

Introduction

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This volume provides an overview of a specific type of learning, called tandem language and culture learning, which was created and developed in Europe before reaching other continents. Through focusing on higher education, the authors aim to demonstrate how, despite institutional constraints, language educators can make better use of this practice in such contexts as internationalisation, physical and virtual mobility, lifelong learning and intercultural education. It is often believed that Tandem (or tandem learning) is an innovative and original pedagogical tool used by language teachers to make up for the scarcity of real-life, authentic communication in the target language for their L2 learners in the classroom. Yet, tandem learning, as such, is by no means new in so far as it has existed and been practised for the last 60 or more years. Indeed, in the very words of Helmut Brammerts, one of the pioneers of Tandem pedagogy: “Two people with different native languages teaming up to learn each other’s language is certainly one of the oldest learning methods in the world” (Brammerts, 1996, p. 121). What is relatively modern, however, is how the current forms of the tandem learning constellation illustrate the necessary re-interpretation and adaptation of tandem principles as they were originally set out. Indeed, these core principles are the starting point of our reflection rather than the specific modes and tools for its implementation (face-to-face, etandem, online intercultural exchange, individual or class collaboration, etc.). This book aims to account for the adaptation process Tandem has been and is still undergoing. It looks at how the fast-evolving language learning situations along with the linguistic and sociocultural realities of an increasingly globalised world have participated in reassessing tandem learning and in reaffirming its value and relevance.

Going Back to the Origins of Tandem Learning

The origins of tandem language and culture learning can be traced back to collaborative practices introduced by the Franco-German Youth Office (Office Franco-Allemand de la Jeunesse—OFAJ) which, with the

humanistic ideal of bringing people together after the Second World War, aimed at fostering cooperation between French and German youths through linguistic and cultural exchanges in the form of language courses in holiday camps during the late 1960s (Brammerts, 1996).

The seventies (in Spain) and the beginning of the 1980s saw the establishment of tandem partnerships between tourists and native speakers of the language they were learning (Wolff, 1982) and between university students with different native languages (Muller, Schneider, & Wertenschlag, 1988, quoted in Little & Brammerts, 1996).

The two main founding principles of such “an educational utopia of companionship” (Helmling, 2002, preface) were then fully established: autonomy and reciprocity. These two principles were valued positively in a more general European context.

A first publication by Holec gave a rather radical definition of autonomy, as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning, to have and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3). In the field of education, autonomy has often been understood as a goal to be reached. But, Little (1991, 2007) considers autonomy to be inherent to human beings. He points out that “according to a large body of empirical research in social psychology, autonomy—‘feeling free and volitional in one’s actions’ (Deci, 1995, p. 2)—is a basic human need” (Little, 2007, p. 1). Following Holec’s definition, different versions of autonomy have appeared detailing its various criteria (Dickinson, 1987; Fenner, 2000; Pothier, 2003). Pothier, in particular, pointed out that language learner autonomy involved actions that were normally the teachers’ prerogatives such as, goal-setting, choice of materials and resources, pace, assessment and so on. This was precisely the type of actions on which Tandem meant to rely. Coincidentally, a more concrete tool came into existence: the European Language Portfolio (ELP) (Council of Europe, 2000/2004), which reminds us that at the turn of the century, the ELP was conceived as a tool designed “to make the language learning process more transparent to the learner and to foster the development of learner autonomy” (Little et al., 2007, p. 10). The second function of the ELP was “to provide evidence of second/foreign language communicative proficiency and intercultural experience” (Ibid.). Both functions seemed perfectly in keeping with Tandem’s ideals. Finally, one cannot fail to emphasise some aspects of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) published by the Council of Europe in 2001. Although the CEFR did not enhance learner autonomy straightforwardly, it appealed to the concept of “ability to learn” implying language and communication awareness and self-assessment (e.g., the “Can-do” descriptors). In sum, research on learner autonomy associated with a strong European determination to foster “enlightened” European citizenship comforted the proponents of the Tandem approach.

The second main principle concerns reciprocity. Tandem language learning relies heavily on the goodwill of both partners to take part in the exchange and to support each other in the learning process. If they wish to benefit equally from their meetings, they should strictly comply with the original rules which required them “to devote the same length of time to each language and to invest the same quantity of energy and involvement in their partner’s success” (Reymond & Tardieu, 2001, p. 21). Vassallo and Telles (2006, p. 83) emphasise the fact that, in the standard form of Tandem, the two languages could not be mixed and were to be kept strictly separate.

The underlying assumption relating to reciprocity—although not a principle explicitly put forward as such—was that both tandem partners were native speakers and that speaker A’s native language was speaker B’s target language and vice versa (Brammerts, 1996; Helmling, 2002). The partners were to ensure reciprocity by speaking in each language for the same amount of time. Today, the very notions of “nativeness” and separation of languages are being challenged, thus prompting further thinking and discussion.

The reciprocity principle was in line with another crucial contextual phenomenon at the time: the development of physical European mobility among students multiplied possibilities for both cross-linguistic and cross-cultural collaboration. In 1987, the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) programme was officially implemented. It was incorporated into the Socrates 1 programme in 1994, which was initiated by the European Commission, and followed by the Socrates II programme in the year 2000. The university exchanges developed by Brammerts and Calvert in Bochum and Sheffield universities certainly benefited from this boost in students’ mobility.

The 1990s also witnessed the integration of new communication technology in tandem learning pedagogy (especially with the technological revolution brought about by the Internet and democratisation of personal computers) and the advent of distance or virtual tandem modalities. The Tandem approach thus became largely accessible to partners who were not physically present in the same place (communication across national boundaries) and sometimes not at the same time (synchronous and asynchronous tandem interactions). In particular, the LINGUA Projekt International E-mail Tandem Network (1994–1996) was established at Ruhr-Universität Bochum and together with its partner universities of Oviedo and Sheffield. It was funded by the European Commission and gathered more than 10 European countries which collaborated on the development of didactic materials to facilitate foreign language learning in tandem via the Internet (Little & Brammerts, 1996). Bochum University became the hosting institution for a web-based platform providing virtual tandem partners in 14 different languages after free registration. However, distance tandem supplemented rather than replaced face-to-face tandem,

which kept on being promoted in parallel. Brammerts and Calvert (2003), especially, were the organisers of tandem and “tridem” exchanges in Oviedo every summer with students from their three universities. In the late 1990s, their *Lingua D* project, also set out to extend the tandem approach from universities to secondary schools in France (Reymond & Tardieu, 2001), the UK (Gläsmann & Calvert, 2001), Germany and Spain. Once again, the project concerned both types of mobility. One of its main goals was to help teachers experiment and implement various forms of tandem learning from extra-curricular to class-embedded tandem. Research conducted by Helmling (2002) in relation with OFAJ, also contributed to consolidating this practice and establishing it in universities and specialist higher education institutions in support of student mobility across different European countries (more specifically, Germany, Spain, the UK, Romania and France).

Virtual tandem, which became known as “etandem” around the year 2000, was based on technology-mediated communication and was initially restricted to asynchronous written interactions (tandem via e-mails or chats). It allowed for fast communication, linguistic feedback and intercultural learning but did not grant the learners the possibility to improve their oral skills in the foreign language nor did it give them access to oral and non-verbal cues that play an essential role in a highly multimodal face-to-face interaction.

This shortcoming was soon offset by another technological development in the early years of the 21st century: instantaneous video chat platforms, such as, MSN messenger and Skype, which sparked the development of teletandem and other forms of online cultural exchanges. For example, since 2006 the Teletandem Brazil Project (Telles & Vassallo, 2006) has aimed at generalising online tandem between students at the University of Assis (UNESP) and foreign students throughout the world, with voice, video and instant messaging software over the Internet. In the last decade, following the fast development in the field of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), a trend of pedagogy and research has veered away from face-to-face tandem to specialise in virtual telecollaboration (Jager, Kurek, & O'Rourke, 2016) and Online Intercultural Exchanges or OIE (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016). Their priority has shifted from language learning as a prime objective to communication across cultures and borders as a form of social action in service of better inclusion and global citizenship.

The intercultural dimension became all the more striking as it gained support not only from the new possibilities offered by the technologies or by the European exchange programmes, but also from two other key factors: the direction taken by the CEFR and the influential scientific production in that field between 2000 and 2010. Indeed, the dissemination of the CEFR's views on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism contributed to enhancing equality between languages and cultures and reciprocity in

all forms of exchange. For historical reasons and due to the development of European language policies, (e.g., the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013), the introduction of the expanded Erasmus+ programme in 2014 and the 30th anniversary of Erasmus in 2017) the tandem learning practice has been established much longer and more widely in Europe than in the United States of America (O'Rourke, 2005). At the same time, publications about multilingualism and the intercultural competence started to provide a powerful theoretical framework (Byram, 1997; Zarate, Levy, & Kramsch, 2008; Demorgon, 2002, 2003, 2004). Woodin (2018)'s recent publication on *Interculturality, Interaction and Language Learning. Insights from Tandem Partnerships* is concerned with how “we create shared meaning” rather than “how we acquire proficiency in a foreign language. Shared meaning, ownership of language/culture, identity and interculturality are the key issues of her approach. Through her analysis of micro contexts of tandem learning focusing on the negotiation of word meaning, Woodin offers a fine-grained understanding of interculturality at work.

We hope that this brief historical overview has shown the relevance of some of the questions this book intends to address. How have Tandem and its core principles evolved since the beginning of the 21st century? Are the original principles of autonomy and reciprocity still relevant today? What about tandem participants' “nativeness”? In other words, how can a practice, which stemmed from a strong monolingual tradition, evolve in today's globalised context? What becomes of the principle of autonomy in the process of the institutional integration of tandem learning? To what extent do communication modes and tools reaffirm or else jeopardise the key concept of Tandem? Such questions and issues are precisely what our book aims to explore from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Taking a Critical Stance on Tandem Learning

The reader will find a critical perspective informed by past and present forms of tandem learning in a wide range of geographical and socio-linguistic contexts both in Europe (Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the UK) and outside Europe (Brazil, Canada and the USA). For that purpose, the authors' contributions adopt both a theoretical and practical approach and compare the tandem original principles with the realities of today's higher education institutions as well as the new developments in Second Language Learning and Teaching.

Key questions examined in this volume include: Do tandem practices truly promote the development of linguistic, intercultural and professional competences? What are the organisational and pedagogical implications of setting up a tandem language learning programme? What is the current state of research in this domain? Has the rise in new technologies

encouraged the growth of distance tandem learning (tele-tandem and etandem) over face-to-face tandem set-ups? In short, how is this practice being institutionalised in higher education environments and how is it integrated into the language teaching/learning curricula?

We explore theoretical aspects drawing from research in complementary domains (language acquisition, didactics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and cognitive sciences), along with pedagogical implications and applications (field reports and innovative practices), as well as language education policies (intercultural policies, international student mobility, etc.).

Some crucial theoretical issues relate to the shift from a monolingual to a multilingual approach to language and culture learning (Kramsch, 2009; Zarate et al., 2008; Docherty & Barker, 2016). This paradigm shift is all the more relevant since it directly challenges one of the fundamental principles of the original tandem setting, viewed as a conversation between two native speakers of two different languages. Kohn's work on the Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition (TILA) project reports on two pedagogic language "constellations": Tandem but also the "Lingua franca constellation" which involves the use of a non-native shared language (Kohn, 2016, p. 91). Consequently, the discussion about the concepts of 'native speaker,' 'multilingual speaker' and 'competent speaker' (revised version of the CEFR, 2018) will be at the heart of our reflection. Other primary concepts will have to be redefined such as the concepts of reciprocity and mediation which involve far more than linguistic capacities—even more so in the context of tandem exchanges (Ware & Kramsch, 2005).

The Current Volume

The current volume is divided into three main parts.

The first part of the book, *Remodelling Tandem Learning*, focuses on revisiting tandem principles, rethinking theoretical models and accounting for some innovative applications in tandem learning programmes.

Regarding key concepts, Cappellini, Elstermann and Rivens Mompean (Chapter 1) question the notion of reciprocity, the second tandem founding principle; and more particularly they examine how learners mediate reciprocity through different formats of learners' logs. They explore the way "reciprocity at the micro level can be linked to the meso level of the relationship between groups," and emphasise the importance of the social relationship which contributes to creating a friendly climate.

Woodin (Chapter 2) underscores the importance of "native speaker-ness" as well as the essentialist conception of culture. Even if language educators recognise that multilingual, multicultural teaching would be highly relevant in the language class, the institutional contexts rarely give room to such an approach. Tandem partners themselves highlight

their interest in meeting a native speaker. One way out of this paradox is to consider that neither languages nor cultures are fixed and to focus on the fluidity of “*languaculture*” (Agar, 1994), thus “understanding the processes of meaning-making in interaction”. Woodin then emphasises the intercultural paradigm thus doing away with the nativeness dogma and its primary focus on language development. She resorts to Byram’s intercultural competence (1997), which relies on a comparative approach and to Kramsch (2006)’s broader notion of symbolic competence.

Hilton (Chapter 3) takes a psycholinguistic perspective on tandem language and culture learning. She addresses the key question of what can, but also, what cannot be learnt in tandem interactions, taking a theoretical stance on the limitations of informal, unstructured tandem learning. She challenges the common assumption that L1 language acquisition is natural and effortless and points to the extra challenges posed by L2 acquisition (in particular non-automatic encoding and decoding processes and limited working memory). She explains how the acquisition of a target culture and target language forms should not be taken for granted as naturally entailing from tandem interactions and should be carefully structured and implemented, as well as grounded in solid acquisition theory.

McAllister and Narcy-Combes (Chapter 4) embark on revisiting tandem learning principles through the translanguaging lens. They anchor their reflection in the most recent interpretations of the translanguaging theory including Garcia and Kley (2016). While the notion of autonomy seems quite compatible with the translanguaging approach, that of reciprocity is problematic because it originally relates to the separation of languages. Regarding the dichotomy “native/non-native”, the authors prefer the terms “initial language(s)” (L1) and “additional language(s)” (L2) (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). The aim of their study is to analyse how 13 English and French initial language speakers at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle University experienced translanguaging in their conversations and to investigate “how translanguaging was taken up or resisted by them in tandem learning settings.”

Finally, Benoit and Lomicka (Chapter 5) continue on the same subject of translanguaging, but in a slightly different perspective as it focuses more on reciprocity and the intercultural. Their tandem project, involving virtual tandem exchanges between postgraduate students at the University of South Carolina (USA) and Master level engineering students at École des Ponts et Chaussées in France, re-examines the concept of reciprocity in a pluricultural, multilingual learning context. The authors prioritise mutual understanding over accuracy of expression. Indeed, their reflection is in line with Williams (1994, 1996, 2002)’s, who was the first to coin the expression “translanguaging” and to describe it as a bilingual system allowing one to alternate between languages (here, French and English). They also rely on more recent works by Shohamy (2013), Canagarajah

(2012), and García and Wei (2014) who refer to the use of multiple languages by plurilingual individuals as an integrated linguistic repertoire.

The second part of the book, *Tandem and (Language and Culture) Learning*, is dedicated to the learning objectives, processes, and outcomes of Tandem set-ups. The first two chapters more specifically centre on intercultural development through tandem set-ups. Echoing Woodin's theoretical reflection in chapter 2, chapters 6 and 7 present fieldwork experiments to explore the intercultural competence development through Tandem.

Vinagre and Corral (Chapter 6) set out to analyse the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration through a linguistically grounded approach. They analyse the etandem exchange of 20 pairs made up of Spanish and American students over two and a half months. In the framework of Martin and White (2005)'s Appraisal Theory, they explore how etandem partners use attitudinal language to display traces of the attitude component of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as described by Byram (1997).

Raluy and Szymańska-Czaplak (Chapter 7) explore the development of intercultural sensitivity through online communication in English lingua franca (see Woodin's intercultural speaker in Chapter 2) between Spanish students (University of Vic, Spain) and Polish students (University of Opole, Poland) through asynchronous communication via Moodle platform over a semester. They take intercultural sensitivity (the awareness that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a positive or negative value) to be a prerequisite for intercultural competence, which is a life-long learning process.

The question of language (fluency and accuracy) development through tandem is tackled in the next two chapters. Shuman and Stemberger (Chapter 8) reflect upon the improvement of L2 fluency through face-to-face tandem thanks to the UBC tandem Program (University of British Columbia, Canada) in two L2 languages (French and Japanese) spoken by pairs of less proficient/more proficient learners (rather than native speakers, see also Woodin's Chapter 2). They examine whether the learners' self-perceived fluency improvement in the course of their 10-week programme correlates with evaluators' assessment, but also with five objective measures of fluency.

Scheuer and Horgues (Chapter 9) explore the potential of tandem learning for developing, not only language fluency, but also language accuracy through the corrective feedback (CF) provided by the native-speaking partners. Drawing from the methodology of CF provided by teachers in the classroom, they analyse a corpus of video-recorded face-to-face spoken tandem interaction between French students and English-speaking students.

In the last chapter of part 2, Chapter 10, Aguilar Río, Brudermann and Abendroth-Timmer, who study the potential and limitations of tandem

learning to foster professional development amongst pre-service language (L2) teachers, address the development of professional skills through tandem. They start by reviewing the recent literature, especially about tandem implementation, its problems and solutions as a pedagogical practice. They then analyse three tandem and collaborative pre-service language teacher training projects which aim at developing various teacher professional skills (digital literacy skills, awareness about the intercultural and/or emotional dimensions underlying language learning/teaching).

The methodological reflections presented in part 3 of the book (*Running Tandem Programmes*) will prove useful for any teacher/educationalist who intends to embark on setting up, managing and assessing a tandem programme at their institution. More particularly, in line with the tradition set by OFAJ, Kleppin (Chapter 11) revisits Holec's concept of learner autonomy through exploring the various forms of self-assessment made easier by the can-do descriptors from CEFR. She proposes to adapt them to the context of tandem learning. She wonders whether the learner log can be a useful tool for tandem partners in the perspective of self-evaluation and beyond self-reflection on the learning process itself. Her chapter challenges the following four issues: self- and peer-assessment at the beginning of the tandem course; recognition and concretisation of progress; commented self- and peer-assessment at the end of the tandem course; and evaluation of the potential of tandem work.

In the next chapter, Tejedor Cabrera (Chapter 12) tackles the issue of tandem assessment within an institutional context in the university of Seville. Overall, the key question is whether educators can convince administrators to institutionalise such a practice into secondary and higher education settings and to integrate tandem methodologies into their language teaching/learning programs (see Chapter 11 as well).

A few case studies are then presented to illustrate some of the applied challenges of running tandem projects. For example, Lallemand (Chapter 13) reflects on the place of tandem learning in the context of internationalisation of higher education, with the example of INALCO (*Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales*, France), an institution which specialises in the teaching of no less than 100 languages. In particular, she looks at the issues of assessment and the role of the intercultural teacher-mediator and the challenges of maintaining institutional support (see also chapters 11 and 12 on the issue of Tandem recognition).

Băgiag and Guy (Chapter 14) give a practical report on their experience of writing and using a tandem textbook. They explain the background that motivated its creation: their 2012–2014 project in five European universities (in Romania, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Switzerland), which centred on both bilingual sessions in mutual immersion and on tandem practice. They explain the rationale behind their textbook and their tandem website, especially how they considered different L2 proficiency levels (and adapted activities to each level) but also the learners' fields of

study (same specialisation in *unidisciplinary tandems*, or *mixed fields in bidisciplinary tandems*).

Finally, echoing Kleppin's final questioning, Sánchez-González and Koch (Chapter 15) focus on the role of counselling tandem learning, especially in relation to learners' autonomy and reciprocity. They set their research in two pioneering institutions in this field: the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB, Germany) and the Universidad de Oviedo (UO, Spain). Their starting point was that compulsory counselling contradicts the principle of autonomy and that voluntary counselling is often underproductive (low attendance). They collected tandem participants' attitudes to counselling through questionnaires and interviews.

Part 3 finishes with Chapter 16, which exposes the specific situation of European countries and language communities regarding language diversity and language policies (with a close-up on four linguistic contexts: Ireland, Wales, Finland and Catalonia). This general overview provided by Gallagher, from the Centre for Irish Cultural Heritage, does not specifically focus on Tandem but it offers precious insights on multilingualism issues in Europe.

In the concluding chapter, we show how the various contributions proposed in this book open new perspectives for an updated and critical approach on tandem language and culture learning in today's higher education. A redefinition of the very term Tandem will eventually be proposed along with a "Tandem constellation map" designed to match the specificities of any particular set-up.

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