentence to her own needs and makes it meaningful for the communication. AG confirms that the uptake is correct saying *yes* (6). LC repeats the corrected sentence. In addition, LC says aloud all basic forms of the verb "to swim," and again AG lets her know that it is correct (8). LC writes down the recasted sentence and the forms of the verb "to swim," and the conversation returns to the previous topic.

In this collaborative dialogue, we are able to observe change in LC's use of the correct past participle and the correct auxiliary verb. The source of LC's change is feedback provided by her tandem partner. Corrective feedback allows LC to notice her errors and to correct them. LC correctly repeats the improved utterance twice. She also writes it down. This multiple contact with the corrected utterance could be considered an opportunity for grammatical learning during this exchange.

This excerpt represents a form-focused LRE, which is very typical for tandem interactions. I observed that many tandem learners had problems with the irregular past participle forms and with the choice of the auxiliary verb (haben or sein). Excerpt 17 represents another example of this situation. The tandem method gives learners additional opportunities to address explicitly this very important aspect of German grammar, to focus on it, and to talk about it. It is an opportunity for learning.

**Excerpt 17**

Excerpt 17 represents a fragment of a collaborative dialogue between NoS and SoG. Similar to Excerpt 16, these learners are talking about their free time using the past tense. In the process of doing it, NoS is able to notice her problems not only with the past tense forms, but also with the use of German articles.

1 NoS: Gesten Abend habe ich **dieses** DVD gesehen, **das** du mir **geleihen** hast.

*(Yesterday evening I watched this DVD that you have lent me.)*

2 SoG: Die du mir. *(That you me)*

3 NoS: Die du mir geleihen hast. *(That you have lent me.)*

4 SoG: Die DVD. *(The DVD.)*

5 NoS: Ja, die DVD. Die, die du mir **geleihen** hast.

*(Yes, the DVD. The, that you have lent me.)*

6 SoG: Geliehen hast. *(Have lent.)*

7 NoS: Geliehen hast. Leihen? *(Have lent. Lend?)*

8 SoG: Geliehen. Partizip. Geliehen hast. *(Lent. Participle. Have lent.)*

9  NoS: Leihen. Geliehen. *(To lend. Lent.)*

10 SoG: Ich leihe mir die DVD von dir, aber ich habe die mir geliehen.

*(I borrow a DVD from you, but I have lent it for me.)*

11 NoS: Die DVD, die du mir geliehen hast, war sehr interessant.

*(The DVD that you have lent me was very interesting.)*

12 SoG: Hat sie dir gefallen? *(Did you like it?)*

During this dialogue the incorrect utterance by NoS causes the temporary shift from meaning to form. NoS commits two errors: she uses the incorrect article (das) for the noun "die DVD," and the incorrect past participle (1). In the following turn, SoG corrects only the first of the errors--the article (2), through a partial recast. Uptake follows and the article is corrected, but the rest of the sentence is still incorrect. Although the article is used correctly by NoS, SoG follows up with more information related to the noun *die DVD*. He provides an explicit explanation that *die* refers to the DVD, making sure that there is no misunderstanding (4). NoS confirms that she understands his feedback (5) and uses the article "die" correctly again, but the rest of her sentence is still incorrect, as she uses the incorrect form of the past participle for the third time. In the next turn, SoG focuses on the past participle form. Another partial recast follows that focuses on the verb forms (6). After hearing the correct form, NoS repeats it (7). She also poses a question in the same conversational turn. Her question concerns whether the basic form of the verb is *leihen* (7). SoG explains that *geliehen* is a participle, and repeats it (8). He does not focus on NoS's question about the infinitive, which she uses correctly. SoG's focus is on the previously incorrectly used past participle. His recast is related to NoS's

errors, and not her question about the correct infinitive form. NoS repeats the infinitive and then the past participle. In the following turn, SoG (10) uses the verb leihen in an example to demonstrate to NoS its use in context: in the present and the past. Once the problem is resolved, the focus of the conversation shifts back from form to the meaning (11, 12).

Excerpt 17 demonstrates again that reducing recasts to one error for each correction leads to learner uptake during tandem interactions. Addressing each error separately allows learners to talk about each problem, to reflect on it, and to make sure that it is understood. The tandem method allows learners to address all errors of their tandem partner, if needed and/or desired. Tandem learners have enough flexibility (no schedule to follow) to focus, for as long as they want, on the chosen by them features of the L2. In this excerpt, SoG is able to address the incorrect use of the article *das* instead of *die* by NoS, and then the past participle *geliehen..*

In Excerpt 17, the corrective feedback provided by SoG is quite elaborate. SoG wants to make sure that his tandem partner understands the essence of it. NoS has multiple occasions to use the corrected form in the following conversational turns. Error correction seems to be different during tandem interactions than in a typical classroom setting. As Sheen (2006) pointed out, recasts employed in many classrooms "do not involve any negotiations of meaning (…) They are didactic, not conversational" (p.387). Recasts observed during tandem interactions involve negotiations of meaning and are conversational. In Excerpt 17, NoS is able to not only to respond to recast, but also reflect

on it, ask questions, and have multiple opportunities to repeat the corrected structure. Also, she can use the corrected structures in the further conversation (11).

In summary, Excerpts 16 and 17 represent form-based LREs during tandem interactions. During both conversations, learners address the incorrect use of the past participle forms. The corrective feedback consists of recasts, frequently enhanced through explicit explanation or additional examples. Recasts proved efficient as corrective feedback in instances where errors were easy to detect. Frequently, uptake followed, which suggests that tandem learners benefit from their interactions, and the tandem method provides them with substantial opportunities for learning.

As with lexical learning, the form-based LREs vary among tandems. They can address various grammatical features, such as pronunciation, spelling, past participle forms, possessive pronouns, articles, etc. The shifts from meaning to form may vary also in duration. Some are quickly resolved (Excerpts 16, 17) and others become quite elaborate (Excerpt 13, 14). In some instances the shift to form may become a whole new topic of the conversation, especially in instances when learners discuss and compare their first and second languages. Such a situation can be observed in the next excerpt, which starts as a conversation between MaG and CS about various languages and their utility for each learner. In this context, MaG struggles to produce a correct Spanish sentence while trying to say that he does not need French and Italian.

**Excerpt 18A**

1 MaG: Frances y Italiano... No me, no me...

*(French and Italian... Not for me, not for me...)*

2 CS: No me interesa.

*(Do not interest me.)*

3  MaG: Nein, brauche ich nicht.

*(No, I don't need.)*

4 CS: No los necesito.

*(I don't need them.)*

5 MaG: **No me necesito.**

*(I don't need me.)*

6 CS: No los↑ necesito.

*(I don't need them.)*

7 MaG: No los?

*(No them?)*

8 CS: Los, beide. El Italiano y el Frances. Son "los."

*(Them, both. Italian and French. Are "them.")*

9 MaG: Aha, claro. No los necesito.

*(Aha, sure. I don't need them.)*

10 CS: No los necesito.

*(I don't need them.)*

Zum Beispiel ich frage dich: Quieres aprender el Frances y el Italiano? Tu me respondes:

No los necesito.

*(For example, I ask you: Do you want to learn French and Italian. You answer me: I*

*don't need them.)*

11 MaG: Aha.

12 CS: Yo se que "los" se refiere al Frances y al Italiano.

*(I know that "them" refers to French and Italian.)*

13 MaG: Si claro.

*(Yes, sure.)*

14 CS: Ich habe grosse Probleme mit das in Deutsch.

*(I have big problems with this in German.)*

15 MaG: Ja? *(Yes?)*

16 CS: Ja. Ja. *(Yes. Yes.)*

17 MaG: Warte mal. Ich überlege gerade... Französisch und Italienisch. Nein, ich brauche

es nicht.

*(Wait. I'm thinking right now... French and Italian. No, I don't need it.)*

18 CS: Warum „es"? „Es" ist nur eine Sache.

*(Why „it?" „It" means only one thing.)*

19 MaG: Warte mal. Moment. Un momento. Man kann es sagen: Ich brauche es nicht.

„Es," es ist unbestimmt.

*(Wait a moment. Un momento. You can say: I don't need it. „It" is unspecified.)*

20 CS: Beide.

*(Both.)*

21 MaG: „Es" ist sehr offen. Es ist alles.

*(„It" is very open. It is all.)*

22 CS: Alles.

*(All.)*

23 MaG: Und wenn du etwas konkreter sagen willst,

*(And when you want to say more exactly,)*

24 CS: Aha,

25 MaG: Eh, dann würdest du sagen: Ich brauche sie nicht.

*(Than you would say: I don't need them.)*

26 CS: Ich brauche sie nicht. Ellos. No los necesito.

*(I don't need them. Them. I don't need them.)*

27 MaG: Ja.

28 CS: Ich brauche sie nicht. *(I don't need them.)*

29 MaG: Si. *(Yes.)*

30 CS: Ok.


Excerpt 18A starts when MaG tries to state that he does not need French and
Italian. Since up to this point the conversation between CS and MaG has been in Spanish,
MaG tries to express this thought in Spanish as well. However, MaG is not able to say
what he wants, and he notices the gap in his L2 knowledge (Swain, 1995). He has two
false starts *No me, no me...* intending to say something, but not being able to do it (1). CS
tries to finish the sentence for MaG, saying *No me interesa*. CS thinks his tandem partner
wants to say *Do not interest me* (*No me interesa*), and he has a reason for doing so since
MaG started this Spanish sentence as *No me*. MaG clarifies his intentions in the next turn
(3), switching the tandem language to German in order to accomplish his communicative

goal. Using German MaG can clearly express his idea, which he was not able to do in Spanish. First, MaG rejects CS's suggestion (*Nein),* and then he gives his target sentence in German as he says *I don't need.* Saying it in German, MaG also creates an opportunity for the translation of his sentence into Spanish by his tandem partner, and simultaneously an opportunity for learning what he wanted to say in Spanish, and was not able to do on his own. After hearing the correct translation of his sentence *I don't need them* in Spanish (*No los necesito),* MG changes the utterance according to his previous hypothesis (used in turn 1), and says *I don't need me* (*No me necesito)* (5). CS corrects MaG's error, making his recast salient with regard to the word *los* (6). Making the recast salient causes MaG to notice the pronoun *los,* and he questions it (7). CS explains that *los* means both items: French and Italian (8). The conversation still continues in Spanish since CS is the expert, and the grammatical problem they discuss is also a Spanish language feature. After the salient recast, questioning it, and receiving an explicit explanation, MaG is finally ready to accept the suggested pronoun *los* instead of *me* (9). There is uptake. MaG acknowledges that CS's explanation makes sense to him saying *sure,* and then repeats correctly the utterance which has been the subject of their negotiations. Although MaG produces the correct sentence, and the communicative goal is successfully accomplished, the conversation about this structure continues, as CS repeats the same expression in Spanish. In addition, he provides an example of how it could be used in an everyday conversation (10). Finally, CS again explains in Spanish the relationship between *los* and the nouns this pronoun can replace (12). MaG agrees with him (13).

The conversation to this point has been mostly in Spanish. Once the problem is resolved, CS changes the language to German to state that he has a big problem with *this*

in German (14). MaG acknowledges CS's statement and at the same time questions it (15), then he tries to come up with an example of the same sentence in German (17). MaG also asks CS to give him a moment to think about it since he wants to reflect about this linguistic feature in his native language. Finally, MaG finds a translation *Ich brauche es nicht* (*I don't need it*). However, this translation leads CS to questions the use of the singular pronoun *es* (18). According to Spanish grammar, it would be incorrect since the pronoun in Spanish should agree in number with the replaced noun(s); this is why CS says that *es* is *only one thing*. In this case *es* is referring to two things: French and Italian. MaG wants again to have some time to think, asks his tandem partner to allow him to have a moment, and then confirms again that indeed *es* can be used because *es* is not specified. *Es* replaces all kinds of nouns and can mean everything (21). CS repeats aloud that *es* can mean everything (22), and MaG continues for a few more turns his explicit explanation of the various possibilities one can use to express the concept of *I don't need French and Italian* (23, 25). This conversation continues for a few more turns when the tandem partners discuss various examples related to the similarities and differences of pronoun use in German and in Spanish.

In summary, Excerpt 18A is an example of a collaborative dialogue with a very strong focus on form. During this prolonged exchange, various form-related LREs can be observed. The first form-based LRE is related to the proper use of the pronouns in Spanish, and the second one to the same issue in German. One could even argue there is a lexical-based LRE in this conversation (turns 1-5) when MaG learns the verb "necesitar" (to need). The whole exchange started with MaG not being able to come up with this

verb. He had the pronoun (which was not correct, but he did not know it in turn 1), and the only thing he needed for communication was the missing verb. So what started as a word search, ended up as a very extensive form oriented discussion.

Secondly, in the middle of this exchange, there is a shift from Spanish to German. This shift occurs in turn 14, when CS states that he has big problems with the previously discussed grammatical issue in German. As a consequence of this shift, tandem roles are reversed. The expert CS becomes the novice, and the novice MaG becomes the expert.

Since this shift is not caused by the need for corrective feedback, given that no error was committed by CS, MaG has to reflect for a moment on his own L1 in order to come up with a similar example in German to the one previously discussed in Spanish.

It is striking in this excerpt that both learners try very hard to accommodate the linguistic needs of their tandem partner. Both are actively engaged all the time, and go way beyond the bare minimum in their explanations. Both MaG and CS not only explicitly explain the usage of *los* in Spanish and *es* in German, but also come up with examples of their use, which gives the other learner additional exposure to the difficult for him item, and increases opportunities for its learning. In doing so, learners also have a chance to reflect on their own native language and become more aware of it. It is truly an example of a collaborative knowledge-building dialogue. What learners say during this exchange becomes an objective product that is discussed further by them (Swain, 2000).

The next stage of this linguistic exploration can be observed in the following excerpt, which represents a direct continuation of the previously discussed conversation.

**Excerpt 18B**

1 MaG: Man muss über seine eigene Sprache nachdenken wenn man so sich unterhält.

*(One has to think about his own language when we talk like this.)*

2 CS: Ja. Ja. *(Yes. Yes.)* [Laughs]

3 MaG: Normalerweise macht man das nicht.

*(Normally people don't do it.)*

4 CS: Du denkst in der Sprache. Wenn man in einer Sprache denkt, kann man die

Sprache sprechen. Wenn ich Spanisch spreche, ich denke in Spanisch. Wenn ich Englisch

spreche, ich denke in Englisch.

*(You think in the language. When you can think in a language, you can speak it. When I*

*speak Spanish, I think in Spanish. When I speak English, I think in English.)*


Excerpt 18B represents closure of the very long conversation about the use of

pronouns in Spanish and in German. After discussing various possibilities in both

languages (Excerpt 18A), MaG comes to the conclusion that this particular conversation

forced him to think about his native language (1). CS explains that the reason for it is

one's ability to think automatically in the native language, or any other language a person

may speak fluently (4). In his opinion, when one can think in a language, one can speak

it.


Excerpt 18B provides evidence that tandem learners not only talk about the L2

during their interactions, but also have the opportunity to discover and to understand

better their own native language. Thinking in the L1 and speaking it automatically does

not always mean that a language user understands its complexity. During tandem meetings, native speakers, trying to explain various linguistic features of their own native language as they arise unpredictably during conversations, learn as well about their metalinguistc limitations with regard to their L1. Thus, tandem participants are able to notice the gap in their abilities to explain the L1 and may try to do something about it. This phenomenon is observed in the previously discussed excerpt, when MaG wants to reflect on his native language and tries to stop the flow of the conversation by saying "wait a moment" in order to have time to think about German.

Excerpt 18B is also interesting for one more reason. It shows that tandem interactions provide an opportunity for not only the temporary shift from meaning to form, but also when the conversation shifts again to meaning, it is a different meaning (for example, the language itself becomes the main topic of the conversation between CS and MaG). So, there are possibilities for two different shifts: from meaning to a focus on form, and from one meaning to a different meaning (talking about the language), due to the nature of the tandem setting. The tandem interactions provide a context in which LREs can (and do) occur. Additionally, learners are not obliged to work on a specific task, during which grammatical problems can occur, as frequently happens in language classrooms. During tandem meetings, learners' interest in discussing grammatical features is closely related to their communicative and authentic needs.

## 7.3 Conclusion

Excerpts 10-18 provide evidence that the tandem method allows learners a shift of their attention from the communication to focus on form in instances when they produce

non-target-like forms in the L2. Such shifts allow learners to notice the gap in their interlanguage and modify their output. Tandem learners frequently engage in metatalk. As Swain (1998) would state, they use language to reflect on language use. Their metatalk, in the communicative context, may serve the function of deepening the students' awareness of forms and rules. "It is language learning in progress" (p.69).

# CHAPTER 8

## CULTURAL AND PRAGMATIC EXCHANGES IN TANDEM

"It is now broadly accepted in most parts of the world that learning a foreign language is not simply mastering an object of academic study but is more appropriately focused on learning a means of communication. Communication in real situations is never out of context, and because culture is part of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free." (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 197)

### 8.0 Introduction

The tandem method presents a unique opportunity not only for lexical and grammatical learning, but also for direct contact with the L2 culture through the face-to-face interaction with a native speaker. In addition to the weekly learning meetings, tandem partners frequently engage in various cultural activities. Together, learners visit each other's homes and meet their family members and friends. Almost all tandem learners try to introduce the tandem partner to their traditional foods either by going out to a restaurant, which serves traditional dishes, or cooking at home. Frequently, learners go together to museums, the theater, cinema, or social gatherings.

Having a local resident as a tandem partner is an advantage for the foreign person. First of all, the native person is familiar with the city and can show the foreigner its "less touristy" points of interest. Secondly, the local person has a social network; therefore, including the foreigner in it, provides the learner with direct and easy access to the native

population. Thirdly, a tandem partner is able to explain, or even directly demonstrate for the foreign person, how to successfully interact and behave in the new environment. Although the foreign person experiences a lot of benefits by having a tandem partner, the local person also benefits because of direct contact with an L2 speaker. Through this contact, learners are exposed to the second language and the second culture (C2). According to Bechtel (2003), pragmatic and cultural learning is always present in a tandem setting, even in instances when the interaction is focused on other features of the language.

Intercultural and pragmatic learning occurs in tandem implicitly and explicitly. Implicit learning occurs through direct contact with the L2 and its speakers and through authentic communication with them. Explicit learning can be observed when the NS explains to the NNS the norms of his/her culture.

In the following section, I will discuss some examples related to the pragmatic and intercultural exchanges observed in tandem setting. Excerpts of such interactions will be analyzed in order to provide evidence that during tandem interactions, learners are exposed to opportunities for cultural exchanges and pragmatic awareness-raising. Data analysis will start with an example of a very explicit cultural-pragmatic "mini-lesson" on the features of correct social behavior in Germany. During this particular interaction, the German native speaker (MG) explicitly explains to her American tandem partner (JE) how one should behave in Germany in order to avoid the perception of being unfriendly and even rude.

## 8.1 Data Analysis

Excerpt 19 is a fragment of a conversation between MG and JE. The conversation starts with JE asking MG if she is familiar with Holland. When talking about Germany and Holland, the learners start to compare the people living in these countries and as result, they start to compare how Americans perceive Germans and how Germans perceive foreigners.

## Excerpt 19

1 JE: Kennst du Holland? Ist das ein schönes Land?

(*Do you know Holland? Is it a nice country?*)

2 MG: Ja. Es ist flatt, aber ich mag es auch. Es ist irgendwie das Land nicht so interessant, wie die Menschen. Sie sind offen. Extrem offen. Sie sind manchmal etwas frustriert, wenn die Deutschen dann nicht sofort so offen sind. Aber es geht den Amerikanern vielleicht auch so, weiss ich nicht...

(*Yes. It's very flat, but I also like it. The people are very interesting, more than the country itself. They are very open. Extremely open. Sometimes they get frustrated, when German people aren't so open immediately. But I think that maybe the American people would feel the same way, I don't know...*)

3 JE: Ja, ein bischen. Es ist viel leichter die Leute kennenzulernen in den USA. Aber nicht immer...

(*Yes, a little bit. It is easier to meet people in the US. But not always...*)

4 MG: Ja. Ich glaube, man muss nur verstehen, dass man hier die Leute öfter gesehen haben muss bis man richtig mit denen spricht. Man hat wahrscheinlich im Verhältnis nicht so viele Freunde wie bei euch, aber dafür enger.

(*Yes. I think one has to understand that here you have to meet a person a few times before having a conversation. We probably don't have as many friends as you, but those we have are really good friends.*)

5 JE: Ja, das haben wir bemerkt.

(*Yes. We could see it.*)

6 MG: Ja, wir haben weniger Fruende, aber enger. Dafür kennst du sie alle gut. Meine Freunde, als sie in den USA waren, waren auch frustriert, weil sie meinen, dass man viele Leute kennenlernen kann, aber niemanden richtig gut.

Das ist hier... anders. Denke ich. Wir sind nicht so unfreundlich, aber ... In Berlin geht es noch.

(*Yes, we don't have so many friends, but we have closer friends. You can know them very well. When my friends were in the US, they were also frustrated because they had the feeling of knowing a lot of people, but nobody very well. Here things are different. I think so. We are not so unfriendly, but... In Berlin is not so bad.*)

7 JE: Ja, in München waren sie anders.

(*Yes. In Munich, they were different.*)

8 MG: Manchmal in Deutschland wenn du zu nett und zu offen und so bist, dann halten dich die Leute für unhöfflich. Sie empfinden es so.

(*Sometimes, in Germany, when you are too nice and too open, then other people think you are rude. They perceive it so.*)

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9 JE: Ist das dann oberflächlich?

(*They perceive it as superficial?*)

10 MG: Es ist unhöfflich, weil du den Leuten zu schnell zu nah kommst, weil du zu viele Fragen stellst. Weil du, hm..., zu interessiert bist. Und dann fragen sie sich: „Was will sie von mir?" Man ist am anfang distanziert, freundlich, hilfsbereit, aber nicht mehr. Ja?↑

(*It's rude because you are coming too fast too close at people. Because you are asking too many questions. Because you, hm..., you are too interested. And then people ask themselves: "What does she want from me?" At the beginning, one has to maintain a distance, being at the same time friendly and ready to help, but nothing more. Yes?↑*)

11 JE: Ja.

(*Yes.*)

12 MG: Wenn du sofort auf die Leute zugehst und zu viele fragen stellst, dann ist das in Deutschland unhöfflich, obwohl du freundlich bist. Es ist einfach nicht üblich.

(*When you are coming too close at people and ask too many questions, then in Germany we will perceive it as being rude, even if you are being friendly. It's not common here.*)

Excerpt 25 starts with JE's question about Holland, which stimulates MG to a reflection about this "not so interesting country" with very "open" people (2). MG has the feeling that Dutch people are frustrated when interacting with the German population because the Germans are not immediately as open as the Dutch people are. She also wonders if American people feel the same way about Germans. JE confirms it, saying that it is easier to meet people in the USA (3). This statement motivates MG to a very explicit statement of the cultural differences between Germans and Americans (4). She

claims that in Germany people do not talk immediately to strangers and do not have as many friends as in the US; but the friends they have are true friends. JE agrees with her (5), saying that she was able to observe it. Since JE seems to agree with MG, she continues (6) saying that:

- Her German friends, who were in the USA, were also frustrated because they knew a lot of people, but nobody really well.

- German people are not as unfriendly as they are perceived by foreigners; especially people in Berlin.

Pointing out that German people are also frustrated when they are in the USA, MG compares these two cultures, stating that German people have fewer friends, but their friends are *closer friends*. MG also points out, that her friends where frustrated while visiting the US because they were able to meet a lot of people, but were not able to know them well.

After discussing the cultural differences (differences in personal relationships) between the USA and Germany, the conversation enters its second stage, when MG explains to her tandem partner how to behave appropriately in Germany. In turn 8, MG points out that one cannot be too open and too friendly in Germany because it creates the impression of being rude. JE seems to be confused and asks if these "overly friendly" types of people are viewed as superficial (9). MG re-confirms her previous statement that such behavior would be perceived as rude. She also provides very explicit examples of behavior perceived in Germany as inappropriate: asking too many questions, looking too quickly for contact with other people, and being too interested in them.

Additionally, MG explains to JE what to do when meeting somebody in Germany. According to MG, one has to be friendly and ready to help, but one must keep a distance when first meeting somebody (10). After explaining these cultural differences, MG makes sure that JE understands it. MG performs a comprehension check, asking with a rising pitch of her voice *yes?* (10). JE answers with a yes (11).

To conclude this cultural/pragmatic mini lesson MG summarizes the previous information, adding that this is the German reality. Being too friendly, even with good intentions, may create a perception of rudeness because people are not used to it.

This fragment of the conversation between MG and JE demonstrates that the tandem method provides learners with opportunities for explicit cultural and pragmatic exchanges. In addition to learning new vocabulary and grammar, tandem learners have the opportunity to obtain pragmatic information in order to exist successfully in the L2 environment. As House (1996) pointed out, metapragmatic information is crucial in counteracting negative pragmatic transfer and promoting learners' pragmatic fluency.

In summary, Excerpt 25 is an example of the explicit teaching of pragmatics by MG to her American tandem partner. This conversation is more than small talk. MG consciously addresses the norms of proper behavior in Germany, explains them to JE, and assures comprehension.

Sometimes not knowing, or not fully understanding the behavioral norms in the L2 culture, may lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. For this reason, it is important that learners have exposure to the correction of their linguistic errors and their pragmatic errors. Learners should know how to use their linguistic resources in a contextually appropriate fashion. As Rose (1999) states, an important part of pragmatic

competence involves the knowledge of what constitutes rude behavior. The next excerpt will provide an example of a potentially rude behavior resulting from a pragmatically inappropriate use of linguistic resources.

**Excerpt 20**

Excerpt 20 is a fragment of a conversation between TG and OS. The tandem partners are engaged in talking about a party they both attended the previous weekend. During this conversation, OS addresses his perception of improper behavior by his German tandem partner.

1 OS: Und was hast du zu, zu Alberto gesagt, auf der Party? Eh?

*(What did you say to, to Alberto, at the party? Eh?)*

2 TG: [Laughs] Nichts schlimmes. Ich habe gesagt, dass er dick geworden ist.

*(Nothing bad. I told him that he got fat.)*

3 OS: Und was? Was hast du gesagt? Was hast du ihm gesagt?

*(And what? What did you say? What did you say to him?)*

4 TG: Ich habe gesagt: „Alberto du bist dick geworden." Ja.

*(I told him: Alberto you got fat. Yes.)*

5 OS: Und was hat er gesagt?

*(And what did he say?)*

6 TG: Nichts. Er hat gar nichts gesagt.

*(Nothing. He didn't say anything.)*

7 OS: Das hat, eh, eh, ihn betroffen.

*(He got, eh, eh, hurt.)*

8 TG: Wirklich? Aber es stimmt doch.

*(Really? But this is the truth.)*

9 OS: Ja, das stimmt. *(Yes, it's correct.)*

10 TG: Er hat gesagt, das war das deutsche Bier.

*(He said, it was the German beer.)*

11 OS: Ja, aber es hat ihn betroffen. Ich sage es dir, damit du entschuldigen kannst.

*(Yes, but he was hurt. I tell you about it, so you can apologize.)*

12 TG: Spanier, die mögen nicht, wenn man direkt ist.

*(Spanish people don't like when one is direct.)*

13 OS: Nein, wir sind direkt. Glaube ich. In solchen Sachen.

*(No, we are direct. I think so. In such things.)*

14 TG: Dann kann er es nicht so schlimm finden.

*(Then it can't be so bad for him.)*

15 OS: Vielleicht ist es ein bischen komplex. Ja, er ist ganz dick geworden. Er hat total verändert.

*(Maybe it is a little bit complex. Yes, he got quite fat. He completely changed.)*

16 TG: Sich. *(Himself.)*

17 OS: Sich verändert. Er hat sich total verändert.

*(He changed. He changed completely.)*

18 TG: Aber, aber, er trinkt nicht so viel Bier, oder?

*(But, but, he doesn't drink so much beer, or?)*

19 OS: Ja, aber er isst viel und treibt kein Sport. Kein Fitnessstudio. Das kann man

erwarten. Das kann man dazu erwarten?

*(Yes, but he eats a lot and doesn't exercise. No fitness-center. It is what you can expect.*

*You can expect in addition?)*

20 TG: Das kann man erwarten. Ohne „dazu." (*You can expect. Without "in addition.")*

21 OS: Und die Präposition? Dafür?

*(And the preposition? Dafür?)*

22 TG: Davon.*(Davon.)*

23 OS: Er hat keine Mutter, die für ihn kocht. Viele Leute die Erasmus machen nehmen

zu. Sie essen immer Pasta, Pasta, Pasta, Kebab, Pasta. Sie essen nicht gesund.

*(He doesn't have a mother who cooks for him. Many people who participate in Erasmus*

*get fat. They eat pasta, pasta, pasta, kebab, pasta. They don't eat healthy.)*

Excerpt 20 starts with a direct, accusatory question posed by OS. He asks TG

about what she said to his friend (Alberto, also from Spain) during a party they both

attended (1). TG answers very directly that she pointed out Alberto got fat. In her

opinion, it was not anything bad at all. OS wants to know the details of this conversation

(3, 5). TG does not understand why her comment was so bad when it is the truth (8). OS

confirms that indeed the fact is true, but Alberto was hurt by hearing it, and TG should

apologize. TG interprets Alberto's sensitivity as resulting from the fact that Spanish

people do not like it when one is direct with them (12). OS does not agree with her,

saying that they are direct, but there is an element of doubt in his expression, which can

be observed in his following statement *I believe so* (13). If this is the case, as TG points out, Alberto should not be so upset about her comment (14).

Although the conversation continues, there is a short shift of attention from meaning to form in the next turn (15), when OS tries to express in German the idea that his friend changed a lot. To do it in German one has to use the reflexive verb "sich verändern," and in doing so, OS fails to use the reflexive pronoun "sich." Corrective feedback is provided (16), as TG says aloud only the missing reflexive pronoun. In the next turn (17), OS corrects his sentence, first repeating the verb only with its reflexive pronoun, and then repeating his whole previous sentence correctly.

After his error is successfully corrected, TG shifts the conversation from a focus on form back to meaning, bringing attention to Alberto's situation. Since Alberto blames German beer for the change in his appearance (10), TG wonders about it. OS explains to TG the particular reasons for Alberto's change: eating too much and no exercise. In doing so, OS encounters a linguistic problem (19). Although OS expresses himself correctly in saying *You can expect it*, he changes his correct sentence to an incorrect one, adding an unnecessary preposition. This is an example of hypothesis formulation and testing. OS uses output to try out his hypotheses about the L2. OS knows that his tandem partner is readily available to assist him in the process of choosing the correct expression. This is also the case; TG offers her assistance (20). Since OS was testing two hypotheses during his previous conversational turn, TG focuses on choosing the correct version, and she repeats it. In addition, she explains explicitly that the preposition *dazu* is not needed at all in such an utterance (20). After hearing her explanation, OS still believes that the verb "to expect something" should be combined with some preposition, and asks about it in the

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following turn (21). TG responds, saying the preposition *von* which can be used with the verb "erwarten."

Once the issue is resolved, their conversation shifts again to meaning. In turn 23, OS explains that the reason for Alberto getting fat is the fact that he does not have a mother who cooks for him. It leads to bad eating habits, which as OS points out, can be observed by many exchange students.

Excerpt 25 represents the following features of tandem learning:

1) It is an example of intercultural and pragmatic learning. OS addresses the perceived improper directness of his German tandem partner, who had told OS's friend (Alberto) that he got fat.

2) OS addresses this improper behavior in order to make TG aware of it and encourage an apology. Thus, OS's goal is to address the issue, understand what happened, and explain TG the consequences of her "German" direct behavior in order to correct it. As Rose (1999) pointed out, it is useful to confront learners with the pragmatic aspects of language because it provides them with some analytic tools to further their pragmatic skills.

3) During the process of this pragmatics-oriented conversation, there is a shift to a focus on form when needed. Two form-based LREs can be observed. Both times, OS encounters problems with German pronouns. During tandem learning, there is no separation between the grammatical and cultural and/or pragmatic learning. Learners can adjust the focus of their conversation at any given moment, to fit their real needs.

4) Although the pragmatic issues are addressed directly, the cultural differences are discussed more implicitly. When OS says that Alberto has no mother in Germany who cooks for him, he addresses a very Spanish cultural phenomenon. In Spain, mothers take care of their adult children much longer than in Germany. The concept of the family is very different in these countries. The Spanish family tends to be "closer" and its family members often live together; mothers take care of their adult children and cook for them. On the other hand, in Germany, young adults strive frequently for independence from their parents. They take care of themselves. For this reason, as OS points out, some Spanish exchange students coming to Germany have to start to live not only in a different country, but also under very different cultural conditions.

Cultural differences between Germany and Spain were discussed on many occasions during the meetings between TG and OS. The next excerpt (from a different tandem meeting than Excerpt 20) will provide another example of this type of interaction. It is a fragment of a conversation about the future plans of TG's sister, who wants to move from Berlin to Bielefeld.

## Excerpt 21

Preceding this exchange, TG stated that she may move out of her parents' house and live on her own soon. In response to it, her tandem partner asks her:

1 OS: Cuando quieres irte de casa?

*(When do you want to move out?)*

2 TG: Si mi hermana se va de casa, yo tambien.

*(If my sister will move out, I will also.)*

3 OS: Con ella? *(With her?)*

4 TG: No, no con ella. Ella se va a Bielefeld.

*(No. Not with her. She will go to Bielefeld.)*

5 OS: Que es Bielefeld, una ciudad?

*(What's Bielefeld, a city?)*

6 TG: Si, es una ciudad. *(Yes, it's a city.)*

7 OS: A que? *(Where?)*

8 TG: Oeste von Berlin. Hannover, Bielefeld.

*(West of Berlin. Hannover, Bielefeld.)*

9 OS: Hm. Pero que quiere hacer alli?

*(Hm. But what does she want to do there?)*

10 TG: Estudiar. *(To study)*

11 OS: Que? *(What?)*

12 TG: Linguistica. *(Linguistic)*

13 OS: Y no lo puede hacer aqui? *(And she cannot do it here?)*

14 TG: No quiere. *(She doesn't want to.)*

15 OS: Porque? *(Why?)*

16 TG: No quiere vivir en casa, or...

*(She doesn't want to live at home, or...)*

17 OS: Por eso ella se tiene que ir a Bielefeld. No entiendo. Y tus padres que dicen?

*(It's why she wants to go to Bielefeld. I don't understand it. And your parents, what do they say?)*

18 TG: Porque no. *(Why not)*

19 OS: No veo porque. Porque sa va a otro citio, si puede estudiar aqui. No es eficiente. Va a tener que pagar dinero. Ella es muy Aleman. Quien va a pagar por eso? Tus padres or el gobierno.

*(I don't see why. Why does she have to go to the other place if she can study it here? It's not very efficient. She will have to pay for it. She is very German. Who will pay for it? Your parents or the government?)*

20 TG: Mis padres. No hay una beca.

*(My parents. There is no scholarship.)*

21 OS: No me parece bien. Es muy Aleman. Si me dijeras que en Bielefeld se puede estudiar algo muy importante, pero...

*(I don't think it is a good idea. It's very German. If you would have said to me that in Bielefeld one can study something important, but...)*

22 TG: No hay nada de differencia entre Bielefeld y Berlin. La cosa es que ella no quiere vivir en casa.

*(There is no difference between Bielefeld and Berlin. The thing is that she doesn't want to live at home.)*

23 OS: Bueno. Si ella tiene dinero, que se vaya. Pero si no lo tiene, deberia vivir con sus padres. Cosa muy Alemana. No se...

*(Fine. If she has the money, let it be. But if she doesn't, she should live with her parents. This is very German. I don't know.)*

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Excerpt 21 is an example of a discussion related to the cultural differences between Spain and Germany. Tandem participants represent their heritage, which affects their ways of thinking and analyzing reality. TG and OS are influenced by their previous experiences and environment. As Kramsch (1993) would state, native speakers "speak not only with their own individual voices, but through them speak also the established knowledge of their native community and society" (p. 43). This makes native speakers' ways of speaking "predictable enough to be understood by other native speakers, but it is also what makes it difficult for non-native speakers to communicate with native speakers, because they do not share the native-speaking community's memory and knowledge" (p. 43).

Since Germany and Spain are quite different, people have different values and ideas about how things should be done. Young people in Germany value their independence and seldom live with their parents after reaching a certain age. Normally, they move out after finishing high school. In Spain, it is not uncommon for adult children to live with their parents. These cultural differences are important when looking at this excerpt.

As mentioned before, prior to this exchange, TG had stated she may move out of her parents' home and live on her own soon. In response, OS asks her when she wants to move out (1). She answers that if her sister will move out she will do it also (2). OS asks if they will do it together (3), and his cultural hypothesis is directly rejected as incorrect (4) because TG will stay in Berlin, and her sister wants to move to Bielefeld. OS is not sure what Bielefeld is, and asks about it, guessing that it must be a city (5). This time his

hypothesis is confirmed, but OS wants to know more, and asks about its location (7). TG explains to OS that the city is west of Berlin, pointing out that Bielefeld is farther than Hannover. Once OS knows about Bielefeld, he returns again to the previous topic, asking what TG's sister wants to do there, and why she cannot do it in Berlin. TG explains that the main reason for her sister's decision is her desire to move away from home (16).

This concept of children moving away from their parents is not well understood by OS. He thinks that such an idea is not only strange, but also frivolous since TG's sister will have to spend money she wouldn't have to spend otherwise for living expenses. For the rest of the conversation, OS points out that this behavior is "very German," and he has difficulty understanding it.

Excerpt 27 is an example of a discussion based on learners' different cultural values and prior experiences. Each tandem partner represents a different "reality" and a different way of perceiving the environment. What seems very strange for OS, is normal and acceptable for TG. Discussion gives both learners an opportunity to develop cultural awareness about their differences. Knowing that such differences exist, discussing them, and trying to understand them is part of intercultural learning. As Cortazzi and Jin (1999) state, developing cultural awareness is associated with being aware of members of another cultural group. It means attempting to understand their behavior, their expectations, and values. It also means trying to understand their reasons for their actions and beliefs. It is a skill in communicating across cultures and about cultures.

Discussing cultural differences is a very common phenomenon among tandems. Regardless of whether they agree or not, learners are able to reflect on their own culture and the L2 culture.

In the next excerpt, Germany and the USA are compared. It is a fragment of a conversation between MiG and SE. Before coming to this part of their conversation, SE was telling MiG that when he first came to Germany he was fascinated with German coffee because it was much better than American coffee. He drank so much of it that he got sick and had to go to the doctor.

**Excerpt 22**

1 SE: In Amerika habe ich kaum Kaffee getrunken, weil das...

(*I almost didn't drink any coffee in America because it...*)

2 MiG: Das schmeckt auch nicht so gut, oder?... (*It doesn't taste good, or?*)

3 SE: Es ist besser in Deutschland. (*Yes, it is better in Germany.*)

4 MiG: Ja. Das glauber ich auch. Nicht jeder, aber du kriegst viel Kaffee der gut ist.

(*I agree with you. Not all coffees, but you can find a lot of good coffee.*)

5 SE: In Amerika ist es irgendwie schwach, wie ein bischen wässerig. Wässerig, oder

wasserig? (*In America it is somehow weak, watery. "Wässerig, or wasserig?"*)

6 MiG: Wässerig ist schon richtig. (...) (*Wässerig is correct.*)

7 SE: Ja, Kaffee und Brot sind besser in Deuschland. (*Yes, coffee and bread are better in*

*Germany.*)

Excerpt 22 starts with SE's statement that he drank very little coffee while living in the USA because... (1). Before SE can finish his sentence, MiG does it for him, saying that coffee doesn't taste very good in the US. Posing this question, MiG demonstrates her familiarity with the issue, but also wants to know the opinion of SE (2). SE confirms that

indeed the coffee is better in Germany (3). MiG agrees with him, but she points out that not all coffee is better in Germany, just most of it (4). SE elaborates on the topic, saying that the coffee in America is watery. Although his utterance is perfect, he reflects on his use of the L2, asking MiG if he used the correct form of this adjective "wässerig," or if he should use a form without an umlaut (5). Similar to OS in Excerpt 21, SE is testing a hypothesis about the L2 and relies on the expertise of the native speaker. MiG confirms that what he used was correct (6). In the following turn, SE states that coffee, bread, and beer are better in Germany. This conversation continues for a few more minutes while learners engage in a discussion about other differences between the food in Germany and in the USA.

When compared to the previous excerpt (Excerpt 21), these learners (MiG and SE) are in agreement about the differences between their countries. Their agreement may be due to a few factors: (1) the topic is more general, and (2) SE (when compared to OS) is more experienced with Germany and its culture since he has lived there for a few years.

In addition to the cultural exchange, SE shifts the attention from meaning to form, asking if the form of the adjective *wässerig* is correct, or if he should use *wasserig*. Although SE had used the adjective correctly, he still has doubts and uses the opportunity to ask MiG if what he had said was grammatically correct.

This connection between cultural learning and grammatical learning is very common during tandem interactions. It is almost impossible to separate these types of learning because tandem is a multicultural, holistic learning setting. This co-existence of

opportunities for multiple learning elements in tandem can also be observed in the next excerpt.

## Excerpt 23

Excerpt 23 is a fragment of a conversation between NoS and SoG. They talk about an upcoming wedding SoG and his girlfriend Katrin will attend. Prior to this excerpt, learners had already discussed some differences between weddings in Spain and in Germany. The following conversation will lead to the discovery of another small, but significant, cultural difference. This is a difference which very likely cannot be found in any text book, and one likely wouldn't know about without having direct contact with an L2 speaker:

1 NoS: Und welche Farbe ist deine Krawatte. Orange?

*(And which color is your tie? Orange?)*

2 SoG: Pink... Blau. Ich glaube. Ich glaube sie ist gestreift.

*(Pink... Blue. I think. I think it has stripes.)*

3 NoS: Aha... Wie sagt man? Mit Streifen?

*(Aha... How do you say it? Stripes?)*

4 SoG: Also, ist gestreift. Zwei Farben. Bischen orange, gelb.

*(It has stripes. Two colors. A little bit orange and yellow.)*

5 NoS: Und wie ist die Kleidung von Katrin?

*(And Katrin's dress?)*

6 SoG: Sie hat ein Kleid. Lila. So, so langes Kleid und so eine Jacke.

*(She has a dress. Purple. A long dress and a jacket.)*

7 NoS: Lila…Eine Jacke. Mit kurze, wie sagt man, kurze…?

*(Purple…A jacket. With short, how do you say it, short…)*

8 SoG: Kurze Ärmel. *(Short sleeves)*

9 NoS: **Ärmel.** *(Sleeve)*

10 SoG: Ärmel. *(Sleeves)*

11 NoS: Ärmel. *(Sleeves)*

In Spanien die Kravate von dem Mann muss mit die, muss mit die Kleidung von die

Frauen anpassen. So die Leute wissen, wer zusammen ist.

*(In Spain, the tie of the man has to have the same color as the dress of the women. So that*

*all people know who is together with whom.)*

12 SoG: Damit die Leute wissen? [Laughs]

*(So that people know it?)*


Excerpt 23 begins with NoS's question about the color of SoG's tie. SoG is not

sure about the color, and thinks that his tie must have stripes (2). He uses the German

adjective "gestreift" which describes something with stripes. NoS focuses her attention

on this adjective, asking explicitly about it in the next conversational turn: "How do you

say it? When something has stripes? "(3). In the process of asking, NoS is not able to

produce this adjective, but she is able to describe it (3). SoG repeats *gestreift* for her

benefit (4).

In the following turn, NoS asks about the dress SoG's girlfriend has chosen (5).

SoG explains that it is a long, purple dress with a jacket. Following his statement, NoS

first repeats the color of the dress. Secondly, she wants to know if Katrin's jacket has long or short sleeves (7). In the process of saying it, NoS discovers she is not able to produce the noun "sleeve" in German and she explicitly asks for help. As Swain (1998) would state, she discovers a gap in her knowledge. SoG helps out and produces the noun (8). In the next turn, NoS tries to repeat the noun *Ärmel*, but fails to pronounce it correctly. She is not producing the umlaut (9). Corrective feedback and uptake follow. After repeating the noun *Ärmel* correctly, NoS explains that in Spain (when attending a wedding) the man's tie has to have the same color as the woman's dress to indicate they are together. SoG laughs, openly finding such tradition quite funny and very different from German customs.

Excerpt 23 is also an example of the co-existence of cultural and linguistic learning during tandem interactions (as previously observed in Excerpts 20 and 22). Although this fragment of conversation is oriented towards a cultural information exchange, there are two other LREs resulting from it. The first one is related to the lexical learning of the adjective *gestreift*, and the second to addressing the word *Ärmel*.

Excerpt 23 starts with NoS's question about the color of SoG's tie. The question is an important element of the cultural message NoS wants to mention. She wants to explain to SoG that in Spain it is important that the color of the man's tie matches the color of the woman's dress. In order to accomplish her goal, NoS asks first about SoG's tie, then she asks about the second element of her cultural puzzle, the dress. Since SoG doesn't mention anything about any connection between the tie and the dress (which in

Germany is non-existent), NoS explains to him that in Spain there is a connection between these two items.

It is important to stress that NoS presents the cultural information to her tandem partner in a carefully constructed way. NoS actively engages the other learner in the construction of the cultural information she wants him to know. Also, NoS uses this interaction to clarify her own linguistic doubts. She is the expert and the novice during this excerpt.

In the next excerpt, reverse roles are observed. SoG is the expert and NoS the novice with regard to pragmatic issues discussed during their interaction.


## Excerpt 24

NoS needs to go to a bank to take care of some financial transactions. Since she doesn't have an account in Germany, it complicates the process. She doesn't know how to get this task done, and asks her tandem partner for his advice:


1 NoS: Aber wenn ich kein Konto habe?

*(But when I don't have an account?)*

2 SoG: Ja, das ist ein Problem, oder?

*(Yes. This is a problem, no?)*

3 NoS: Ja, ich wollte nur Geld in seine Konto lassen.

*(Yes, I only wanted to transfer money to his account.)*

4 SoG: Man kann nicht Bargeld auf Konto überweisen. Du kannst fragen ob du Bargeld auf das Konto einzahlen kannst.

*(You cannot transfer cash to an account. You can ask if you could pay in cash to the account.)*

5 NoS: Aber wie sage ich das?

*(But how do I say it?)*

6 SoG: Du möchtes das Geld bar einzahlen auf das Konto von dieser Botschaft. Bar einzahlen.Weil du hast kein Konto. Du bist aus Spanien. Du hast kein Konto in Berlin. Am Schalter, du sagst: Hier sind 30 Euro und ich möchte es auf dieses Konto überweisen. Wir können das auch zusammen machen.

*(You want to pay in cash to the account from the consulate. To deposit cash. Because you don't have an account. You are from Spain. You don't have an account in Berlin. When you are at the bank, you say: Here are 30 Euros, and I would like to deposit it to this account. We could do it together.)*

7 NoS: Aber der Name, das heisst auch Überweisung, auch wenn ich kein Konto habe?

*(But the name, it is also a transfer, when I don't have an account?)*

8 SoG: Du sagst, dass du das Geld auf das Konto einzahlen möchtest.

*(You say that you want to pay the money to the account.)*

9 NoS: Ja. Überweisen ist von einem Konto auf das andere.

*(Yes. Transfer is from one account to the other one.)*

10 SoG: Einzahlen.

*(To deposit.)*

11 NoS: Einzahlen. [Writes it down]

*(To deposit.)*

12 SoG: Auf das Konto einzahlen. Genau.

*(To deposit to the account. Exactly.)*

13 NoS: Auf Spanisch es ist ingresar. Ingresar.

*(In Spanish, it is „ingresar." "Ingresar")*

Since NoS needs to pay for something by transferring money to someone else's account, and does not have her own banking institution in Germany. She asks her tandem partner (SoG) what she should do when she does not have a German account (1). SoG confirms that this could be a problem (2). To understand this excerpt, one should be aware of the lack of flexibility among German banks. Not having a German account can be problematic for foreign visitors living there. SoG suggests that NoS can ask about a cash deposit (4). At this moment, the pragmatic issue of how to approach the possible problem seems to be resolved.

Turn 5 signals that the issue is more complex. NoS does not know what she should say in German at the bank. SoG explains to her what to say and how to say it. He also offers his help and suggests that they could do it together (6). In the process of explaining to NoS how to make the request, SoG uses the verb to deposit twice and to transfer once. NoS notices the difference in these verbs and asks him about it. She wonders if she can use the verb "to transfer" also in the situation when she does not have an account in Germany (clarification of meaning). SoG explains that she should use the verb "to deposit" (8, 10). NoS repeats the verb, writes it down, and translates it into Spanish (11, 13).

Excerpt 24 demonstrates that pragmatic and lexical learning are closely related. In order to communicate successfully, one has to have the linguistic resources to do it. In the

process of learning how to make a money transfer in Germany, NoS learns how to accomplish the tasks and what to say. She learns the difference between the terms money transfer and deposit. In the process of pragmatic learning, NoS is exposed to a new lexical item *einzahlen*, which she repeats aloud and writes down. SoG provides NoS with multiple repetitions of the new word, which is used 9 times during this short excerpt. This multiple exposure to the new word should be beneficial for learning.

It is also important to note that SoG offers his help. He is willing to go with NoS to a bank to help her out. As observed, the tandem method provides a multitude of benefits to learners. Through contact with a local expert the foreigner can obtain direct help with linguistic and pragmatic problems, as they arise while living in a foreign country.

The data provide examples of learners asking their German tandem partners for help in the following situations:

- Visit to a hairdresser (LC/AG). LC asked her tandem partner how she should talk to the hairdresser about her haircut. Tandem partners practiced the possible conversation during their meeting.

- University life (RS/DG). RS asked his tandem partner how he should proceed with a group work assignment. He was not familiar with the structure and dynamics of such a task. DS explained to him how it is normally done at a German university and how to approach the professor about it.

- Hotel booking (RS/DG). RS did not receive a booking confirmation and was not sure if this was a problem in Germany. His tandem partner explained that indeed it was a sign that something was possibly wrong and suggested the follow-up on this.

- Interacting with German roommates. (MS/BG). MS and BG discuss how to
  approach the issue of sharing (or not sharing) their food with other roommates.

In addition to addressing their everyday pragmatic needs during tandem interactions,
the data provide evidence there is one more aspect related to cultural learning in the
tandem setting--learners focus on current cultural events and ask their tandem partners
about them, as shown in the next excerpt.

## Excerpt 25

1 SE: So, right now in Germany you have Spargel-time?

2 MiG: Yes.

3 SE: And how do they make it?

4 MiG: How do they make? With potatoes, salad, and a hollandaise sauce.

5 SE: OK. Asparagus is pretty good. For some reason, in the US we don't have the white

asparagus.

6 MiG: No?

7 SE: No, only the green.

8 MiG: Green? Is this different? I didn't know… green. How do you pronounce it?

**Aspar…**

9 SE: Asparagus.

10 MiG: Asparagus. Asparagus.

11 SE: Ja, they grow it, but only the green. I don't know why. And the white is better.

The green is pretty good also, but the white is better. Ja…

In America, they plant asparagus where they already have fruit trees. They also plant asparagus there, around the trees, because bugs like it better and will eat the asparagus first. It means that we have a lot of green asparagus in America. At least, where I come from, from Oregon.

Excerpt 25 represents a conversational fragment between MiG and SE. Since the audio tapings for this research study were conducted in the spring/summer time in Germany, their timing coincided with the asparagus season. Between May and July, German families tend to eat fresh asparagus, which is brought to the cities from farms and sold everywhere. It is an important tradition, and most foreign visitors living in Germany notice it, as does SE asking MiG about the "Spargeln-time" (1). SE is curious about how German people prepare it in their homes, and MiG is able to explain that asparagus is normally served with potatoes, sauce, and a salad (4). Being in Germany and seeing that the asparagus which is sold there is white, SE points out this difference. This time MiG is surprised because she has never seen green asparagus before (8).

This is also the very first time she wants to use the word asparagus in this conversation and is not able to pronounce it. For this reason, MiG asks SE about the pronunciation of this word. This question causes a temporary shift from meaning to form for the next three conversational turns. In turn 8, MiG asks her tandem partner *How do you pronounce it?* The demonstration of correct pronunciation follows in turn 9. Finally, in turn 10, there is repetition of the word *asparagus*. MiG repeats the lexical item twice. After her repetition, the conversation shifts again from form to meaning. SE provides a detailed explanation of the production of asparagus in his state of Oregon (11).

Excerpt 25 is an example of mutual cultural exchange. MiG learns how the asparagus is produced in Oregon, and that there is a different form of it, the green one, which she is not familiar with. On the other hand, SE receives confirmation of his hypothesis that there is a *Spargel-time* in Germany. He also obtains information about how it is prepared among German families. In the process of this cultural exchange, MiG is able to notice the gap in her knowledge--her inability to pronounce the word asparagus in English. SE helps her work on it, and she is able to pronounce it correctly after it is demonstrated to her.

Although this topic may seem trivial at first sight, it was one of the most discussed cultural topics during the time of data collection. Almost all tandems had some type of experience with the *Spargel-time* and addressed this cultural phenomenon explicitly during their tandem meetings. For example, RS/DG compared how Spanish and German people prepare various asparagus dishes. RS pointed out that in Spain asparagus is often prepared as an omelet; whereas in Germany, it is served with meat and potatoes. RS was also invited by DG and her parents twice to their home to participate in a festive Sunday lunch of eating asparagus in the traditional German way. The tandem MS/BG also addressed the "asparagus" topic. Similar to the previously discussed example of RS and DG, the German tandem partner (BG) invited the foreigner (MS) to her house for a traditional asparagus dinner.

In summary, participating in tandem learning allows learners to be exposed to various cultural aspects of foreign culture, and to learn about them through direct contact with their tandem partner. In some instances, such intercultural communication allows

learners to become more aware of their own culture and language, as observed in the next excerpt.


**Excerpt 26**

1 RS: Es gibt aber Sprichwörter, die sehr ähnlich sind. Zum Beispiel: Aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen. Hacer una tormenta en un vaso de agua. Aber ich habe 2 Muttersprachen und ich spreche auch Katalan als Muttersprache und auf Katalan heisst das: Aus einer Mücke einen Pferd machen.

*(There are proverbs, which are very similar. For example, "To make an elephant from a mosquito" would be in Spanish "To make a storm in a glass of water." But I have two native languages. I speak also Catalan, and in Catalan you would say "To make a horse from a mosquito.")*

2 DG: Oh, wirklich? Ein Pferd. *(Oh, really? A horse?)*

3 RS: Aber ein Elefant ist noch, über...*( But an elephant is still, more...)*

4 DG: Grösser. Trotzdem, das gleiche ist gemeint, aber utnerschiedliche Worte sind benutzt.

*(Bigger. Although different words are used, the meaning is the same.)*

5 RS: Am tollsten finde ich: Man kann nicht auf zwei Hochzeiten gleich tanzen.

[Laughs]

*(What I like the best is "You cannot dance at two weddings at the same time.")*

6 DG: Aber man muss schon die Sprache gut sprechen, um die Sprichwörter zu verstehen.

*(One has to know a language quite well to understand proverbs.)*

After discussing many idiomatic expressions and proverbs in Spanish and in German, RS states there are some expressions which are similar in both languages. RS uses as an example the German idiom *To make an elephant from a mosquito* (to exaggerate). In Spanish, there is a similar expression, which has the same meaning, but the single words forming it are different. The Spanish people say *To make a storm in a glass of water.* Since RS has two native languages, Spanish and Catalan, he is able to give another example of the same idea, expressed in Catalan. Interestingly, the Catalan idiom is much closer to the German one. The Catalan people say *To make a horse from a mosquito.* DG expresses her interest in the Catalan idiom, noticing the difference between the elephant (German proverb) and the horse (Catalan proverb). She seems a little surprised by it (2). RS shares DG's interest in looking for these differences and discussing them. RS continues with DG's statement and compares these two different animals. He wants to say that an elephant still is bigger, but has problems expressing it (3). DG helps him with the superlative of "big." Finally, DG concludes that although different words are used, the meaning is basically the same (4). The next conversational turn (5) shifts the focus back to the German proverbs, and RS comments that his favorite proverb is *One cannot dance at two weddings at the same time.* He laughs.

DG concludes this dialogue saying that one has to know a second language quite well to understand proverbs. DG's statement demonstrates that learners participating in tandem are able to develop increased cultural and linguistic awareness. They reflect on their L1 and L2 use, compare them, and in doing so, create opportunities for learning.

## 8.2 Summary

The tandem method provides learners with opportunities for lexical, grammatical, and cultural exchanges, which are interconnected. These one-on-one meetings with an L2 speaker that take place in tandems are a source of opportunities for implicit cultural and pragmatic learning since the other person is a living representative of his or her native culture. Additionally, there are instances of opportunities for explicit pragmatic and cultural learning during tandem meetings. Such learning is important because, as Kramsch (1993) stated, "the ability of the learner to behave both as an insider and an outsider to the speech community whose language he or she is learning, depends on his or her understanding of the cultural situation." (p.182)

When looking at the examples described in this dissertation, it is evident the learners address numerous elements of L2 learning as they arise in context and from context. This holistic approach to second language learning during tandem makes it quite different from some formal classrooms, where teachers may tend to focus more on grammar than vocabulary, and rarely on culture.

As Cortazzi and Jin (1999) pointed out, there are many deficiencies related to addressing cultural content in formal schooling. According to them, teachers and students should raise their awareness of intercultural issues. In addition, more textbooks should include explicit intercultural elements. Finally, teachers should be more conscious of intercultural competence, in the way that many are now conscious of communicative competence. The raising of cultural awareness in classrooms would help foreign language learners to understand other cultures and be able to communicate across cultures.

The tandem method provides opportunities for raising cultural awareness. It allows learners to have multiple, repetitive exposures to the lexical, grammatical, cultural and pragmatic elements of the L2. It gives learners the opportunity to discover the differences and similarities between their languages and cultures (Excerpts 19, 21, 22, 23, 25). As Cortazzi and Jin stated (1999), a cultural focus on intercultural competence may not only encourage the development of identity, but also "encourage the awareness of others' identities and an element of stabilization in a world of rapid changes" (p.219).

# CHAPTER 9
## ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

## 9.0 Introduction

The previously discussed chapters focused on examples of lexical, grammatical, cultural, and pragmatic learning during tandem interactions. They were based on data from audio recordings. This chapter will focus on the second part of the data--the questionnaires completed by the participants of this study. I will highlight their perceptions of the tandem method.

## 9.1 Questionnaires-general information

The data for this study were collected from April through August, 2007, in Berlin, Germany. The data consist of two parts: multiple audio-tapings of each tandem pair and four questionnaires completed by each participant.

The questionnaires were developed in collaboration with my supervising professors from Michigan State University and the Tandem Language School in Berlin-- "Tandem Berlin e.V.," which also provided significant logistical support during the data collection process. The questionnaires were offered to participants in English or German, so they could choose the language they felt most comfortable with for completion. All German native speakers and 70% of the non-native speakers of German completed the questionnaires in German. Only 3 participants completed the four questionnaires in English. Each participant completed the questionnaires independently, by taking them home and working in privacy. Their results will be presented in this chapter.

## 9.2 Questionnaire 1

The first questionnaire addressed participants' biographical information: gender, age, native language, occupation, and length of previous L2 instruction. Participants were also asked about their expectations with regard to tandem learning and reasons for studying an L2. This information is presented in Tables 2-10, in chapter 4. This questionnaire was administered during one of the first meetings between tandem partners and the researcher. The following two additional questions from Questionnaire 1 will be addressed in this section:

●Why are you learning the TL? (Tandem language)

●What is more important for you right now: focus on grammar or on vocabulary? Why?

## 9.2.1 Why are you learning the TL?

* Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of participants who provided the preceding statement. A total of 18 participants are discussed in this study.

All possible answers provided by the learners are listed. None of the answers was suggested to participants by the researcher. Any repetition of statements arises from shared beliefs.

● Because I'm interested in the TL and I enjoy it (5)

● For everyday communicative purposes (4)

● I would like to be able to express myself better in the other language (3)

● To learn more about the German culture (3)

- To improve my vocabulary (3)

- German is very important for my future job (3)

- Because I live in Germany (3)

- For the vacation time in Spain (2)

- I have an "English-phobia" and want to learn a different language (2)

- I would like to read the literature in original language

- I would like to understand TV and radio in the L2

- To conduct interviews in German (one of the participants was a journalist)

- To teach the language in the future

- To speak fluently

- I would like to write better in German

- To understand the text of Flamenco in Spanish

- I hope to live in Germany in the future

- I had an amazing German teacher in high school and fell in love with the language

- To work in a Spanish speaking country in the future

- To pass a language exam at the university

- Personal growth


The six most common reasons for participation in tandem, in descending order, were:

- Interest in the language learned in tandem

- Communicative purposes

- Learning about the cultural aspects of L2

- Lexical learning

- Pragmatic reasons, such as better job opportunities in the future due to the knowledge of L2

- Living in Germany and, consequently, learning the language spoken in the country

### 9.2.2 What is more important for you now: focus on grammar or vocabulary? Why?

**1. Vocabulary** (13)

Some of the reasons for choosing vocabulary were:

- I know already the grammar quite well (4)

- To have more resources for communication

- I had learned grammar at school

- Idioms

- "Vocabulary is harder to learn from the book since you don't always know if a native speaker would use this certain word in this sentence. Grammar is on the other hand universal."

- "Normally, I focus on grammar most of the time, but I would like to improve my vocabulary as well because I think that the lack of vocabulary restricts my explanations and conversations when speaking. I try to learn new words, but it's always difficult."

- I can study the grammar at home with my books

**2. Both-grammar and vocabulary** (5)

Out of five participants agreeing with this statement, one pointed out that his goal was, "Not only to speak grammatically, but also to use the correct vocabulary, as a German person would do."

### 3. Grammar only

**Nobody agreed with this statement.**

None of the tandem participants chose only grammar as a learning focus. 13 out of 18 learners (72.2 %) pointed out that expanding their vocabulary was more important than focusing on grammar during their tandem interactions. For 5 participants (27.7 %), both the grammar and the lexical items were equally important.

**9.3.0 Questionnaire 2**

The second questionnaire addressed the following issues: reasons for participation in tandem, length and frequency of individual tandem meetings, participants' preferences and perceptions of the differences between L2 learning in a classroom with a teacher or with a tandem partner, and finally error correction.

**9.3.1 Why did you decide to participate in tandem?**

Below answers represent spontaneous tandem participants' statements:

- To improve my TL (8)

- To speak the language (4)

- To gain cultural knowledge (4)

- To meet German people (3)

- Tandem is more relaxed than classroom learning (2)

- Tandem provides a very intense learning opportunity (2)

- It's gratis (2)

- It's a good opportunity to study with a native speaker

- I like to teach my partner

- We can talk about the country

- We can talk about what is interesting for us

- Tandem is much better to learn to speak fluently than any other type of formal instruction

- Tandem is fun because I can use directly the learned language

- Because other people recommended it

- **I felt that I needed, despite living with Germans and conversing most of the time in German, someone who was willing to correct my mistakes and help me learn the language in a casual atmosphere, but without pressing friends to do that.**

In summary, the most common reasons for participating in tandem were:

- Improvement of the TL

- Speaking opportunities

- Cultural knowledge gains

- Meeting German people

One of the most interesting comments obtained from this questionnaire was: "*I felt that I needed, despite living with Germans and conversing most of the time in German, someone who was willing to correct my mistakes and help me learn the language in a casual atmosphere, but without pressing friends to do that.*" This sentence summarizes very well some of the main reasons for tandem learning. Even when living in a country where the L2 is spoken, a non-native speaker, who can communicate quite well, may fail to make further progress without paying attention to the grammar, lexical items, and the usage of the L2 in various contexts. Tandem language learning provides learners with opportunities to focus on the language, use it, think about it, talk about it, and learn through corrections *in a casual atmosphere.* It is also not a conversation group organized by the university, where one meets a different partner every week; it is a meeting in a private setting with a comfortable atmosphere, which allows tandem partners to develop, in most cases, a friendship based on mutual trust. As observed in the

excerpts, this setting seems to have a very positive effect on the learning process, where learners can feel comfortable enough to ask questions and express doubts, and where they can receive the corrective feedback they want.

## 9.3.2 How often do you meet with your tandem partner?

- One time a week, 2 hours. (3)

- One time a week, 1-1.5 hours. (2)

- One or two times a week, 2-3 hours.

- At least once a week, for 2-3 hours.

- Two times a week, 3-4 hours.

According to the responses from questionnaires, most tandems met once a week for 2 hours. Some had more frequent meetings, but nobody met more than two times a week.

During data collection, I could observe that not all tandem partners were able to meet each week, due to their busy schedules at the university or work. Many tandems tried to recoup the lost time through more frequent meetings during the following weeks or through longer tandem meetings after. All participants seemed interested in maintaining regular meetings with their tandem partners.

## 9.3.3 In your opinion, what is a better learning method, in a classroom with a teacher or through tandem interactions? Why? What are the main differences?

**A) Tandem is better** (4)

● If you already have some basic knowledge of the TL, tandem is definitely better (intense, direct opportunities for clarification of doubts). In a classroom, one has to share the time and the teacher with others.

● Time efficient

● Flexibility

● One can choose the topics

● More effective

● "I find it much easier to remember things I learn in a real world environment, for example, it is easier for me to remember names of foods or utensils if I have to ask for them in an actual restaurant setting."

● "In a classroom, you only get a few opportunities to speak each session. Passively understanding the language and actively speaking are completely different. In tandem, you can also learn the vocabulary for the contextual situations (easier learning), and in a classroom from a word-list, which is very difficult to remember."

**B) Formal classroom instruction is better** (1)

(*But only if the quality is very good*, as stated by this participant.)

**C) Both are important for different reasons** (13)

● "In a formal instruction one can learn the theory and the grammar. Tandem is good to practice it."

● A combination of both methods is perfect

- "Even though I prefer tandem learning, I think that both classroom and tandem complement each other."

- "Both are important because the native speaker cannot explain all grammatical problems"

When looking at the results, 73% of participants agreed that the combination of both tandem and formal classroom instruction functions the best, largely because the non-native speaker is not always able to explain the grammar of his native language to the other partner. For this reason, the combination of formal instruction (with a teacher in a classroom) with the intense one-on-one communicative approach of tandem resonated well with the participants of this study.

Only one person, with the least experience with the tandem learning method, stated that classroom learning can be better: but only if it has a very good quality of instruction. This participant had only 4 previous tandem meetings with his partner, compared to most other tandems with a few months of experience.

Finally, 22% of participants preferred tandem learning over a classroom experience because of its effectives and opportunity to learn language in context.

### 9.3.4 The main differences between tandem and classroom learning, as stated by the participants of this study

**Table 11: Tandem vs. classroom learning**

| TANDEM | CLASSROOM |
|---|---|
| Language usage in context | Theory and grammar |
| One can speak as much as he or she wants | Systematic learning environment |
| Better learning environment for vocabulary | Good for basic learning |
| One can practice pronunciation better | Teacher can explain grammar |
| Free choice of the topics | |
| Economical, most of the time gratis | |
| Relaxed atmosphere | |
| Equal powers, both are students/teachers | |
| More fun learning experience | |
| More intense learning experience 1:1 | |
| The school doesn't teach colloquial language, and later, one cannot understand people on the street, tandem does it | |
| One doesn't have to share the time/teacher | |
| Cultural knowledge can be gained | |
| One is always engaged, it's not boring | |
| Vocabulary is learned in context | |
| You learn from a NS, and not a book | |

Again, most of the participants pointed out that in a formal classroom setting one would have more opportunities for structured learning of grammatical items, but time would be shared with other people, and learning would be less time-efficient and sometimes boring. Tandem learning was evaluated as learning in context, where participants could gain cultural knowledge, learn new vocabulary more easily (because of the contextual setting), and speak as much as they want. Most of the participants in this study viewed classroom learning as a setting with plenty of input, but tandem provided them with the opportunity to produce meaningful output.

**9.3.5 Did you like it when your tandem partner corrected your errors? Why yes or no?**

**A) Yes** (17)

● "It is the main goal of tandem to be corrected"

●"Error correction is crucial to realize what is wrong" (2)

●**"On the beginning, I didn't enjoy being corrected, but once you realize how important it is to have your bad habits corrected, I began to prefer having my grammar or vocabulary corrected"**

● "I want to be corrected, otherwise I will not learn"

● "It's why I'm doing tandem"

● "It's important that there are corrections because one thinks many times that he/she speak correctly, but often it's not the case"

● "It's very important to correct the pronunciation"

- "When my partner corrects me she shows interest, and I can improve"

- "It's important; otherwise I can talk to myself"


**B) Yes, but** (2)

- "Error corrections are important, but not all the time. More important in tandem is the opportunity to speak, without constant interruptions."

- "It's crucial, but not every minute. Only serious and frequent errors should be corrected."


100% of the tandem participants wanted error correction; among them 11% preferred to be corrected, but not all the time, and not all their errors. They wanted to communicate without too many interruptions. According to them, only serious or frequent errors should be corrected.


### 9.3.6 What did you learn from your tandem partner?

- New vocabulary (10)

- Grammar usage (5)

- Cultural knowledge (5)

- Better pronunciation (4)

- Colloquial usage of the language (4)

- Idioms (3)

- Almost everything

- That we cannot translate everything from one language to the other

- I gained a new friend

- I developed better listening skills in the TL


Learning new vocabulary was mentioned by 55% of participants. Also, the correct usage of the grammar and gains in cultural knowledge seemed to be of greater importance. The data strongly support the results of this questionnaire. Most tandems were very strongly oriented towards lexical learning, which occurred frequently.

### 9.4.0 Questionnaire 3: Cultural exchanges

Through the third questionnaire, participants had the opportunity to point out the strengths and weaknesses of typical tandem interactions based on their personal experience. Students were also asked about the cultural and pragmatic aspects of tandem learning. This questionnaire was administered immediately after collecting Questionnaire 2 from them.

According to participants' responses, **the following cultural activities were conducted during their tandem interactions:**

- Dance lessons taken together

- Cooking of national dishes for the tandem partner (most tandems)

- Trips to different German cities (many tandems visited nearby cities, like, Potsdam)

- Attendance at concerts (varying from classical music to rock)

- Meeting the friends and family of the tandem partner (frequently pointed out)

- Parties

- Canoe trip

- Open-Air Opera visit

- Theatre visit

- Going out to cafés, restaurants and bars (most tandems)

### 9.4.1 Did your partner help you understand the culture of his/her country better? Which new things did you learn about it?

- "My opinion about the German people changed. They are also very nice and dependable. Sometimes, Spanish people have a very different stereotypical image of the German people."

- German traditions and the traditional German dishes

- "The differences between Spanish and Catalan languages"

- "I learned a lot about the Danish school system, immigration problems, health care system, and the life in Copenhagen"

- German history

- "That the Spanish parents are more conservative than German"

- University life in Spain

- Christmas traditions in Spain and eating habits in Spain

- "Why and how the German culture is different from my own. We compared frequently our both cultures"

Participation in tandem gave both parties a unique opportunity to have a prolonged and direct contact with a native speaker of their L2. Due to such frequent and prolonged interactions, intensive cultural exchanges were present. Tandem participants gladly shared their cultural knowledge and were curious to learn about the culture of their tandem partner. As a result, some participants were able to revise their stereotypical thinking of other nations, as shown, in the statement provided by one of the research participants from Spain: "My opinion about the German people changed. (...) Sometimes, Spanish people have a very different stereotypical image of the German people."

## 9.4.2 Participants' evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of tandem

### Table 12: Participants' evaluation of tandem

| Advantages of tandem learning | Disadvantages of tandem learning |
|---|---|
| One can learn directly from a native speaker | There are not disadvantages (4) |
| A lot of cultural information | You don't have to prepare anything, if you don't want to; no negative consequences--no bad grades are given* |
| Time flexibility | At the beginning, there is some tension, because one has to work with an unknown person |
| Gratis | Subjective points of view. One has to understand that it represents only one persons' point of view. |
| A lot of speaking opportunities | Not all tandem partners can explain the grammar of their own language. |
| One can meet German people | Less grammar |
| One can learn how the language is spoken in a "real life" situation | A weakness could be if one wouldn't have a partner who was both a good teacher and a willing learner. |
| More interesting than learning in a class | Normally, it's only oral |
| Eliminating the fear of speaking | |
| A lot of fun while learning | |
| One can pause for clarification when something is not understood | |
| Better learning environment than the classroom | |
| More interesting conversations, one is not falling asleep | |
| Flexible schedule, one can meet whenever it's possible and how often she wants | |
| More practical approach. One can learn what he feels is needed. | |
| One can improve listening comprehension a lot through tandem | |

*for people who are really motivated and want to learn this is not a disadvantage

### 9.4.3 Learners' tips for a well functioning tandem:

1) "It is important that both partners have a similar level of their L2. If one tandem participant is much more advanced in the L2 than the other person, it could happen that only one language will be used, and the tandem would loose the equilibrium and the justification."

2) "It is important to have a tandem partner with whom one has a good connection, and who is dependable."

3) "Both partners have to be motivated. It is good to talk about expectations and goals for learning."

# 9.5 QUESTIONNAIRE 4: EVALUATION OF TANDEM LEARNING METHOD

## Table 13: Questionnaire 4

SA=strongly agree, A= agree, XA=to some degree agree, D= disagree, SD = strongly disagree

|  | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I'm very satisfied with the outcome of my participation in tandem | 16 89% | 2 11% |  |  |  |
| 2. I have learned a lot of new words through tandem interactions. | 9 50% | 7 39% | 2 11% |  |  |
| 3. My pronunciation improved because of the tandem program. | 6 33.3% | 8 44.5% | 4 22.2% |  |  |
| 4. My grammar improved a lot through tandem interactions. | 2 11% | 7 39% | 7 39% |  | 2 11% |
| 5. The tandem program was a waste of time for me. |  |  |  | 1 5.55 | 17 94.45% |
| 6. I could have learned more with a different tandem partner. |  |  |  | 6 33.3% | 12 66.7% |
| 7. I speak more in the classroom than during tandem exchange. |  |  | 1 5.5% | 3 16.7% | 14 77.8% |
| 8. I like to have my tandem partner correct my errors. | 16 89% | 2 11% |  |  |  |
| 9. I have learned a lot about my partner's culture through tandem. | 4 22% | 9 50% | 5 28% |  |  |
| 10. I prefer learning in a classroom with a teacher than through tandem. | 1 5.5% | 1 5.5% | 9** 50% |  | 7 39% |
| 11. I corrected my tandem partner's pronunciation a lot. | 3 16.7% | 12 66.6% | 3 16.7% |  |  |
| 12. I corrected my tandem partner's grammar a lot. | 3 16.7% | 12 66.6% | 3 16.7% |  |  |
| 13. I corrected the structure of my partner's sentences frequently. | 6 33.3 | 7 39% | 5 27.7% |  |  |
| 14. I think my partner can better speak my native language because of me. | 5 28% | 11 61% | 2 11% |  |  |
| 15. I liked interacting with my tandem partner. | 18 100% |  |  |  |  |
| 16. My tandem partner learned a lot of new vocabulary from me. | 8 44.5% | 9 50% | 1 5.5% |  |  |
| 17. I have learned a lot of new vocabulary from my tandem partner. | 12 66.7% | 6 33.3% |  |  |  |
| 18. I speak more during my tandem interaction than in the classroom. | 17 94.5% | 1 5.5% |  |  |  |
| 19. The tandem program is very beneficial for language learners. | 16 89% | 2 11% |  |  |  |
| 20. I wish I could continue with tandem learning in the future. | 16 89% | 2 11% |  |  |  |
| 21. I will never again participate in a tandem program, because it was a bad experience. |  |  |  |  | 18 100% |
| 22. I understand my partner's culture better because of the tandem experience. | 6 33.3% | 7 39% | 5 27.7% |  |  |

** **70%** of this group stated that the combination of both is useful (Nr.10)

Questionnaire 4 summarized participants' satisfaction with the various aspects of tandem learning. When looking at item 21 (I will never again participate in a tandem program because it was a bad experience for me), 100% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. Similar satisfaction levels were observed with regard to Item 1 (I'm very satisfied with my participation in tandem), where 89% strongly agreed with this statement and 11% agreed. Item 15, which again measured learners' satisfaction with their tandem interactions (I liked interacting with my tandem partner), confirmed that participants of this study were very content with their tandem interactions, and that they enjoyed interacting with their tandem partners. 100% of respondents agreed with the statement: "I liked interacting with my tandem partner."

The next group of questions was related to lexical learning: 2, 16, and 17. Item 2 (I have learned a lot of new words through my tandem interactions) yielded the following results: 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 39% agreed, and 11% agreed to some degree that they learned a lot of new vocabulary through tandem. With regard to Item 16 (My tandem partner learned a lot of new vocabulary from me), participants provided the following answers: 44.4% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 5.6% agreed to some degree. For item 17 (I have learned a lot of new vocabulary from my partner), the results were: 66.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed. All three items provided support for lexical learning although tandem participants tend not to overestimate their influence on their partner, only 44% stated they strongly agreed that their partner learned a lot of new vocabulary from them, but 66.7% strongly agreed that they had learned a lot of lexical items from their partner.

Questionnaire 4 also addressed the issue of corrective feedback in items 8, 11, 12, and 13. Item 8 (I like when my tandem partner corrects my errors) received the following responses: 89% of all participants strongly agreed and 11% agreed they like to be corrected by their tandem partner. Tandem participants stated (33.3% strongly agreed, 39% agreed, and 27.7 % agreed to some degree) they corrected the structure of their partner's sentences frequently (Item 13). All participants agreed with the statement that they corrected a lot of their partner's pronunciation (Item 11) and grammar (Item 12). For both items, identical results were obtained: 16.7% strongly agreed, 66.6% agreed, and 16.7% agreed to some degree.

**9.6 Summary**

From the questionnaires and the level of satisfaction of tandem participants, the tandem learning method, although not perfect, received very favorable ratings. The participants were very satisfied with tandem's practical, efficient, and very communicative approach. They hoped to continue with this learning method in the future (Item 20: 89 % strongly agreed, 11% agreed) and they thought the tandem program was very beneficial for language learners (Item 19: 89% strongly agreed, 11% agreed.)

Such favorable feedback should be considered by language educators for future implementation of tandem learning as part of foreign language instruction. Through a combination of classroom and tandem learning, one could achieve a very stimulating environment, which could contribute to better learning outcomes and higher learner satisfaction. Tandem participants stated that although they were very satisfied with their tandem learning, some type of formal instruction was still very beneficial.

# CHAPTER 10

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 10.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will review the research hypotheses of this study and evaluate

them in light of the results obtained from questionnaires and data analysis. Secondly, I

will address implications of the findings for the field of language pedagogy. Finally, I

will suggest directions for further studies related to this research.

### 10.1 Review of research hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study were first introduced in Chapter 1, section 1.3, and are

repeated here:

H1: There are substantial opportunities for lexical learning because of students'

participation in tandem.

H2: There are substantial opportunities for grammatical learning from context and in

context due to one's participation in tandem.

 H3: There are substantial opportunities for development of pragmatic knowledge and

cultural exchanges because of students' participation in a tandem.

H4: The majority of tandem participants are highly satisfied with the outcome of their

learning in tandem, and with the learning progress of their tandem partner, and would

recommend this method to others.

This study sought to confirm as true, not true, or partially true the above four hypotheses through careful data analysis and evaluation of questionnaires. Results will be presented in the following sections.

## 10.2 Evaluation of hypotheses

**10.2.1 HYPOTHESIS 1:** There are substantial opportunities for lexical learning because of students' participation in tandem.

As observed in chapter 5, the tandem method provides learners with various opportunities for lexical learning, which can range from single-word learning to complex, multi-word learning situations. Lexical learning in tandems is in most instances incidental and directly related to learners' needs. Learners are fully responsible for their progress and the content of their meetings. Although in most cases tandem interactions are unplanned, some instances of students engaging in more formal management of their lexical learning were noted--as they worked at home on written assignments (RD/AIG) or previously prepared didactic materials were used during interactions (flashcards with proverbs and idioms).

Although these activities have some characteristics of formal learning, they were not obligatory for learners; on the contrary, they were chosen by them because learners decided it was what they wanted and/or needed to do. During tandem interactions, learners are always in charge of their own learning and the learning of their tandem partner. This mutual dependence was also reflected in lexical learning during tandem.

Multiple examples of both learners learning the same lexical item in their respective L2s, in the same conversation, were present. This type of lexical learning is an advantage of the tandem method. Lexical learning during tandem is also different from lexical learning in other educational contexts because it gives learners opportunities for prolonged discussions about new words. As observed in the discussed excerpts, learners were not only exposed (often multiple times) to new words and their spelling, pronunciation, contextual use, and translation, but also had a chance for their immediate use in a meaningful conversation.

In summary, lexical learning in tandem took various forms and arose on various occasions, but always in an interactional context. Secondly, lexis-based LREs were present in all tandem learning contexts when learners discussed grammatical issues, cultural topics, or explicitly focused on lexis. Every time learners wanted to say something and were not able to do so, they had the opportunity to learn from it, which they frequently did. In addition to output, the other source for lexical learning in tandem was the L2 input provided by native speakers. Learning from a native speaker and with a native speaker allowed both tandem partners to learn about their L2s and reflect about their L1s. Tandem learners were able to develop an increased awareness of their own native language (e.g., use of proverbs) because of tandem interaction and the need to explain it to the foreigner.

It can be concluded that the tandem method provided substantial opportunities for lexical learning and development of lexical awareness in the L2 and L1. The tandem method allowed learners to learn new words, idioms, and proverbs. Also, it gave them the

opportunity to recognize and utilize words to which they had been previously exposed, but hadn't managed to gain control over.

Finally, based on the responses to the questionnaires, tandem learners were well aware of tandem as an opportunity for lexical learning; they pointed to lexical learning as a very important element of tandem learning for them. The majority of learners (13 out of 18) admitted vocabulary was their main focus in learning because it provided more resources for communication and was related to their interest in idiomatic expressions. As one learner pointed out, "Vocabulary is harder to learn from the book, since you don't always know if a native speaker would use this certain word in this sentence." Another learner stated, "Normally I focus on grammar most of the time, but I would like to improve my vocabulary as well because I think that the lack of vocabulary restricts my explanations and conversations when speaking. I try to learn new words, but it's always difficult." These statements provide very important information that students perceive vocabulary learning from a book as difficult, and learning while conversing with a native speaker makes more sense to them.

Answering Questionnaire 4, the majority of learners strongly agreed with the statement that they learned a lot of new words through tandem. The statement, "My tandem partner learned a lot of new vocabulary from me," provided the following results: 44.4% strongly agreed with this statement, 50% agreed, and 5.5% to some degree agreed. For item 17 (I have learned a lot of new vocabulary from my partner), the results were: 66.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed. Responses to all three items provided support for lexical learning.

When looking at both learner satisfaction expressed through questionnaires, and the multitude of examples related to lexical learning during tandem interactions in all possible contexts (lexical, grammatical, and cultural), the tandem setting provides learners with substantial opportunities for lexical learning.

**10.2.2 HYPOTHESIS 2:** There are substantial opportunities for grammatical learning from context and in context due to one's participation in tandem.

Although grammatical learning is not the main goal of the tandem method, which primarily focuses on communication, form-based LREs were very frequently observed during tandem meetings. In a regular, everyday communicative setting, understanding can be reached even when the non-native speaker speaks ungrammatically. Often, nobody corrects such sentences because it would be socially inappropriate, and in most instances, both parties would feel uncomfortable with it (the native speaker and the foreigner). During tandem interactions, a very different reality is created since both participants are experts and learners at the same time. The customary social norms do not apply in such contexts in most cases. Tandem participants want to learn. Their conversation with a native speaker is not small talk. It goes beyond communication, as they want to learn from the other person. As such, learners are well aware (or with time and experience become well aware) that corrective feedback is crucial for them in order to achieve L2 accuracy. For this reason, although participants of this study pointed out they were significantly more interested in lexical learning during tandem interactions and grammatical learning was their secondary goal, form-based LREs were observed in the

majority of tandem meetings because the second factor, corrective feedback, came into play.

Learners were not interested in grammatical instruction, per se, but they were very aware they wanted to receive corrective feedback, which was perceived as crucial for their learning. When answering the question: "Did you like it when your tandem partner corrected your errors? Why yes or no?" all participants answered affirmatively. In their opinion, the main goal of tandem was to be corrected. Error correction was crucial for learners to realize what was wrong with their L2 production. As one participant stated, "On the beginning I didn't enjoy being corrected, but once you realize how important it is to have your bad habits corrected, I began to prefer having my grammar or vocabulary corrected." Most participants pointed out that without corrections they were in danger of committing the same errors all the time. Learners also pointed out they perceived error correction as their tandem partner's interest in the interaction and in them.

Such a positive outlook on error correction resulted in the frequent presence of corrective feedback during typical tandem meetings. Such feedback led to grammatical (and sometimes lexical) learning, and provided learners with substantial opportunities for improvement. Questionnaire responses confirmed learners' strong preference for corrections: 89 % of participants strongly agreed and 11% agreed they liked to be corrected by their tandem partner (Item 8, Questionnaire 4). Tandem participants stated (33.3% strongly agreed, 39% agreed, and 27.7% to some degree agreed) they corrected the structure of their partner's sentences frequently (Item 13, Questionnaire 4). All participants agreed with the statement that they corrected a lot of their partner's pronunciation (Item 11, Questionnaire 4) and grammar (Item 12, Questionnaire 4). For

the last two items (grammar and pronunciation) identical results were obtained: 16.7% strongly agreed, 66.6% agreed, and 16.7% to some degree agreed.

In sum, the participants were well aware of the importance of corrective feedback, welcomed it, and frequently corrected the errors of the other learner. Correcting each others' errors, learners frequently became involved in metalinguistic discussions about corrected items. Due to all the above described factors, the tandem learning method provided learners with substantial opportunities for grammatical learning.

### 10.2.3 HYPOTHESIS 3: There are substantial opportunities for development of pragmatic knowledge and cultural exchanges because of students' participation in tandem.

As previously discussed, the tandem method provides learners with opportunities for lexical and grammatical learning, which arise from interaction. During interactions with native speakers, learners are also exposed to culture and pragmatics. One could argue that already this direct contact with a native speaker of one's L2 is a cultural experience, and thus, an opportunity for learning. Of course, not all contact results in learning, but as noted in Chapter 8, tandem learners tend to engage in extensive discussions about their respective cultures. They compare them, comment on them, and discuss their similarities and differences.

Sometimes, the tandem learners tried to help each other to become pragmatically and culturally more aware by explaining the rules of proper behavior in certain situations.

They gave each other corrective feedback with regard to the appropriateness of their pragmatic skills when interacting with members of the C2 (Excerpt 19).

Learners of German frequently asked native speakers how to approach certain situations in Germany in order to have a successful outcome (Excerpt 24). This could be categorized as an explicit request for pragmatic information and an opportunity for cultural/pragmatic learning.

In addition to their tandem meetings, learners often participated together in various cultural activities, including trips to different German cities, attendance at concerts (varying from classical music to rock) and various parties, a canoe trip, Open-Air Opera visits, theatre visits, dining in restaurants, and going out to cafés.

When answering the following question: "Did your partner help you understand better the culture of his or her country? Which new things did you learn about it?," participants pointed out they were able to learn about traditions, history, university life, and everyday life in the L2 country. They were also able to revise their previous, often stereotypical, opinions about native speakers of their L2, as shown in the following quote: "My opinion about the German people changed. They are also very nice and dependable. Sometimes, Spanish people have a very different stereotypical image of the German people."

In summary, participation in tandem gave learners a unique opportunity to have prolonged and direct contact with a native speaker of their L2. Due to such frequent and prolonged interactions, intensive cultural exchanges were present and stereotypes were revisited. Respondents agreed they learned a lot about their tandem partner's culture (Questionnaire 4, Item 9).

Combining the nature of tandem interactions (one-on-one contact with a native speaker), evidence of cultural learning obtained from analyzed data, and the positive feedback from questionnaires, Hypothesis 3 can be confirmed as well.

**10.2.4 HYPOTHESIS 4:** The majority of tandem participants are highly satisfied with the outcome of their learning in tandem and with the learning progress of their tandem partner, and would recommend this method to others.

According to the questionnaires, Hypothesis 4 can be confirmed as well. When looking at Item 21, Questionnaire 4 (I'm very satisfied with my participation in tandem), 89% of the participants strongly agreed and 11% agreed with this statement. Item 15, Questionnaire 4 (I liked interacting with my tandem partner), also confirmed that participants of this study were very satisfied with their tandem interactions. 100% of respondents agreed with this statement.

**10.3 Summary**

Analysis of all data indicates that the tandem method provides learners with substantial opportunities for lexical, grammatical, cultural, and pragmatic learning. As Swain (2000) would state, "as learners speak, their 'saying' becomes 'what they said', providing an object for reflection. Their 'saying' is cognitive activity, and 'what is said' is an outcome of that activity. Through saying and reflecting on what was said, new knowledge is constructed." (p. 113)

This construction of new knowledge occurs during tandem interactions in a truly communicative setting, which is very learner oriented. In tandem, learners' linguistic needs can be directly addressed as they arise. The tandem learning setting is also very flexible. Learners can choose what they want to talk about. They are able to spend a considerable amount of time focusing on their difficulties while learning the L2, discussing them, engaging in metatalk, and reflecting on both their L1 and L2. Such instructional situations, in which students set their own agendas and are always in charge of their own learning, are not very common in typical classroom interactions.

Further, the tandem method gives each participant the opportunity to be a novice and an expert in the same educational setting. In tandem, both learners have equal status during their interactions and both are entitled to interrupt the flow of the conversation at any time they have linguistic or cultural difficulties in order to ask the other person for help. This shift from communication to a focus on form, lexis, or culture frequently results in various LREs.

This equal position of tandem learners also makes this educational setting different from traditional classroom learning, where the teacher decides what will be learned and how it will be done.

During tandem interactions, learners are also able to question and to challenge the opinions of the expert (the other learner), and they do not have to agree with every instance of corrective feedback. In a traditional classroom setting, learners are expected to respect the teacher and not to disturb the flow of the lesson too much. In some traditional classrooms (which I have personally experienced), the teacher has a monopoly on expressing opinions. Such a situation would not be possible in a successful tandem

setting, where each person has the right to his or her own point of view, and each person's opinion is equally important.

As previously discussed, tandem learning allows learners to spend considerable amount of time discussing various aspects of their languages. The data presented in this dissertation demonstrate that when learners engage in metatalk, they are able to increase their L2 awareness and reflect about their native language. While answering questions about their own language, tandem participants are forced to analyze it in order to explain it to the other person. As Swain (2000) points out, "Through dialogue they regulate each other's activity, and their own. Their dialogue provides them both with opportunities to use language, and opportunities to reflect on their own language use. Together their jointly constructed performance outstrips their individual competencies" (p.111).

The collaborative dialogues of the tandem meetings represent opportunities to shift from a focus on meaning in communication to form. Language is used as a cognitive tool to talk about linguistic processes. As Swain and Lapkin (1998) would state, such dialogue "provides both the occasion for language learning and the evidence for it. Language is both process and product" (p.320). Through scaffolding, and help from the other more proficient learner, tandem participants are able to overcome their limitations and produce structures beyond their previous level. What occurs in their collaborative dialogue is learning.

## 10.4 Conclusion

The results of this dissertation suggest that the tandem learning method provides second language learners with substantial opportunities for lexical, grammatical, cultural, and pragmatic learning.

The tandem method represents language learning within the context of "real" communication. In this manner, it differs from purely form-focused classrooms as well as communicative classrooms or other communicative settings that lack any kind of focus on form. Thus, tandem represents a unique approach to language learning.

As observed in chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, the tandem participants regard their meetings as educational and frequently take advantage of the interaction with the native speaker of their L2 to ask questions, test linguistic hypotheses, and deepen their understanding of the second language and culture. Since their interaction is one-on-one, it is very intense and provides learners with constant opportunities to speak and to practice their L2 skills in a very comfortable learning environment, where both participants are able to maintain equal status. Also, many tandem partners take their responsibility as an "expert" very seriously, and they do not want the other person to speak their native language less than perfectly. Such an approach results in prolonged linguistic and/or cultural discussions. Frequently, corrective feedback is provided. Collected data provides evidence that some native speakers can be very persistent with their feedback and do not stop until the other learner notices and corrects his or her errors. This highly customized feedback could be seen as one of the strengths of the tandem method and an opportunity for second language learning.

Such an intense and personalized approach seems to be very well liked by the participants of this study since 100% of them were satisfied with their learning in tandem, according to the questionnaires' responses. However, the participants of this study pointed out that supplementing the tandem method with some type of formal classroom instruction is very beneficial because the native speaker is not always able to explain the nuances of his native language to the other learner and is not always able to give linguistically accurate feedback. For this reason, the combination of formal classroom instruction with the tandem method seems to be advisable. The classroom learning provides learners with intense theory instruction and well structured learning, but learners are not able to speak as much as needed in order to become fluent in their second language. During tandem meetings, learners can practice the previously learned theory and actively use the second language. Both approaches, the classroom learning and the tandem method, have their advantages and disadvantages. However, when combined, they seem to supplement each other very well creating a well balanced learning environment.

Additionally, the tandem method addresses all five Standards for Foreign Language Learning (communication, communities, cultures, connections, comparisons) developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, and for this reason its implementation should be considered by American educators.

Finally, the tandem method helps its participants to become life-long learners who can use their second language for personal enjoyment and enrichment: thus, it creates the crucial link between formal learning and independent learning.

## 10.4 Areas for future research

Since this research focused on the opportunities for lexical, grammatical, and cultural learning during tandem interactions at the intermediate level, investigation of the same research questions could be carried out at other levels of proficiency. Research comparing the differences between tandems of various nationalities would be of interest. It is possible that German-American tandems would have different dynamics than German-Spanish, or German-Japanese tandems. Finally, the new more formal approach to tandem introduced at the Freie University in Berlin merits investigation.

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# Appendix A

**QUESTIONAIRE 1**
**PARTICIPANTS BACKGROUND**

Please, provide the following information.
(* LT=Language you are practicing with your tandem partner for your own benefit)
1.  Your age:
2.  Your gender:
3.  Native language:
4.  Language you are practicing with your tandem partner for your own benefit (LT):

5.  Occupation (if you are a student, please, indicate what are you studying):

6.  Hobbies:


7.  Where and for how long have you been studying LT? List all previously attended institutions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____


8.  What is your current level of LT? At which level you are currently enrolled at your language school?


9.  Why are you learning LT?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

____


10. Studying LT right now, what is more important for you: focus on grammar or on vocabulary? Please explain reasons for your choice.


11. Why did you decide to study this language?

# Appendix B

1.   Why did you decide to participate in a tandem program?

2.   How often do you meet with your tandem partner? For how long?

3.   In your opinion, what is a better learning method: in a classroom with a teacher or through interaction with your tandem partner? Please, explain shortly your point of view.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4.   In your opinion, what are the 3 most important differences between tandem learning and classroom learning?

5.   Do you like when your tandem partner corrects your errors? Why do you like it, or why don't you like it?

6.   What have you learned so far from your tandem partner?

7.   What do you hope your tandem partner has learned from you?

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# Appendix C

1.  Did you and your partner socialize outside of your tandem-learning situation? How often? What did you do? Did you meet any of his/her friends or family?

2.  Did you partner help you understand better the culture of his/her country? What new did you learn about it?

3.  Would you recommend to a friend to participate in a tandem program?

4.  In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the tandem learning method?

# Appendix D

SA=strongly agree
A= agree
XA=to some degree agree
D= disagree
SD = strongly disagree

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I'm satisfied with the outcome of my participation in the tandem program | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 2. I'm using new words because of tandem interactions | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 3. My pronunciation improved because of tandem | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 4. My grammar improved through tandem interactions | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 5. Tandem program was a "waste of time" for me | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 6. I could learn more with a different tandem partner | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 7. I speak more in the classroom than during tandem exchange | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 8. I like when my tandem partner corrects my errors | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 9. I have learned a lot about my partners' culture through tandem | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 10. I prefer learning in a classroom with a teacher than through tandem | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 11. I have corrected my partner's pronunciation a lot | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 12. I have corrected my partner's grammar a lot | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 13. I have corrected my partner's sentences | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 14. I think my partner can better speak my native language because of me | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 15. I liked interacting with my tandem partner | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 16. My tandem partner learned a lot of new vocabulary from me | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 17. I have learned new vocabulary from my partner | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 18. I speak more during my tandem interaction than in the classroom | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 19. Tandem program is beneficial for students | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 20. If available, I will continue with tandem in my native country | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 21. I will never again participate in tandem program because I did not like it | SA | A | XA | D | SD |
| 22. I understand better my partners' culture because of tandem | SA | A | XA | D | SD |

Participant's background
1. Gender:  F      M
2. Age:  _____
3. Native language: _____
4. Native country: _____
5. Level of German: _____
6. Occupation: _____
7. Other foreign languages you can speak:

# Appendix E

**ALLGEMEINE INFORMATION ZUM TEILNEHMER**
*Wenn Sie mehr Platz für Ihre Antworten brauchen, benutzen Sie bitte auch die Rückseite dieses Blattes.*

Bitte beantworten Sie folgende Fragen.
(*LT=Die Sprache, für die Sie das Tandem machen)

11. Alter:
12. Geschlecht:
13. Muttersprache:
14. Die Sprache, für die Sie das Tandem machen:
15. Was machen Sie zur Zeit? Bitte den genauen Beruf bzw. Studiengang angeben:

16. Interessen:

17. Wie lange lernen Sie schon die Sprache für Sie dasTandem machen? Wo haben sie diese Sprache vorher glernt und wie lange? Bitte führen Sie ausführlich auf.

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

18. Wie würden Sie Ihren aktuellen Sprachkenntnisstand bezeichnen? Auf welchem Niveau sind Sie zur Zeit auf der Sprachschule?

19. Mit welchem Ziel lernen Sie die Sprache?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

20. Worauf konzentrieren Sie sich beim Sprachelernen zur Zeit -eher auf die Grammatik oder auf die Erweiterung des Wortschatzes? Warum? Bitte begründen Sie Ihre Antwort.

21. Was hat Sie motiviert die Tandem-sprache zu lernen?

# Appendix F

1. Warum haben Sie sich entschlossen an Tandem-dem Sprachaustausch mit einem Tandempartner-teilzunehmen?

2. Wie oft treffen Sie sich mit Ihrem Tandem Partner? Wie lange dauert ein Treffen?

3. Wie funktioniert Ihrer Meinung nach der bessere Sprachunterricht? Durch betreutes Lernen in einer Sprachschule oder durch den Austausch mit einem Tandem Partner? Erklären Sie das bitte.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Worin unterscheiden sich die beiden oben genannten Lernmethoden im Wesentlichen? Nennen Sie bitte drei wichtigsten Punkte.

5. Wie stehen Sie dazu, von Ihrem Partner bei Fehlern korrigiert zu werden? Bitte begründen Sie die Antwort.

6. Was haben Sie so weit von Ihrem Tandem Partner gelernt?

7. Was hoffen Sie, dass Ihr Tandem Partner von Ihnen gelernt hat?

# Appendix G

**FRAGEBOGEN 3**
\* Tandem Methode-bedeutet hier das Treffen von 2 Personen um die Sprache des Partners zu lernen.

5. Haben Sie zu Ihren Tandem Partner eine Freundschaft aufgebaut? Was und wie oft haben Sie etwas zusammen unternommen? Haben Sie die Freunde/Familie des Tandem Partners kennengelernt?

6. Konnte Ihr Tandem Partner Ihnen sein Land und seine Kultur etwas näherbringen? Haben Sie etwas Neues dazugelernt? Was?

7. Würden Sie die Tandem Methode weiter empfehlen?

8. Wo sehen Sie die Stärken und Schwächen der Tandem Methode?

# Appendix H

SA= ich stimme dem ganz zu
A= ich stimme dem zu
XA= ich stimme dem teilweise zu
D= ich stimme dem nicht zu
SD = ich stimme dem überhaupt nicht zu

1. Ich bin mit dem Erbebnis meines Tandems zufrieden SA A XA D SD
2. Durch den Austausch beim Tandem benutze ich neue Wörter SA A XA D SD
3. Durch das Tandem hat sich meine Aussprache verbessert SA A XA D SD
4. Durch das Tandem hat sich meine Grammatik verbessert SA A XA D SD
5. Das Tamdem war für mich eine Zeitverschwendung SA A XA D SD
6. Mit einem anderen Tandem Partner könnte ich mehr lernen SA A XA D SD
7. Ich spreche mehr in der Sprachschule als mit meinem Tandem Partner SA A XA D SD
8. Ich finde es gut, wenn mein Tandem Partner meine Fehler korrigiert SA A XA D SD
9. Durch das Tandem habe ich viel über die Kultur des Partners gelernt SA A XA D SD
10. Ich bevorzuge das Sprachelernen in einer Sprachschule als Tandem SA A XA D SD
11. Ich habe die Aussprache meines Partners korrigiert SA A XA D SD
12. Ich habe die Grammatik meines Partners korrigiert SA A XA D SD
13. Ich habe die Struktur der Sätze meines Partners oft korrigiert SA A XA D SD
14. Durch meine Hilfe spricht mein Partner meine Muttersprache besser SA A XA D SD
15. Ich mochte den Austausch mit meinem Tandem Partner SA A XA D SD
16. Mein Tandem Partner konnte durch meine Hilfe seinen Wortschatz vergrößern SA A XA D SD
17. Ich konnte mit Hilfe meines Tandem Partners meinen Wortschatz vergrößern SA A XA D SD
18. Ich spreche mit meinem Tandem Partner mehr als in der Sprachschule SA A XA D SD
19. Die Tandem Methode ist sehr hilfreich für Studenten SA A XA D SD
20. Ich fände es wünschenswert,
    die Tandem Methode in meinem Heimatland fortzuführen SA A XA D SD
21. Ich werde nie wieder ein Tandem machen, weil es mir nicht gefallen hat SA A XA D SD
22. Das Tandem hat mir die Kultur des Partners nähergebracht SA A XA D SD

## Allgemeine Informationen zum Teilnehmer
1. Geschlecht: W     M
2. Alter: _____
3. Mutterprache:_____
4. Herkunftsland:_____
5. Ihr Niveau der Fremdsprache, die sie im Tandem lernen:
6. Beruf: _____
7. Andere Fremdsprachen, die Sie sprechen:

# Appendix I

**Symbols used in this dissertation for discourse transcription**

1. Errors are marked in **"bold"**

2. ↑- rising intonation

3. ↓-falling intonation

4. [   ] researcher's comment and/or non-verbal communication

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