

eTandem language learning

An alternative learning mode to develop students' English speaking competence

Martha Guadalupe Hernández Alvarado



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Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades
Área Académica de Lingüística



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An alternative learning mode to develop students' English speaking competence

Martha Guadalupe Hernández Alvarado

UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DEL ESTADO DE HIDALGO



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Abstract

Previous studies have revealed the potential of eTandem language learning for language and intercultural learning between native speakers of two different languages. Most research however has focused on the development of learners' writing skills through synchronous and asynchronous written CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) such as e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and text-based chats. This book examines the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence, based on their reflections and perceptions of improvement. The research data comes from pre and post semi-structured interviews as well as participants' learning portfolios used in the three-week exchange. Results suggest that learners perceived an improvement of their speaking competence in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. Findings also indicate that the eTandem oral exchange with native speakers provided learners with opportunities to gain knowledge of sociocultural rules of language and to practice strategies to compensate for communication breakdowns. It is suggested that in future research, language tasks are carefully designed to incorporate opportunities for participants to improve their grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences in speaking.

Foreword

When I started reading this book, it was clear that it was born out a universal need: how to improve the conversation level of learners of English and, more specifically, how to help future English teachers achieve a competent level of conversation in the target language. In general, students in language teacher preparation programs are highly motivated, regardless of their fluidity level; the challenge is to provide them with an ideal environment in which students will reach new levels of skills and knowledge. In this book, Martha Guadalupe Hernández Alvarado not only takes on the task of finding out if eTandem is an effective tool for improving conversational skills but also what is the perception that students have of themselves after a few sessions of computer-mediated dialogue with their peers in the United Kingdom. In this decade, I have come across dozens of research projects and literature focused mostly on identity, cultural competency, and performance during and after eTandem sessions from both points of view: the learners (the students) and the professors (or facilitators) who create the sessions. In this qualitative study, Hernández Alvarado observes and interviews a small group of students who participate in eTandem sessions for the first time. Although this book presents the findings of a small study, it provides the reader with a detailed account of the latest research on eTandem learning and offers well-founded suggestions for those who would like to start an eTandem program or for established practitioners in language teacher preparation

programs. The findings apply to small, medium, and large groups, as well as intermediate (B1) and advanced (B2-C1) students.

The participants in the study are students of the BA in English Language Teaching at Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo in Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico. As the author points out, many students in this program have visited the United States and have been taught by British and American instructors; however, they do not have the opportunity to hold frequent conversations with English native speakers. The students in the program do not have similar skills and many need to reach a higher level of competency. The author asserts that “it is necessary to provide learners with authentic language practice in a real communicative context in their own country and learning setting.” Thus, the use of eTandem—or teletandem as it is known in Brazil and parts of Latin America—which is an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that allows the language learner to practice conversation skills with native speakers. In my experience, eTandem gives students more confidence and more tools to eventually learn on their own.

The ultimate objective of learning a second language is to be able to swiftly interact with native speakers and advanced learners of that language. When the learner has the objective of being a teacher of the target language, the need for culture and language competency grows in importance. Aside from acquiring an advanced understanding of the language and the pedagogical skills to teach and

assess it, future teachers must practice conversational skills more than the casual learner in order to be successful. Future language teachers must become life learners by creating their own personal learning networks and creating learning spaces that will foster life-learning. In an ideal situation, every individual who wishes to learn another language with the intention of teaching it would have the opportunity to live in a place where the target language is spoken by the majority of the population. Living in an environment that promotes the use and understanding of the target language requires money, time, resources, and effort that in many cases cannot be afforded by future language teachers; especially, if they live far from places where native speakers of the studied language live or visit. As Hernández Alvarado suggests, eTandem is one of the tools that future language instructors should use to practice listening and speaking skills.

One of the problems that this study had in its initial phase, was finding a partner university for the eTandem exchange. This issue does not affect the study or its findings in the least. In fact, it makes it stronger because it tells one of the reasons why not every school and university has currently an eTandem program. As an eTandem practitioner since 2011, I can assure the reader that it is not easy to find partners and to set up sessions. In many cases, the time difference, the lack of bandwidth, and the type of equipment interfere and the collaboration never happens. I applaud Hernández Alvarado for including this information in her book, since it takes time and effort to start and maintain eTandem partnerships, and, eventually, do research and other collaborative projects.

Students' perception of themselves is a very important piece of the eTandem puzzle when organizing an eTandem session. You may have the best equipment, an optimal time for the exchange, and learners who are at the same level of language in their target language; however, if professors or facilitators do not understand the participants and how they feel before, during, and after the exchange, the entire experience may become a negative one for the students.

I believe that the best way to use this book is to read it all at once, then keep it as a reference and re-read it when planning and evaluating eTandem sessions.

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Introduction

Learning a language in a foreign context represents a big challenge as the context itself does not provide learners with many opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom for real communication purposes. However, with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), it is now possible to be in contact with native speakers of a target language and be exposed to accurate models of the language in an environment that promotes authentic communication. Tandem language learning has been implemented in Europe since 1968 as a learning mode that allows native speakers of two different languages to be in contact through different communication media in order to learn each other's language. Previous studies on tandem (Kötter, 2002; Lewis & Walker, 2003; Truscott & Morley, 2003; Lee, 2007; Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010; Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011) have revealed its potential for language and intercultural learning. However, most research has focused on the development of learners' writing skills through synchronous and asynchronous written CMC such as e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and text-based chats. This study examines the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence, based on their reflections and perceptions of improvement. The research data comes from pre and post semi-structured interviews as well as participants' learning portfolios used in the three-week exchange.

Structure of the research study

This work consists of five chapters. Chapter one offers a description of the teaching and learning context where the research takes place and states the problem, aims as well as research questions to be addressed in the study. This chapter also explains the researcher's motivation to conduct the study as well as its significance regarding the implementation of eTandem language learning projects in this and similar academic contexts. Chapter two reviews literature on tandem language learning, its definition, main principles, approaches, and the media used by language partners to communicate with native speakers of their target language depending on their learning goals and needs. In addition, it discusses findings and challenges faced in previous research on eTandem language learning in order to set the bases for this study, which elaborates on their findings and suggestions for the adoption of eTandem language learning in this particular context. Chapter three provides information regarding the methodology used in the present study with a detailed description of participants, research procedure, data collection instruments, data analysis, as well as limitations encountered in the study. Chapter four presents and discusses the findings obtained from the analysis of data from participants' pre and post interviews and eTandem learning portfolios. Chapter five concludes by summarising the findings emerged from the study, commenting on the pedagogical implications, and providing recommendations for further research in the field of eTandem language learning in this and similar English learning contexts.

Chapter 1

Research Study

1.1 Statement of the problem

The B.A. in English Language Teaching at the “Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo” was founded in 1999 with the objective of preparing qualified teachers of English, capable of teaching the language in higher education institutions. The program has always recognised the need for ELT professionals to be not only linguistically competent but also methodologically and pedagogically trained in order to become efficient ELT practitioners.

However, as no language requirements have been set to enter the program, many learners throughout the years have enrolled in the B.A. with a low or no level of English at all. They seem to share the belief that they will learn the language from scratch once they are in the B.A. and are not aware of the high proficiency level they will need to reach in order to get their degree and to teach the language in the future. According to the B.A. program, learners must obtain 550 points in the TOEFL test or a B mark in the FCE as a requirement to get their degree, which is level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL).

This situation along with other limitations related to learning English as a foreign language may be the main reasons why many learners at the B.A. have a poor level of English, particularly in speaking. This fact has been observed by the

program academic staff when students are evaluated throughout their English courses, participate in spontaneous conversations outside academic contexts, and take international examinations at the end of their studies in order to get their degree. The context for teaching and learning English at the B.A. shares the predominant problems found in most foreign language learning settings. There are very few opportunities to talk to native speakers, wide exposure to inaccurate non-native language models used by teachers and other learners, no authentic language practice outside the classroom as well as a tendency for academic and bookish English teaching and learning.

Although the program has been benefitted in the last few semesters from the participation of few British and American teachers and assistants in language lessons as well as other academic and cultural activities such as conversation clubs, students still need continuous real communicative speaking practice outside the classroom. This would not only allow them to consolidate the linguistic knowledge gained in their English lessons for future teaching purposes but also help them develop the capacity to use the language for interpersonal and transactional purposes (Brown, 2007a) in different contexts. This distinction is clearly stated by Cummins (1980, 1979, as cited in Brown, 2007b) who differentiates cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) from basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), explaining the first as form-focused language used in classroom exercises and tests, and the second as the skills individuals acquire in order to take part in daily interpersonal exchanges outside academic contexts.

Considering the constraints listed above and their negative impact on students' speaking performance, it is vital to help learners improve their speaking competence despite their poor language background and the limitations of their learning context. Unfortunately, at present there are not many opportunities in the B.A. for all students to go on exchange programs or scholarships abroad in order to improve their speaking competence in an English-speaking country. Hence, it is necessary to provide learners with authentic language practice in a real communicative context in their own country and learning setting.

Taking previous studies on the effect of eTandem language learning through asynchronous and synchronous CMC on language learning as reference, (Kötter, 2002; Lewis & Walker, 2003; Truscott & Morley, 2003; Lee, 2007; Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010; Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011), the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of B.A. in ELT students' English speaking competence, based on their own reflections and perceptions of improvement during and after the exchange.

Through an eTandem-based language learning mode, complementary to classroom language instruction, learners will have the opportunity to take part in spontaneous verbal exchanges in a language learning environment outside the classroom, where authentic communication can be promoted through synchronous interaction with English native speakers. As a result of this practice, it is hoped that learners can improve their speaking competence and compensate for some of

the limitations characteristic of their language background and learning context. Although learners' speaking competence can certainly be developed through authentic communication with any English user, native or non-native, the study focuses on the benefits of interacting with English native speakers in an attempt to expose B.A. in ELT students to accurate native-like language models within communicative contexts. This practice might help learners produce the language spontaneously as in a real-life English speaking environment with the additional advantage of gaining cultural information at the same time as a result of the exchange.

1.2 Motivation and Significance of the study

The literature reviewed for this project indicates that there seems to be a lack of studies regarding eTandem language learning in Mexico as most research in the field has involved language partnerships from countries such as Spain, Germany, the UK, China, Japan, the United States and Brazil. Previous research (Kötter, 2002; Lewis & Walker, 2003; Truscott & Morley, 2003; Lee, 2007; Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010; Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011) in these countries has revealed the potential of eTandem language learning for language and intercultural learning; therefore, it would be interesting to find out to what extent this learning mode can help English language learners at the B.A. in ELT improve their speaking competence and what aspects of eTandem language learning need to be adapted to our academic setting and culture in order to promote successful language learning experiences between language partners.

Even though the size and length of the study does not allow the opportunity for objective assessment to measure improvement in learners' speaking competence, learners' reflections, perceptions of their progress during and after the speaking exchange as well as general feedback will be analysed in order to respond to the research questions addressed in the study. Moreover, findings and pedagogical suggestions resulting from this research will be developed to consider the adoption of eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with English native speakers as a learning mode which could complement English courses at the B.A. in ELT. Through this learning scenario, the B.A. program may provide learners with extra opportunities to improve their speaking competence in an authentic communicative setting outside the classroom.

1.3 Aims and Research questions

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence; this based on their own reflections and perceptions of improvement during and after the exchange. As the source of data comes from the participants' own reflections on their learning experience and their own perceptions of progress in speaking, interviews and students' portfolios are the two methods used for data collection in the study.

It is hoped that the insights derived from this study could help other students from the B.A. in ELT at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo improve their speaking competence and compensate for the limitations imposed on their learning by their English learning context. The information gathered could also provide valuable new input which may contribute to current professional discussion of the pedagogical implications of eTandem language learning as a learning mode, complementary to regular English courses in general.

The research questions addressed in the study are the following:

- a) From students' perception, does eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC activities with English native speakers help them improve their speaking competence?
- b) What aspects of the eTandem language learning experience do students believe contributed to the improvement of their speaking competence?
- c) What kinds of knowledge and skills do students believe they gained through eTandem language learning synchronous verbal exchanges that they had not gained through face-to-face (F2F) speaking classes?
- d) According to learners, what aspects need to be considered to replicate eTandem language learning studies through synchronous oral CMC with English native speakers in future semesters in this particular teaching and learning context?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reviews literature on tandem language learning, its definition, basic principles, history and approaches. It also lists the main media used by language partners from distant countries to communicate with native speakers of their target language depending on the ICT available and their course or own learning objectives. The second section discusses findings from previous research on eTandem language learning and elaborates on recommendations deriving from studies through synchronous and asynchronous oral and written CMC to set the bases for this research.

Important topics for this study such as the learning theories and the language acquisition principles that lay the foundation for tandem language learning, CMC and task-based learning are not developed in this work. Given the extent of the paper, more attention is given to previous research findings related to eTandem language learning and to the integration of a program based on its challenges, pedagogical implications and recommendations. All this to study the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC has on the improvement of learners' English speaking competence, from participants' own reflections and perceptions of improvement.

2.2 Tandem language learning

Language learning in tandem, according to Brammerts (2001), “occurs when two language learners with different native languages communicate with one another sharing the common objective of learning from each other” (p. 10, translated by d’Atri, 2002, as cited in Cziko, 2004). Tandem language learning combines characteristics of natural informal learning settings and formal instruction by creating opportunities for authentic communication with native speakers around different topics and providing focus on form and corrective feedback on the linguistic aspects each partner wants to learn or work on. Through a tandem learning partnership, learners with different native languages can work together in order to learn about their partner’s culture, improve their language skills and exchange additional knowledge regarding their professional life and other areas of interest (Brammerts, 1996, translated by D’Atri & Calvert, 1996).

Even though tandem language learning is a new learning mode in Mexico, many research studies and articles (Kötter, 2002; Lewis & Walker, 2003; Truscott & Morley, 2003; Lee, 2007; Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010; Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011) have been published, mainly in Europe, on the implementation of tandem language learning on its face-to-face and eTandem modes as a learning scenario that apart from exposing language learners to native language models and creating opportunities for authentic communication in their own country, also promotes the development of cultural understanding, autonomous learning skills, and technical abilities (Cziko, 2004).

2.2.1 Tandem learning principles

Foreign language learning in tandem involves pairs of speakers whose aim is to learn each other's language by means of bilingual conversation sessions. Within this autonomous, reciprocal and collaborative learning context, each partner becomes both a learner of the foreign language and a tutor of his/her mother tongue.

(Telles & Vassallo, 2006a, p. 1)

For successful tandem language learning to take place, Brammerts (1996, translated by D'Atri & Calvert, 1996) identifies two essential principles, reciprocity and learner autonomy. Brammerts states that in order to benefit from a tandem language learning exchange, language learners should support each other and contribute equally to their work together. This involves not only devoting the same time for each language practice but also investing energy in preparation for the exchange and showing interest for their partner's success in learning his/her target language.

With regard to autonomy, Brammerts emphasizes the need for language partners to be responsible for their own learning by determining what they want to learn and when. However, as most partners do not have any teaching training experience; they require support in identifying their learning goals, planning and organising their learning as well as using appropriate learning strategies and evaluating the whole process in terms of the knowledge and skills gained as a result of the exchange. Therefore, it is course instructors and eTandem facilitators' duty to

train their learners so that they become autonomous students able to direct their learning based on their own needs.

2.2.2 Tandem language learning history

The term *tandem* dates back to 1968 when it was applied to a French-German youth exchange program where students from two different European languages communicated face-to-face with the objective of learning each other's language. Then, in 1979, Jürgen Wolff organised Spanish-German tandem partnerships in Madrid, which set the basis for the later TANDEM®Network, founded in 1983, which initially consisted of language schools in 16 countries offering regular language courses combined with a tandem language learning component.

In 1994, Brammerts created the International Email Tandem Network with the participation of 11 European universities, which later became the International Tandem Network consisting of 12 European universities located in Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Spain, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Italy. In the same year, Jürgen Wolff founded TANDEM®Fundazioa, which with its 23 member schools now forms Tandem International, an organization that offers tandem experiences to their language students up-to-date.

At present, public and private educational institutions around the globe have taken interest in tandem language learning as a learning mode that combined with formal instruction can provide learners with the necessary knowledge and practice to develop their language skills as a result of the direct interaction and

feedback from a partner, a native speaker of their target language. This situation has brought about the creation of educational networks and websites among institutions from different countries in an attempt to expose their learners to native-like language models in an authentic communicative setting. Ruhr University Bochum (2005), the “Universidad de Oviedo” (2006), Coventry University (2010), and the University of Surrey (2012) are examples of these institutions. eTandem Europa (<http://www.cisi.unito.it/tandem/etandem/etindex-en.html>), ePaLs (<http://www.epals.com/>), busuu (<http://www.busuu.com/>) and Livemocha (<http://www.livemocha.com>) are also examples of language networks and online communities which allow learners from around the world to look for a language partner in order to engage in eTandem language learning.

2.2.3 Approaches to tandem language learning: From tandem to eTandem language learning

According to Telles & Vassallo (2006a, p. 2), “tandem learning can be carried out in many different ways, depending on how it is conceived and where and by whom it is carried out”. Due to its great flexibility, it can be implemented to learn a language autonomously or as part of a formal course, adopting either of its two different approaches, face-to-face tandem language learning or eTandem language learning.

Face-to-face tandem language learning, in Telles & Vassallo’ (2006a, p. 2) words is “the richest and most complete” learning approach as language partners benefit from the direct interaction with each other in the same physical setting.

However, this learning scenario is only possible in some contexts such as Europe, where its countries' proximity allows learners from different linguistic backgrounds to interact with native speakers of their target language for study, work, or recreational purposes.

Nevertheless, language learners from different continents cannot have access to such interaction; that is why, another learning approach, eTandem language learning, has been implemented by some educational institutions to create opportunities for learners to mutually benefit from a language learning partnership through the use of different communication media. "In eTandem, you work together with a language learning partner from another country by telephone, email, or other media", (pools-m, 2011, p. 3).

Even though Telles & Vassallo (2006a, p. 2) make a distinction between eTandem language learning, "...a form of interaction based on synchronous or asynchronous writing", and Teletandem language learning, "a new reading, writing and audiovisual approach to tandem for listening and speaking practice", the learning mode with a language partner through the use of different communication media is generally referred as eTandem language learning. As O'Rourke (2007, p. 44) points out, "eTandem is becoming established as a standard term for internet-based forms of tandem".

Other forms of eTandem language learning include telecollaboration "international class-to-class partnerships within institutionalized settings" (Thorne, 2003, p. 5, as cited in Tian & Wang, 2010) and tridem projects, a form of telecollaboration

which allows either synchronous or asynchronous CMC among three language learners from different parts of the world (Hauck & Lewis, 2007).

2.2.4 Communication media for eTandem language learning

Although tandem language learning originally involved face-to-face interactions between learners of two different languages, the advent and new developments in technology have made it possible for tandem language partners to communicate with each other from very distant places with the use of different ICT. These technologies facilitate the development of different language skills in learners. Examples of these technologies are the telephone and CMC through its diverse multimedia.

The telephone has been one of the main media used in eTandem language learning due to its accessibility worldwide. It allows synchronous audio communication between language partners from remote countries providing them with the opportunity to receive and give feedback on language as well as interrupt each other for clarification in real time, as it would happen in face-to-face communication (Cziko, 2004). The main disadvantage of using telephones for eTandem language learning is related to the cost involved in such service, especially for long-distance communication; however, it has a great potential for eTandem language learning as it can be used in combination with other CMC technologies such as chats and videoconferencing.

CMC, on the other hand, offers a wide range of multimedia for eTandem language learning at a relatively low cost. Email, electronic bulletin boards, chats, audio-based programs, videoconferencing, and virtual worlds are some ICT that can be exploited for language learning in eTandem. Their potential to support this learning mode based on their capabilities will be commented on the next paragraphs, taking Kötter (2002), Cziko (2004), Lamy and Hampel (2007), Schneider and Panichi (2009), and Mullen et al.'s (2009) work as sources of information.

According to Cziko (2004, p. 8), email is “the earliest and still most widely used form of CMC”. Most eTandem learning projects conducted mainly in Europe have made use of this communication media for written language practice between native speakers of two different languages. Its asynchronous nature allows learners, even from different time zones, to read, review, and respond to their partner’s email message keeping half of the interaction in each other’s language. This written exchange does not only provide language partners with meaningful practice but also expose them to native-like writing models that are not commonly found in the foreign language classroom.

Electronic bulletin boards also provide learners with asynchronous written practice as language partners can share text messages, files, and photographs in order to learn from each other’s language and culture. Examples of electronic bulletin boards that can be used by language learners are Yahoo Groups and the Tandem Community, a website developed by Tandem International which allows

learners to find and communicate with partners through synchronous text chat and asynchronous text messages.

Text-based chats, as Cziko (2004) indicates, combine aspects of synchronous oral communication and asynchronous written communication. Although language partners can communicate in real time, the written exchange characteristic of chats differs from the interaction of an oral conversation in the pace of the conversation, lack of paralinguistic communication, and different turn-taking patterns. Nonetheless, text-based chats constitute an effective media for language learning as partners can refer to their written exchange for later language analysis and feedback. Examples of chat services that can be used for eTandem are AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, MSN Messenger, Windows Messenger, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and iVisit among others.

Audio-based programs, unlike the other ICTs described above, can help language partners develop their listening skills through oral communication. PureVoice, Audacity, Stepvoice Recorder, Windows Sound Recorder among other programs can be used to record audio messages that may be attached in any email service for asynchronous audio practice. AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, MSN Messenger, Windows Messenger, PalTalk, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and iVisit are other programs that can be used for synchronous audio communication by eTandem language partners whether they are combined or not with synchronous text chat, depending on language partners' learning objectives and needs.

Yahoo Messenger, MSN Messenger, Windows Messenger, and AOL Instant Messenger can also be used for one-to-one videoconference providing learners with the opportunity to recreate face-to-face communication with native speakers for language learning purposes. Programs such as ooVoo and iVisit allow video communication among more partners resulting in a richer interaction which can simulate a daily life conversation around an assigned communicative task. Skype is another videoconference program that has been used for eTandem language learning purposes (Elia, 2006; Branzburg, 2007, as cited in Mullen et al., 2009). According to Mullen et al. (2009, p. 104), it “facilitates tandem exchanges by providing a free tool to communicate using synchronous voice”; thus, it allows learners to develop their listening and speaking skills as a result of the real time interaction with native speakers of their target language.

Finally, virtual worlds also constitute an alternative for eTandem language learning through written and oral computer-mediated communication. Virtual worlds or 3D environments are defined by Lamy and Hampel (2007, p. 131) as “virtual reality programs which range from immersive environments (with sound and touch sensors) to graphical spaces (with or without audio) and text-based environments (such as MOOs)”.

In MOOs, language learners can prepare notes and lectures, create their own rooms, and select the presentation of their written messages. Moreover, they can address their partners directly and emote empathy between each other to recreate a face-to-face interaction (Kötter, 2002). Mundo hispano, Diversity Education,

SchMOOze University, and MOOFrançais are examples of popular MOOs used for eTandem language learning purposes by different educational institutions (Cziko, 2004; Lamy & Hampel 2007).

Active Worlds (<http://www.activeworlds.com>), Travelers Network (<http://travelersnetwork.net/>), and Second Life (<http://secondlife.com/>) are other examples of virtual worlds where language learners can develop their language proficiency and gain intercultural learning as a result of the interaction with their partners (Swertz, Panichi & Deutschmann, 2010). In Schneider and Panichi's (2009, p. 1) words, Second Life is "a particularly appropriate platform for the improvement of oral proficiency in distance education, collaborative and intercultural learning contexts and vocational training". Through an avatar-based interaction, language learners in Second Life and other 3D environments can interact with native speakers of their target language within a communicative context.

2.3 Previous studies on eTandem language learning

Most research on eTandem language learning has focused on synchronous and asynchronous communication through written chats, email and other text-based online environments such as MOOs and learning platforms, leaving opportunities for more investigation into the effect of eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC on the improvement of language partners' speaking skills, which is the focus of this research. However, all studies in the field of eTandem

language learning have resulted in valuable findings which have altogether allowed other researchers and teachers around the world to replicate eTandem language learning projects according to their own needs and contexts.

Some of the most relevant findings from previous research on eTandem language learning and the improvement of participants' speaking competence as a result of the exchange will be discussed and analysed in this section, considering their importance for successful eTandem language learning to take place in similar settings. In addition, pedagogical suggestions deriving from eTandem language learning studies through oral and written CMC will be developed as they were also used to set the bases for the current study.

The findings and pedagogical suggestions developed from previous eTandem language learning research for the proposal, design, and implementation of this work are 1) the use of language tasks to guide eTandem language learning; 2) the implementation of an eTandem learning portfolio for participants to keep record of their learning experience, reflections, and perceptions of improvement in their speaking competence; and 3) the adaptation of guidelines to facilitate students' learning, interaction with language partners, and participation during the project.

2.3.1 eTandem language learning and participants' perceptions of improvement in speaking competence

There seems to be a lack of studies on the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement

of participants' speaking skills. However, existing research in the field (Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010; Lee 2002, 2007a, 2007b) has concluded that this learning mode provides language learners with opportunities to improve different aspects of their speaking competence such as grammatical competence (vocabulary, fluency, intonation, and pronunciation); discourse competence; sociocultural competence; and strategic competence. Although these research projects, as the present study, only focused on participants' own perceptions of improvement as the source of data, Lee (2006, as cited in Tian & Wang, 2010, p. 183) supports this view stating that:

Learner perspectives are an important source of information that provides language educators with an opportunity to reflect on their intended pedagogical efforts, and modify teaching strategies to meet the needs and interest of learners.

“Competences are the sum of knowledge, skills, and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions”, (CEFRL, 2001, p. 9). Therefore, being a competent user of a language does not only involve using the language correctly but also performing different activities using that language in diverse contexts. Communicative competence, according to Canale and Swain (1980), consists of four different types of competence, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. These four competences are equally important for individuals to communicate successfully in any situation by adapting themselves to the social and cultural characteristics

of the context and overcoming any communication problems caused by their use of the language.

Grammatical competence is defined by Canale and Swain (1980, p. 29, as cited in Brown, 2007b) as “knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar, semantics, and phonology”. Discourse competence refers to the ability to connect sentences and utterances to convey an idea, either through an oral or written channel. Sociolinguistic competence, on the other hand, is associated with the sociocultural rules for language use in different contexts. In Savignon’s (1983, p. 37, as cited in Brown, 2007b) words, this type of competence “requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction”. Finally, strategic competence is described as the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that can be used to repair communication breakdowns caused by different variables such as insufficient grammatical competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Tian and Wang’s (2010) study on language partners’ perceptions of linguistic and intercultural gains as a result of a Skype-based eTandem learning project concluded that synchronous oral CMC exchanges with native speakers can help learners improve their language competence. The fifteen Chinese learners of English and fifteen Australian learners of Chinese who took part in the nine-week videoconferencing interaction reported that the CMC with native speakers of their target language had helped them increase their confidence in speaking and also

improve their pronunciation, intonation and fluency in speaking English/Chinese. Additionally, they expressed they had learned new words and expressions from their partners and could speak in longer sentences in their target language after the exchange. All participants agreed that the online exchange was a good way to improve their speaking skills outside class and also improve their listening skills in English/Chinese.

By matching participants' perceptions of improvement in different areas of language with Canale and Swain's (1980) four types of competence, Tian and Wang's (2010) research provides evidence of the potential that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC has to help language learners improve their grammatical and discourse competence in speaking. As Chinese and Australian learners stated, the exchange helped them learn new words and expressions as well as improve their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency in English/Chinese, aspects that are part of the grammatical competence defined by Canale and Swain (1980). Participants' ability to connect sentences and utterances, discourse competence, was also promoted as learners expressed they could speak in longer sentences in the target language after the exchange.

On the other hand, Lee's (2007a) study on fostering second language oral communication through constructivist interaction in desktop videoconferencing also concluded that the exchange had helped learners develop their oral skills. Even though her study did not involve eTandem language learning partnerships between native speakers of two different languages, it focused on building

learners' communicative skills through audio and visual interaction with expert speakers of Spanish (native speakers and Spanish instructors). At the end of the exchange, most learners agreed that videoconferencing was an effective medium to be exposed to authentic input from expert speakers of different cultural backgrounds in a way that is not possible in the language classroom, especially as the communication required spontaneous and quick responses in real time (Lee, 2007a).

In relation to strategic and sociocultural competence, Tian and Wang (2010) and Lee's (2007a) findings suggest that although their studies offered learners opportunities to improve both competences, participants' level of proficiency in their target language, lack of knowledge of compensatory strategies, and insufficient feedback by partners prevented them from improving their competence as a result of the exchange. Lee's (2007a) study in particular provides recommendations for the development of each competence in future language learning research projects. Her suggestions will be commented in the next paragraphs considering their importance for learners to fully benefit from synchronous oral CMC with native speakers and improve their strategic and sociocultural competence in speaking in their target language.

In the research study conducted by Lee (2007a), learners reported they had experienced difficulties understanding native speakers with different dialects as they had never communicated with native speakers of their target language. This, along with lexical variations used by expert speakers of Spanish, resulted

in communication breakdowns that affected participants' learning experience and perceptions of improvement in speaking from the exchange. Although some partners were able to make pronunciation repairs due to scaffolding by expert speakers, language learners in general did not make use of body language, voice or visual channels to compensate for their linguistic breakdowns.

As a result, Lee (2007a) considers vital for further research to train learners to develop their strategic competence so that they are able to use body language and voice projection to make repairs in communication. Moreover, learners can be instructed in their language classroom to paraphrase as well as ask for clarification and repetition when they do not understand a message due to their interlocutor's pronunciation or their own lack of vocabulary. By training learners to use these strategies, course instructors/eTandem facilitators can give language partners more opportunities to benefit linguistically from the interaction with native speakers through synchronous oral CMC and improve their strategic competence in an authentic context. Written chats available in some videoconferencing programs can also be used to solve communication breakdowns when other verbal and nonverbal strategies fail.

With regard to the improvement of sociocultural competence as a result of synchronous oral exchanges with native or expert speakers, Lee (2007a) illustrates a situation in her study where a learner of Spanish unaware of the way the native speaker was addressing him, kept speaking to his partner inappropriately considering the degree of familiarity between them. Although the native speaker

did not feel offended by the learner addressing him as “tú” instead of “usted”, he did not provide any feedback to the learner in relation to appropriate social conventions. The native speaker expressed that he did not want to make the learner feel uncomfortable by his observation and therefore preferred not to correct the learner. Lee (2007a) points out that this example represents a wasted opportunity to raise learners’ awareness on sociocultural competence and considers necessary to remind all participants involved in similar projects that learning should not only be limited to the completion of a task but also to the provision of feedback and correction on partners’ errors.

Furstenberg, Levet, English & Maillet (2001, as cited in Lee, 2007a) state, the interaction with expert speakers of a language allows learners to be exposed to language within social and cultural contexts that are not available in traditional instruction. Therefore, it is vital to train participants in eTandem language learning projects to take advantage of their communication with native speakers to improve their sociocultural competence without the need to move to an English-speaking country. According to Lee (2007a), this can be accomplished by making learners conscious of the important role that mutual feedback and correction by partners play on their learning experience. Furthermore, learners can learn sociocultural rules of language from teaching resources, authentic materials, and the analysis of their video recordings in the classroom. In Lee’s (2007a, p. 643) words “pragmatic activities within specific speech situations, in conjunction with instructor feedback, can also be designed to foster learners’ competence.”

2.3.2 A task-based approach to eTandem learning

According to Mullen et al. (2009), a task-based approach to learning supports autonomy and reciprocity, two basic principles defined by Brammerts (1996, translated by D'Atri & Calvert, 1996) as essential components for successful eTandem language learning experiences. With regard to autonomy, Mullen et al. (2009, p. 107) state that:

The conversation should be as free as possible within the communicative constraints of the task. The point is not to restrict conversation by artificial constraints, but rather to give the students clear communicative goals and let them exercise their linguistic problem-solving skills by finding their own way to verbally communicate the information necessary to accomplish the goals.

With the provision of specific tasks, designed in accordance with clear communicative goals depending on the learners' proficiency in the language, it is possible for course instructors/ eTandem facilitators to guide students through their learning process and help them benefit from the purposeful and planned interaction with a native speaker of the language they are learning. Otherwise, the interaction between eTandem language partners would result in isolated and incidental learning that would not allow the fulfilment of clear and specific communicative goals. Mullen et al.'s (2009) study between Japanese students of English at Tsuda College in Tokyo and American students of Japanese at San Diego State University also found that task-based exchanges engaged language learners and kept them interested in the interaction.

Nevertheless, in order for students to exercise their real learner autonomy at later stages, the present study suggests that eTandem partners are given the opportunity to choose tasks from a set of options provided by course instructors/eTandem facilitators or even to create their own tasks to meet their language needs. In this latter case, course instructors/eTandem facilitators can be responsible for training and guiding learners on the design and implementation of language tasks.

In relation to reciprocity, Mullen et al. (2009) state that by assigning an even number of specific tasks to be carried out in the target language of each student, course instructors/eTandem facilitators promote the practice of each language so that both language partners benefit equally from the interaction. Although this strategy facilitates the organization of time to practice both languages from the very moment tasks are designed, language learning partners can be allowed to do each task in both languages as well, interacting half of the time in their target language and the other half in their mother tongue in order to exercise their autonomy and responsibility for their own learning.

Regarding the criteria language tasks should meet, Mullen et al. (2009) suggest that it is possible to adapt the same criteria used in face-to-face tasks in traditional learning settings to tasks in CMC environments within the ICT own capabilities. For Long (1989, as cited in Mullen et al., 2009) tasks should meet three important criteria, 1) to be two-way tasks so that both students have information to be conveyed in order to do the assignment; 2) to be closed tasks, that is, with an outcome required; and 3) to be planned tasks so that there are higher possibilities to incorporate new language structures into the students' interlanguage.

Furthermore, Mullen et al. (2009) propose three more criteria for the creation of language tasks: 1) an emphasis on communication so that language partners have information to convey to each other and a reason to convey it without any particular emphasis on the development of a skill or vocabulary building; 2) a goal-oriented aspect for both L1 and L2 speakers at all times, making sure that tasks are engaging for both participants no matter the language they are using as means of interaction; and 3) maximal exploitation of native speaker interaction, designing tasks that are truly communicative and engage both learners.

Even though the criteria provided by Long (1989, as cited in Mullen et al., 2009) and Mullen et al. (2009) favour an emphasis on communication, equal engagement for both participants, the requirement of a task outcome as a result of the exchange, and the maximal exploration of native speaker interaction, they differ in one point, the design of language tasks to learn and practice new language. While Long (1989) suggests that tasks are carefully planned so that there are higher possibilities to incorporate new language structures, Mullen et al. (2009) believe that the exchange should not have any emphasis on the development of a particular skill or vocabulary building.

Long's (1989) criteria seems more appropriate to facilitate the learning and practice of specific language items, especially if eTandem language learning is to be implemented as a complementary learning mode to face-to-face English courses where language content is organised and distributed along a complete academic semester. Tasks design in this context can be planned purposefully to

guide students towards the use of specific language providing a framework for authentic communicative practice through the completion of those tasks. As Lee (2002) points out the key is to plan tasks that involve learners' in active participation in sharing, exchanging, and debating information in a meaningful way so that they reinforce particular vocabulary and grammatical structures and notice the gap between the L1 and L2 linguistic systems.

The following section of this work will discuss the use of diaries and learning portfolios in eTandem language learning previous studies, as learning tools for students to plan, record, and reflect on their own learning. In particular, the adaptation of the European Language Portfolio developed by the Council of Europe will be commented and analysed as a learning instrument that can guide language partners through their learning process in eTandem.

2.3.3 Learning portfolios in eTandem language learning

Although previous research (Walker, 2003; Truscott & Morley, 2003; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011) on eTandem language learning has included the use of learning diaries and language portfolios as instruments to assist students' learning, learners' perceptions of their usefulness have not been completely positive. Vinagre and Muñoz' (2011) study on the effect of peer feedback on the development of learner accuracy through an eTandem email exchange found that from the ten language partners who participated in the project, only four students considered the diary useful and one of those four participants

thought about withdrawing from the project because he considered the diary was difficult to keep.

In the diary, learners were required to keep a record of their eTandem language learning experience so that they could evaluate their learning and make any decisions during the exchange. Three aspects were considered fundamental for their diary: Vocabulary, errors, and culture. Language partners were asked to write down any words they learned as a result of the interaction or use of the dictionary, errors they made and were corrected by their partners (along with some sentences illustrating the correct form), as well as cultural information they acquired during the exchange.

At the end of the study, participants expressed that keeping the diary was time-consuming and seemed not to understand its benefits as a learning tool to plan, evaluate, and reflect on their own learning. The researchers assume that learners might have felt overwhelmed by the number of questions included in the diary instructions to guide their writing which affected their perception about the learning instrument.

Findings derived from this study suggest the need for eTandem language partners to receive some training (prior to the exchange) for the development of their learning autonomy. This training includes the use of self-reflection instruments such as diaries and learning portfolios to set their language learning goals, organise tasks, reflect on their experience, evaluate their learning, and make decisions in relation to their progress and needs. Otherwise, participants

in future projects might experience the same negative feelings towards diaries and their importance in autonomous language learning settings such as eTandem learning environments. Furthermore, it is essential to develop a learning reflection instrument that supports students' learning without making them feel overwhelmed or demotivated due to its complexity or length.

The Tandem Learner Diary developed by Walker (2003, as cited in Lewis, 2005) proposes a framework that allows learners to analyse their needs, prioritise learning objectives, record and review progress, and plan further steps. In the diary assessment section, students are required to evaluate their development as learners, assess their own and partner's proficiency, and write a small reflection of their eTandem experience. In order to facilitate the evaluation and assessment process, learners are provided with self-assessment tables for them to rate their competence and progress according to clear, explicit descriptors.

Truscott and Morley (2003), on the other hand, for their eTandem language exchange program between British and overseas students, conducted at the University of Manchester, included a learning dossier as the main instrument for students' evaluation. The dossier consisted of a record of students' reflections on tasks as well as the language feedback and correction provided by their partners (similar in structure to the learning diary implemented by Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011).

Both learning reflection instruments, the Tandem Learner Diary developed by Walker (2003) and the dossier implemented by Truscott and Morley (2003),

emphasise the importance of participants' reflection on their own learning process. The diary, in addition, suggests the identification of language needs and incorporation of learning objectives in order for students to exercise their autonomy by planning and evaluating their learning. As opposed to the dossier, the Tandem Learner Diary allows learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning based on their own language needs in contrast to a mere completion of tasks assigned by course instructors/eTandem facilitators, as occurred in Truscott and Morley (2003), Mullen et al. (2009), and Vinagre and Muñoz (2011).

Taking the learning reflection instrument proposals commented above, the present study suggests the integration of the elements identified in the Tandem Learner Diary (Walker, 2003), the compilation of learners' reflections and account of errors required in the dossier (Truscott & Morely, 2003) and learning diary (Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011) into a language learning portfolio, adapted from the European Language Portfolio for Adult and Vocational Language Learners (2007). This portfolio can guide eTandem language partners through their learning process in order to fulfil their language goals and make the most of their experience.

The original European Language Portfolio for Adult and Vocational Language Learners (2007) is divided into three sections: The Language Passport, the Language Biography, and the Dossier. For the eTandem learning portfolio, the Language Passport will consist of a self-assessment grid including the six levels of proficiency of the CEFRL (2001), from Breakthrough (A1) to Mastery (C2) for learners to identify their current level of competence in the language. By doing

this, learners can plan future learning based on their language needs and their course or own learning objectives. As it is essential for learners to place themselves objectively and honestly according to the CEFRL-based self-assessment grid, for each of the skills, especially speaking. So, it is course instructors/eTandem facilitators' responsibility to assist learners in this activity or even administer a speaking diagnostic test at the beginning of the exchange for participants to find out their level of competence in the language objectively.

According to the European Language Portfolio for Adult and Vocational Language Learners (2007, p. 3), "the main object of the Biography is to help you reflect upon and record your own development". Therefore, for the eTandem learning portfolio, the language Biography will include the language tasks, assigned by course instructors/eTandem facilitators or created by language learners, with information regarding what learners want to learn from their partners in each session and the aspects of language they would like to receive feedback or correction on. The eTandem learning plan completed by both language partners will help them direct their own learning in terms of what they want to achieve with the language, exercising their autonomy and mutually benefiting both from the interaction with their partners.

Finally, the eTandem learning record and eTandem learning reflection formats will allow learners to collect evidences of their learning as well as assess and reflect on their learning experience, which is basically the purpose of the ELP Dossier (2007). This section of the eTandem learning portfolio will include a detailed

development of language tasks, assigned or created by learners, with an account of the correction or feedback received from their partners, as well as linguistic and cultural knowledge gained from the exchange. Learners' reflections in the eTandem learning reflection format can also help participants to direct future learning by making decisions that can help them make the most of eTandem language learning.

2.3.4 eTandem learning guidelines

As eTandem language learning may represent at first an unfamiliar learning mode for most participants, it is essential for course instructors/eTandem facilitators to carefully plan every aspect of the exchange, from setting up partners and designing tasks to monitoring learners during the project. Moreover, it is vital to train participants to learn in an eTandem learning scenario based on their own learning objectives and the feedback/correction provided by their partners. General tips and guidelines from previous research (Calvert, 1992; Lewis, 2005, Vinagre, 2007, Vinagre, 2011) on eTandem language learning will be discussed in the next paragraphs considering their importance for successful learning to take place between language partners.

Lewis (2005) suggests that in order to prevent mismatching of language partners in eTandem language learning projects, course instructors/facilitators should consider seven criteria. These criteria include participants' mother tongue, target language, level of FL proficiency, learning objectives, age, gender as well as

profession, interests and hobbies. By considering these factors as the basis for language partners' selection and matching, learners may have more opportunities to improve their language competence with reciprocity and avoid negative feelings caused by failure, demotivation, and lack of confidence. Vinagre's (2007) study on an e-mail tandem exchange between learners of English at Nebrija University in Madrid and learners of Spanish at Trinity College Dublin, also revealed that the difference in participants' academic profile can constitute an important factor in motivation and commitment to the project.

As error correction and provision of feedback may be delicate issues due to cultural differences, eTandem language learning participants should be instructed on how to provide correction and also benefit from the correction offered by their partners. Previous studies (Kötter, 2002, Lee, 2007a; Kabata & Edasawa, 2011) have shown that learners have failed to provide feedback at the end of each exchange or have not used explicit explanations when giving correction, which made it difficult for their partners to understand their feedback. Consequently, it is vital to make learners aware of the key roles correction and feedback play in the improvement of their language competence. Although not all native speakers may have the necessary linguistic knowledge in their mother tongue to provide language explicit explanations (Calvert, 1992), participants should be trained to make use of learning resources in order to contribute to their partners' improvement in the language.

Based on the research findings commented above, this proposal adapts the guidelines suggested by Vinagre and Muñoz (2011) in order to guide eTandem language partners in their learning process and provide them with useful strategies about how to maximally benefit from the interaction with native speakers. The guidelines include a detailed description of what the project is about, the basic principles for the exchange, media and other resources used in the project, learning tasks, as well as strategies to organise and correct their partner's errors. Above all, the guidelines emphasize the need for language partners to come to an agreement about what aspects of the language each partner wants to be corrected on and how.

It is hoped that by having matched language partners according to their proficiency levels in their target language and interests in speaking, learners in the present study can have opportunities to benefit from the exchange and improve their speaking competence as a result. In relation to the guidelines, it is believed that by having explained each component of the eTandem language learning program and provided strategies for the planning, organization, and reflection of their learning, participants can take an active role in the exchange and understand the importance of correction and feedback for their partners and own learning.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature on Tandem language learning, its definition, basic principles, history, approaches as well as the main media used by language partners from distant countries to communicate with native speakers of their target language. It has also discussed findings from previous research on eTandem language learning and elaborated on recommendations deriving from studies to set the bases for this research. In particular, the use of tasks to guide eTandem language learning, the implementation of a language learning portfolio, and the adaptation of guidelines to direct learners' exchange were discussed as three essential elements of the eTandem language learning exchange.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology followed to undertake this investigation as well as the participants who took part in the project, the procedures and instruments used to gather data, data analysis procedures as well as the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research methodology

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence; this based on their own reflections and perceptions of improvement during and after the exchange. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was adopted to understand the meanings and significance of this learning mode from the perspective of those involved (Richards, 2003).

In Dörnyei's words (2007, p. 38) "qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied." By analysing participants' reflections, perceptions of improvement, and general feedback from the exchange, this study aims at having a better understanding of

eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers and its effect on the improvement of participants' English speaking competence. Qualitative research involves the use of a variety of empirical materials such as case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, observation and visual texts among others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005); however, the method chosen for this particular research was case study. According to Merriam (1998, p. 16, as cited in Nunan, 1992), a qualitative case study can be defined as:

an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources

Brown and Rodgers (2002) point out that in language learning research, case studies often involve the development of the language competence of an individual or small group of individuals. This study describes and analyses five participants' reflections and perceptions of improvement in their speaking competence during/ after a three week eTandem language learning exchange with English native speakers.

Pre and post interviews and students' portfolios were the two methods used for data collection. Data from both methods was then triangulated to maximise findings validity. Triangulation refers to the use of two or more data collection in an attempt to explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by analysing it from more than one standpoint (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

3.3 Participants

Five seventh-semester students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo were purposefully selected to take part in six one-hour synchronous CMC verbal exchanges with English native speakers, learners of Spanish, to practice their speaking skills through the completion of six language tasks. The tasks included an introductory task for participants to meet each other, two tasks based on a topic from the Mexican learners' syllabus, two free tasks to be negotiated between partners, and a final task for general feedback.

The reason why students from seventh semester were chosen to participate in the research is related to the number of hours devoted to formal language instruction within the curriculum. Unlike the other six general English courses, taught from first to sixth semester eight hours a week, the English course in seventh semester is given only four hours a week; thus, teachers at the B.A. program recommend students to look for extra opportunities to learn and practice the language outside the classroom.

The English class selected for the study consisted of seventeen students whose language proficiency varied from level B1 to B2 (CEFRL scales) according to the scores students obtained in the diagnostic TOEFL test administered at the beginning of the semester. This test is administered to all the students from the B.A. in English Language Teaching every semester as an instrument to measure their proficiency in English and identify any particular weaknesses for teachers and students to work on during the course.

The seventeen students from the class were invited to carry out the eTandem language learning sessions; however, only eleven students volunteered for the exchange. Then, time availability and flexibility were used as the main criteria for participants' selection considering English native speakers' time availability for the synchronous oral CMC and the time difference between Mexico and the UK, which is six hours. Due to a mismatch between Mexican and British course calendars; limited number of British eTandem learners; and time constraints, only five students from the class were selected to participate in the project.

The five participants selected for the research project were all women, between 20-23 years old, and had never been engaged in eTandem language learning exchanges before. Their TOEFL scores ranged from 450 to 547 points (level B1 and B2, CEFRL scales) and their speaking grades in their English course, according to the information provided by their teacher, were rather low. Learners' academic profile suggested they needed additional speaking practice outside the language classroom, among other types of practice in order to improve their speaking competence.

It is important to mention that B.A. in ELT students had received previous training on learning autonomy and learning to learn as part of their program. In addition, they were accustomed to using learning portfolios as they had been asked to keep a language self-learning portfolio in each of their English courses, from English I to English VII. In the portfolio, learners collected evidence of their learning, equivalent to 30 hours of independent language study either at the University

Self-access Center or at their place using different self-study resources. The format used by learners to keep record of their autonomous learning at the B.A. program is called “Registro de Autoaprendizaje” (Occeña, 1998).

The “Registro de Autoaprendizaje” (Occeña, 1998) is a self-learning instrument developed at the “Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo” to facilitate students’ self-learning process. In the format, students indicate the language topic, skills, activities and materials learned/practiced in each session. The instrument also includes a section for learners to do their activity and self-assess their progress in order to determine their learning objective for the next session. For their course purposes, Mexican participants’ six-hour-eTandem oral exchange was considered part of their independent language learning and portfolio records in order to increase students’ motivation and commitment to take part in the study. On the other hand, British participants, three women and two men, were students of Spanish at the University of Southampton who volunteered to participate in the project with the objective of practising their Spanish and learning cultural information about Mexico in an autonomous way, independent from their academic programs. All of them were first year B.A. students, who had studied Spanish for four to eight years prior to the exchange. In addition, they were studying French and Spanish, and Spanish and Latin American studies at the University of Southampton.

English native speakers’ levels of proficiency in Spanish also varied from B1 to B2 (CEFR scales) or levels three to four according to the Overview of the

Southampton Language Stages (2001/2002). Through the Head of the Spanish Department, students who had a language proficiency equivalent to B1 were invited to participate in the synchronous oral CMC exchange and were asked to contact the project coordinator in Mexico by email, in case they were interested. Although ten English native speakers responded to the invitation, only five learners finally decided to participate in the exchange due to the difference of time between Mexico and the UK as well as their own personal and academic activities.

Afterwards, British and Mexican students were asked to respond to a list of questions to find out information regarding their foreign language proficiency, learning objectives (linguistic and cultural), topics of interest, and time available for the exchange in order to pair them up with the most appropriate language partner (see eTandem language partners' information questions in Appendix A). The matching process was carried out following Lewis' (2005) criteria for language partners' selection which include mother tongue, target language, level of FL proficiency, learning objectives, age, gender, and profession/interests as the basis for dyads' arrangement.

3.4 Research procedure

Before the eTandem language learning sessions started, there was a preparation stage for participants from both countries. At this stage, learners received information about the purpose of the study and how the data obtained from Mexican participants' interviews, learning records and reflections would be

used for the research. Although information regarding ethical issues was communicated to British participants only by email, as it can be seen in the eTandem language partners' information questions (see Appendix A), Mexican partners signed a consent form adapted by Mackey and Gass (2005) agreeing on the conditions under which the study would take place. Above all, anonymity and confidentiality of data were emphasized as two important factors for learners to participate in the study (see Consent form for a study in a foreign language context in Appendix B).

Additionally, language partners from both countries were given written guidelines, adapted from Vinagre and Muñoz (2011), explaining the purpose of the research and providing information regarding the two basic principles for eTandem language learning, autonomy and reciprocity (Little & Brammerts, 1996). Learners were informed about the Internet tools and materials they would use for the one-hour eTandem language learning exchange (Skype and online dictionaries), the time they would devote to the practice of each language within each session (30 minutes to practice English and 30 minutes to practice Spanish), and the communicative tasks they would carry out over the three weeks (from November 14th to December 4th, 2011). Information regarding the portfolio formats participants would use to record their learning experience as a result of the verbal exchange and a set of suggestions for error treatment and correction were also provided in the guidelines. (See eTandem learning guidelines in Appendix D).

Mexican participants also received oral explanations and guidance about the project in a face-to-face session prior to the beginning of the exchange, where they had the opportunity to ask for clarification in case something had not been understood when reading the eTandem learning guidelines. Students in that session were also instructed to create a Skype account and send an initial email to their language partner (previously assigned by the project coordinator, as explained in section 3.3 of this chapter) introducing themselves and proposing the date and time for the first Skype-based exchange.

From all the videoconferencing programs discussed in section 2.2.4 of Chapter 2, Skype was chosen as the tool for the eTandem language exchange due to its effectiveness in previous research (Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010) in the field. According to Tian and Wang (2010) its affordability, reliability, ease of use, and pedagogical values make it an effective media for oral CMC language exchange outside the classroom. Although the success of an eTandem language learning project does not only rely on the tool, no matter its potential for educational purposes (Dooley, 2007), it is hoped that by implementing the eTandem language exchange through Skype, learners can resemble face-to-face communication and benefit linguistically from the interaction with a native speaker of the language they are learning.

In the preparation stage as well as in the eTandem learning guidelines, learners were encouraged to use online dictionaries such as WordReference.com and Merriam-Webster in order to look up any unknown word in the target language

before or during the exchange. Furthermore, the use of websites, videos, texts or any other type of supplementary materials participants considered useful for the interaction was also promoted. These learning resources could be used either as sources of information to prepare for the exchange or as learning resources to provide feedback to their partners.

3.4.1 Language tasks

Because of time constraints, the total number of communicative tasks was limited to six, one for each of the six Skype sessions planned in the project. The design of the language tasks considered the criteria for suitable language tasks suggested by Mullen et al. (2009) which establish emphasis on communication, goal-oriented aspects for L1 and L2 speakers at all times, and maximal exploitation of native-speaker interaction as three important elements. Long's (1989, as cited in Mullen et al., 2009) criteria for language tasks was also met since both learners conveyed information in order to do assignments, based on carefully designed tasks that aimed at helping learners incorporate new language structures into their interlanguage.

The following paragraphs describe the six language tasks in detail with rationale for their inclusion and selection within the eTandem language learning exchange:

Task 1

Task 1 was designed for both language partners to introduce themselves and exchange personal information regarding their name, age, studies, hobbies, interests, place of origin, among other information. Furthermore, in this task, research participants were instructed to negotiate the eTandem learning plan on which their Skype speaking sessions would be based on. Although students received a partially completed eTandem learning plan format with four language tasks (see Appendix E), participants negotiated the topics for other two speaking tasks depending on their learning needs, interests, and the cultural information they wanted to learn from their partner's country. In this first eTandem language exchange, participants also indicated the time and dates for the six Skype-based speaking sessions, their learning objectives, language focus, and the linguistic aspects they wanted to receive feedback or correction on at the end of each session.

Task 2 and 3

Being *Crime and Punishment* one of the topics included in the English course syllabus in seventh semester, two language tasks were designed around this topic so that students could have the opportunity to practice their speaking skills on this theme one more time but in a different environment from their typical English classroom. By doing this, it was hoped that students could identify different aspects present in the eTandem language exchanges that could help them improve

their speaking competence in combination with the learning and practice they acquired in a more traditional F2F teaching and learning setting.

In language tasks 2 and 3, research participants were asked to do the following:

Task 2: Talk to your partner about things that are against the law in your country, punishments, laws, and the legal system in your country. What do you think about punishments? Are they fair? Give examples.

Task 3: Share ideas about how you would like the legal system to change for the better in your country. Give examples. How crime can be avoided?

It is important to mention that coincidentally this topic was relevant to English native speakers, since some of them expressed in the eTandem language partners' information questions (see Appendix A) that they were willing to come to Mexico for their exchange academic year abroad. This factor was the main reason why the topic *Crime and Punishment* was selected from the Mexican students' course syllabus and incorporated into the eTandem language exchange program. The language functions practiced in order to accomplish these tasks involved describing, giving opinions, expressing and paraphrasing wishes, hopes and desires.

Tasks 4 and 5

Tasks 4 and 5 were negotiated between language partners; consequently, each pair dealt with a different topic depending on their needs, interests, and likes.

Task 6

As task 6 was carried out in the final eTandem speaking session within the program, participants were asked to share opinions about the Skype language exchange in general. In the instructions, participants were asked to discuss about the aspects they liked best and least, the linguistic and cultural information they gained from the interactions as well as whether they would like to continue the eTandem language exchange on their own in the future or not. This last task also created the opportunity for participants to give final feedback on their partner's performance and competence during the six exchanges, identifying strengths and areas of opportunity to improve their speaking competence in the target language.

For the completion of the six language tasks, learners were instructed to follow the four task stage model suggested by Skehan (1996, as cited in Truscott & Morley, 2003) so that both partners fulfil their learning objectives and get the most of their eTandem language learning experience. The stages guided learners to prepare for the exchange, carry out the language task, provide and receive feedback from their partners and finally reflect on their own learning. Each of these stages is explained in the next paragraphs:

In *pre-task* students were required to plan and preview new language independently before the Skype exchange so that both participants were ready for any questions their partners could have about the task. For this reason, it was essential for language partners to plan and negotiate the content of the free tasks in detail at the beginning of the project, agreeing on a learning plan to be followed during the interactions.

In the *interactive stage* language partners carried out the task which took the form of a discussion, question and answer session or short presentation. At this stage, participants had the opportunity to provide and ask for information about the task planned for the session.

Post-task stage 1 took place during the last ten to twenty minutes of each Skype-based eTandem language exchange. Participants gave and received corrective feedback from their language partner on their oral performance depending on the areas they wanted to receive feedback or correction on, as established in the eTandem learning plan (see Appendix E).

Finally, in post-task stage 2 partners kept record of their learning experience in the formats included in their eTandem learning portfolio (eTandem learning record and eTandem learning reflection). The purpose of this stage was to help learners reflect on their own learning and make any decisions to redirect the exchanges in order to fulfil their learning objectives (see Appendix F and Appendix G).

3.5 Data collection

As it was stated before, the source of data for the study comes from eTandem Mexican participants' reflections on their learning experience and their perceptions of progress in speaking during and at the end of the Skype-based exchanges. For this reason, semi-structured interviews and the participants' eTandem learning portfolios (eTandem learning plan, eTandem learning record, and eTandem learning reflection) were used as the two methods for data collection.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The rationale for using interviews as one of the data collection methods in this study was that according to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 349), “[they] enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view”. As Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 173) point out “interviews can allow researchers to investigate phenomena that are not directly observable, such as learners’ self-reported perceptions or attitudes”.

Considering the advantages of interviews as data collection methods stated above, pre and post semi-structured interviews were conducted in the study to capture participants’ own perceptions of their speaking competence before and after the eTandem language learning exchange. Semi-structured interviews, in Nunan’s (1992, p. 150) words “give privileged access to other people’s lives” by allowing researchers a great deal of flexibility to change the order of questions, ask follow-up questions, and lead the interview where they want it to go depending on their areas of interest.

The pre semi-structured interview, adapted from Vinagre and Muñoz (2011), consisted of 16 questions, divided into three main categories: Personal information; English learning background and language skills; and English language learning habits (see Appendix C). The purpose of this first interview was to find out information about participants’ English language learning background, learning habits outside the classroom, perceptions of their speaking competence, and

previous eTandem language learning experiences with English native speakers. In particular, questions 10 to 13 aimed at investigating learners' perceptions of their individual levels of achievement in speaking, whether they considered they had any specific weaknesses in that skill, what they thought the reasons for those might be, and how they believed those weaknesses could be overcome.

The post semi-structured interview, also adapted from Vinagre and Muñoz (2011), was conducted at the end of the study (see Appendix H). This second interview consisted of 18 questions aimed at investigating learners' perceptions of improvement in their speaking competence as a result of the eTandem synchronous oral exchange with English native speakers. Students responded questions regarding the aspects of the exchange they thought contributed to their learning; the kinds of knowledge and skills they gained, the aspects they considered need to be improved for future eTandem language learning projects, and whether they would like to take part in eTandem language exchanges in future semesters.

In the interview, participants also answered questions about the extent they had fulfilled the learning objectives set at the beginning of the eTandem language learning project; the aspects they liked the best and least of the exchange; the usefulness of the eTandem learning guidelines, and eTandem learning portfolio (eTandem learning plan, eTandem learning record, and eTandem learning reflection); as well as the problems they had encountered through the process that could have affected the improvement of their speaking competence in a negative way.

3.5.2 eTandem learning portfolio

Participants' eTandem learning portfolio was the second data collection method used in the study. The rationale for using learning portfolios as methods for data collection is that, as diaries and journals, they allow language learners to write and reflect on their learning experiences. Learning portfolios, according to İşler (2005), serve three different purposes in educational contexts; they are tools for fostering autonomy, alternative ways of assessment and evaluation, and tools for instruction. For this particular study, language learning portfolios were used as instruments to foster participants' autonomy, one of the principles of eTandem language learning (Brammerts, 1996), and to guide them through their eTandem instruction.

The eTandem learning portfolio used for the oral exchange consisted of three different formats, the eTandem learning plan, the eTandem learning record, and the eTandem learning reflection. By using these three formats, participants were encouraged to plan their learning, monitor their progress, and finally reflect on their whole learning experience. Apart from providing documentary data for analysis by itself, the portfolio also helped students to respond to the questions in the post semi-structured interview at the end of the study.

In the eTandem learning plan, learners indicated the dates and times for the Skype exchange, the learning objectives set by both language partners, the language tasks to be carried out during the project, and the linguistic aspects participants wanted to receive feedback or correction on by their partner (see Appendix E). This format was adapted from the "Registro de Autoaprendizaje" (Occeña, 1998)

used by all learners at the B.A. in ELT to record their activities as part of their self-learning portfolios in their English courses.

The eTandem learning record was the second format incorporated into the portfolio. In this format, students were asked to register their learning experience for each of the six Skype sessions of the exchange. They wrote down information regarding the session learning objective; the development of the task; errors corrected during the interaction; and new vocabulary learned during the exchange. This self-learning instrument also included space for learners to take notes about the cultural information learned, references used for the completion of the task, and problems they faced during the session (see Appendix F). Participants were asked to record their learning experience in this format every time they participated in an eTandem speaking exchange with their language partner and hand in a copy of the formats to the project coordinator according to the dates established in the eTandem learning guidelines (see Appendix D).

Finally, the eTandem learning portfolio included a third format, the eTandem learning reflection sheet where students were asked to write comments concerning the linguistic aspects they learned, developed or improved; the aspects of language they had not learned in class in relation to the functions or topics practiced; the aspects that fostered or affected their learning; and what they found interesting or useful about the language tasks (see Appendix G). The language reflection format was completed by Mexican participants after every two Skype speaking exchanges. Students were instructed to hand in a copy of their learning reflection

formats along with their learning records according to the dates set in the eTandem learning guidelines (see Appendix D).

This last format of the eTandem learning portfolio resembles a diary where learners were encouraged to write about their whole eTandem language learning experience based on the four basic prompts stated above. Bailey (1990, p. 215, as cited in Nunan, 1992) defines a diary as “a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurrent patterns or salient events”. Their use in second language research allows researchers to investigate into areas of people’s lives that otherwise may be inaccessible (Gibson, 1995, as cited in Nunan, 1992).

3.6 Data analysis

Pre and post semi-structured interviews and students’ learning portfolios were the two methods used for data collection in the study. In order to analyse data, the researcher followed the qualitative analysis sequence suggested by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) and Dörnyei (2007) which involves four main stages transcribing the data, coding for themes, looking for patterns as well as making interpretations and drawing conclusions.

The two semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed following conventions suggested by Richards (2003) in order to identify any relevant categories for data analysis (see Appendix I). Then, all data from the study went through the two coding levels suggested by Dörnyei (2007), initial

coding aimed at identifying any important topics for the research; and second-level coding, aimed at noticing patterns that emerged across the individual accounts.

Although some of the categories had already been preconceived in the pre and post semi-structured interview questions and the three formats which integrated the eTandem learning portfolio, the interview transcriptions and students' portfolios were deeply analysed to identify any other theme or pattern which could provide findings in relation to the research questions addressed in the study. A combination of "bringing codes to the data" and "finding them in the data" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 254) was used in order to not only focus on preconceived data but also discover patterns which could lead to new insights on the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of participants' speaking competence.

In order to facilitate data interpretation, interviewees' words were organised and summarised in a chart based on the categories previously identified. Charts among other types of data displays, according to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 2, as cited in Dörnyei, 2007), consist of "an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action".

3.7 Limitations of the study

This research study was initially planned to be carried out with learners of Spanish from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, institution which

signed an agreement with the “Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo” to conduct collaborative projects and other academic activities. However, as the eTandem language learning project initiated in November 2011 and the Spanish courses at University-Purdue University Indianapolis did not start until January 2012, it was not possible to find any English-native speakers, learners of Spanish, to set the partnerships at that time.

Fortunately, through the Head of the Spanish Department of the University of Southampton, it was possible to invite learners of Spanish interested in participating voluntarily in the project. Nonetheless, the time difference between Mexico and the UK, six hours, imposed a limitation on language partners’ communication which could have affected Mexican students’ learning and perceptions of their progress in speaking. Moreover, as British students’ voluntary participation was not part of their formal Spanish course, there were not any eTandem language learning project supervisors in the UK to provide language learners with face-to-face support throughout their eTandem language learning exchange.

On the other hand, although this qualitative research study could shed light on the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican students’ English speaking competence based on their own reflections and perceptions of improvement, there is no objective assessment to measure its effectiveness. The limited time frame during which the research was conducted could not allow any significant improvement of learners’ speaking competence in such short period of time.

Nonetheless, it is hoped that the insights derived from this study could help other students from the B.A. in ELT at the “Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo” improve their speaking competence and compensate for the limitations imposed on their learning by their English learning context and poor language background. Based on the findings obtained in this study, the B.A. program authorities may decide the incorporation of eTandem language oral exchanges with English native speakers into face-to-face language instruction in order to provide learners with opportunities to improve their speaking competence in an authentic communicative environment outside the classroom.

3.8 Summary

A detailed description of the research methodology, participants’ profile, and research procedures was provided throughout this chapter. Information regarding the data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and limitations of the study was also discussed.

The following chapter will present a description of the results obtained in the study as well as a discussion of the findings in relation to previous research (Mullen et al., 2009; Tian & Wang, 2010; Lee 2002, 2007a, 2007b) on the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of participants’ English speaking competence.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The results from the study are presented in this chapter. For best organization, the results are presented in three main sections according to the methods used for data collection: Pre semi-structured interviews, participants' eTandem learning portfolios, and post semi-structured interviews. Section one gives a framework for analysis in the light of the research questions by identifying participants' English learning background, perceptions of their speaking competence before the exchange as well as English learning habits. Section two presents the results obtained from participants' learning portfolios in relation to their learning experiences during the eTandem language learning project. Finally, section three responds to the research questions addressed in the study by triangulating data obtained in the post semi-structured interviews with the results presented and discussed in the two previous sections.

The findings are reported below along with some excerpts from the interviews and participants' eTandem learning portfolios illustrating important points. It is necessary to point out that as suggested by Dörnyei (2007), minor linguistic inaccuracies in learners' interview responses and portfolio entries have been edited to facilitate reading. However, careful attention has been paid not to distort or misrepresent learners' actual meaning. Learners' unedited responses to interview questions can be seen in Appendices J and K.

The study originally included ten learners, five English native speakers from the University of Southampton and five Spanish native speakers from the “Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo”. However, for various reasons the final number of participants was reduced to eight. The results presented and discussed in this study are based on the data analysis of four pairs of learners who completed the three-week eTandem language exchange. Due to ethical issues agreed with Mexican learners at the beginning of the eTandem language learning project, they will be referred throughout this study as participants A, B, C, and D. (see Consent form for a study in a foreign language context in Appendix B).

4.2 Pre semi-structured interviews

This section reports the results collected in the pre semi-structured interviews with the learners from the B.A. in ELT who participated in the three-week eTandem language exchange with English native speakers from the University of Southampton. The section is divided into four subsections that describe participants’ English learning background, perceptions of their speaking competence before the oral exchange, English learning habits as well as previous experiences in eTandem language learning (see Pre semi-structured interview questions in Appendix C).

4.2.1 Participants' English learning background

Interview results revealed that all four participants had studied English from three to six years before entering the B.A. in English Language Teaching. All of them had attended English classes in high school and participant A had also taken four basic English courses at the University Language Center. However, two learners, participants B and C, expressed that their prior instruction in English in high school had been limited and insufficient. Probably the reason for this perception is that most English courses at public high schools in Mexico only include from three to four hours of instruction a week during six semesters. Moreover, classes consist of approximately forty learners which makes it difficult for teachers to carry out activities and tasks that help students to practice the language in communicative settings.

From the four learners who took part in the study, only one had been to an English-speaking country. Participant C responded that she had been to the United States the year before as her father works there. She stayed in California for one month on vacation and although she spoke Spanish with her father and brother most of the time, she expressed that she also had the opportunity to practice English with native speakers, friends of her father. In addition, she used the language as means of communication in order to get some services in grocery stores and the bank.

4.2.2 Participants' perceptions of their speaking competence

Question 9 of the pre semi-structured interview asked learners about the language skills they found most difficult in English. It was interesting to find out that although English and content subject teachers at the B.A. program have identified weaknesses in learners' speaking competence in general, as it was described in the statement of the problem in chapter one, only two learners from the four participants considered speaking difficult. Participant A responded that the most difficult skills for her were speaking and writing. In relation to the reasons she considered these two skills difficult, she answered the following: "Speaking because I consider [myself] a shy person and [it] is difficult for me and writing because I don't know [how] to organise my ideas".

Participant B noted that although speaking had been difficult for her at the beginning of her B.A. studies, now she could express herself with a certain degree of proficiency. She considered the most difficult skill for her was writing as she had to organise her ideas in a different way than in Spanish. Participant C, on the other hand, said that the most difficult skill for her was listening since she sometimes got lost easily when people spoke fast. Finally, participant D responded that the most difficult skills for her were writing and speaking.

When learners were asked about the level of proficiency they considered they had in speaking in English, they had problems to understand the question and responded in different ways despite the researcher's efforts to clarify the question.

Participant A, for instance, said that her level of proficiency in speaking varied depending on the person she was talking to. She felt more comfortable and fluent when speaking the language with students as part of her teaching practice in some subjects than when participating in class or talking to teachers at the B.A. Although she was not certain about why that happened, she commented she felt fear when talking to her classmates or teachers at the program; as a result, she had more problems in the language. Participant B responded she considered she had a proficiency level equivalent to B1. Participant C mentioned that even though she could talk to people in English, she was aware of certain aspects of the language she needed to improve such as pronunciation and grammar. However, she considered she had a proficiency level equivalent to B2. Participant D, on the other hand, pointed out that although she understood what her teachers were saying in class, it was difficult for her to find the correct words to express her ideas in English. She believed she had an intermediate level in the language.

Since this item of the interview was not clear enough for all participants, the researcher decided to include a self-assessment grid taken from the CEFRL (2001, p. 26-27) in the eTandem learning portfolio for learners to read the descriptors for each of the six levels (A1 to C2) and carefully identify the level they felt corresponded to their speaking competence. Participants A, B, and D placed themselves in level B1 while participant C placed herself in level B2. It is important to point out that learners' evaluation of their speaking competence using the self-assessment grid (CEFRL, 2001, p. 26-27) matched with the proficiency

levels learners classified themselves into according to the scores they got in the TOEFL test administered to them at the beginning of the semester.

Question 11 of the interview asked learners to talk about their weaknesses in speaking based on their own perceptions. In order to help participants answer this question, the researcher listed some areas of language learners could have problems with such as fluency, lack of vocabulary, frequent mistakes, difficulty to interact and keep a spontaneous conversation, and use of very academic/bookish English. The following excerpts show what learners responded in relation to those areas:

Participant A: “Maybe pronunciation and how to organise my ideas or vocabulary”. “...for the same reason that I think I need more vocabulary, it’s difficult to interact with [another] person”.

Participant B: “Well, the pronunciation of some words is difficult for me”. “...making mistakes, it is a big problem for me ahh I have like ahh maybe I speak in a [fluent] way, well I think so, but I have many mistakes sometimes”. “...if I don’t have the vocabulary is difficult for me, I have to think first and then I have to connect my ideas and all kind of things.”

Participant C: “...my pronunciation. Yeah and also when I don’t know the grammar structure, I don’t know how to express that”. “...I think that with vocabulary you can like explain when you don’t know the [exact] word but with grammar is more difficult for me”.

Participant D:” Pronunciation and I don’t know if it is an area, but vocabulary”. “Sometimes with a teacher or older person, sometimes I feel stressed but when I don’t feel stressed, I can speak.” “Maybe the stress can be because the native speaker [speaks] very fast and my stress could be that I get all the things that he is telling me but if I can say, could you speak a little bit slow?”

By associating learners’ perceptions of their weaknesses in speaking with the four types of competence described by Canale and Swain (1980), it is possible to observe that learners believed they had deficiencies in the four areas of their speaking competence, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. All participants referred mainly to their lack of knowledge of lexical items and of rules of grammar, syntax, and phonology (grammatical competence). Participants A and B, in particular, expressed they also had problems to organise their ideas when speaking which refers to their ability to connect sentences and utterances to convey a message (discourse competence). Participants A and D also mentioned they felt stressed when speaking to teachers of English or older people. Probably the reason may be that learners do not feel comfortable speaking to them as they do not have a complete understanding of the sociocultural rules that should be used when talking to people than impose respect due to their position or age (sociolinguistic competence). Participant D said she also felt stressed when speaking to English native speakers. She stated that usually native speakers speak too fast; therefore,

she needs to ask them to slow down. The fact she felt stressed when speaking to them may indicate she is not very familiar with the use of compensatory strategies that could help her make communication repairs and compensate for breakdowns caused by her competence in English (strategic competence). Furthermore, participants A and D revealed they did not feel confident speaking English with their teachers or classmates in class. This affective factor constitutes another important variable in second language learning and the development of learners' competence in the language (Watkins, Biggs, & Regmi, 1991; Brodkey & Shore, 1976; Gardner & Lambert, 1972, as cited in Brown, 2007b).

When the researcher asked learners what they thought the reasons for their weaknesses may be, they all agreed that they needed additional practice outside the classroom since the only place they had to practice the language was in their classes at the B.A. Additionally, participant C noted that she needed practice in a real context. To illustrate her point she described the difficulties she faced when she opened a bank account in the United States due to her lack of knowledge of vocabulary (grammatical competence), sociocultural rules of interaction and turn-taking (sociolinguistic competence), and compensatory strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication (strategic competence):

“Well, because mainly because of the grammar structure that I don't (.) that I don't know very well and about vocabulary, there are some like technical terms that I don't know, for example, I went to the - in (xxx), I went to the bank and we went to open a new account, bank account, and

then the (.) yeah the girl started to talk and talk about that like credit and like that, I know this but now I know that I know how to speak in a bank but [there]...” “...but as you know it’s like ,you know the answer, well the question the answer, the question the answer but it doesn’t work in real life so she started to talk and talk about credits and many things and I got lost, and I was like yeah - that was very (.) very bad because well, I (.) I (.) I thought that (.) that I [knew] how to (.) yeah how to interact in that situation...”

Participants expressed they needed additional practice in order to overcome their weaknesses in speaking. Participant A responded she needed practice with English native speakers because in that way she could also practice her listening skills and get used to different accents. Participant B expressed that in order to improve her speaking competence she also needed to practice with English native speakers. Participant C stated that it was important to work on one’s weaknesses in the language in order to overcome them. Participant D also believed that by having more speaking and reading practice she could improve her pronunciation and increase her vocabulary in the language.

4.2.3 Participants' English learning habits

All learners agreed that practice was an important factor for the improvement of their speaking competence; however, only two of them revealed they had little speaking practice outside the classroom. Participant B expressed she practiced speaking with her boyfriend or her students three times a week. Participant C responded she sometimes practiced her speaking skills when talking on the phone with her father twice a week and probably twice a month with native speakers, friends of hers. On the other hand, participants A and D expressed they never practiced speaking outside the classroom and did not have any contact with English native speakers. Some of the reasons learners did not practice their speaking skills outside the classroom may have included a mismatch of their schedule with the conversation club sessions held at the B.A., few opportunities to practice the language in communicative settings and even lack of motivation or interest to improve their proficiency in English.

4.2.4 Participants' previous experiences in eTandem language learning

Regarding previous learning experiences in eTandem language learning, none of the learners who took part in the oral exchange with native speakers had been involved in this learning mode before.

4.3 Participants' eTandem learning portfolios

This section reveals results from participants' eTandem learning portfolios by analysing data collected in two of its formats: eTandem learning plan (see Appendix E) and eTandem learning reflection (see Appendix G). The format eTandem learning record (see Appendix F) was not analysed in order to respond to the research questions since its main purpose within the portfolio was to assist learners in planning and carrying out the language tasks. The record also helped participants take notes about their progress in speaking in order to write their reflection afterwards.

4.3.1 eTandem learning plan

As it was stated in the research procedure in Chapter three, learners carried out six language tasks with their eTandem language partners over three weeks. Even though participants performed four language tasks already set in the eTandem learning plan (tasks 1, 2, 3, and 6), they had the opportunity to negotiate two tasks with their partners based on their learning needs and interests (tasks 4 and 5). Moreover, they were instructed to indicate in the plan what they wanted to learn in relation to each task and the aspects they wanted to receive feedback/correction on from their partners in each exchange. For best organization, results from this format are presented under the following labels:

A). Participants' free tasks

Participant A and her partner agreed on carrying out their two free tasks around two topics, sports and economy. In task 4, learners exchanged information about the sports that are practiced in their country and also mentioned what sports they practiced. In task 5, partners exchanged information about their country's economy and expressed their opinion about their partners' country's economy based on the information presented by their partners and their background knowledge on the topic.

Participant B and her partner decided to plan their free tasks around two topics, celebrations and touristic places. In task 4, learners talked about the most common celebrations in their country during the year, when and how those celebrations took place, and how people celebrated. In task 5, partners shared information about holiday destinations in their country and the reasons why those places were popular among visitors.

In task 4, participant C and her partner decided to describe daily life in their country. In task 5, learners exchanged examples of informal language used by them and other young people in their country.

Finally, participant D and her partner decided to plan only one task for the fourth and fifth oral exchange. They shared information about traditions in their country and explained cultural aspects related to them.

In order to carry out these free language tasks, learners were instructed to follow the task model they had used for the completion of the other four tasks (Skehan, 1996, as cited in Truscott & Morley, 2003).

**B). Aspects learners wanted to learn and receive feedback/
correction on in relation to each task**

In relation to task 1, participants A, B, and D wrote they wanted to learn expressions to introduce themselves in formal and informal contexts. Participant B also stated that she wanted to learn about how she could talk about any topic with new people. Participant C indicated she wanted to learn informal vocabulary to exchange personal information and also how people from the UK used body language when meeting new people. About the aspects learners wanted to receive feedback/correction on, participants A, B, and C expressed they wanted to be corrected on their pronunciation. Participant B also wanted to receive feedback on her fluency in the language. Participant D, on the other hand, expressed she wanted to receive feedback/correction on grammar.

With regard to task 2, participants A and D stated they wanted to learn vocabulary related to the topic *Crime and Punishment*. Participants A, B, and C were interested in learning about crime, punishment, and justice in the UK. Participant D expressed she was also interested in learning informal language about the topic. At the end of the exchange, participants A and B wanted to receive feedback/correction on their pronunciation. Participant B also wanted to be corrected on vocabulary. Participants C and D wanted to receive/correction on grammar.

In task 3, participants A and D expressed they wanted to learn more vocabulary related to the topic *Crime and Punishment*. On the other hand, participants B and C were more interested in learning information about problems caused by

insecurity and crime in the UK and their partners' opinion on how the system could be improved. Participant A wrote she wanted to receive feedback/correction on vocabulary. Participant B wanted to be corrected in pronunciation. Participants C and D, on the other hand, wanted to get feedback/correction on grammar.

As all participants had designed different language tasks for task 4 and 5, everybody expressed they wanted to learn different cultural aspects in relation to those tasks. However, they also expressed they wanted to learn vocabulary about their tasks. For task 4, participants A, B, and C expressed they wanted to receive feedback/correction on vocabulary. Participants B and C also wanted to be corrected on pronunciation. Participant D wanted to get feedback/correction on grammar. For task 5, participants A, B, and C indicated they wanted to be corrected on their pronunciation. Participant D only wanted to be corrected on grammar.

In task 6, learners did not specify any aspects of language or culture they wanted to learn; however, they expressed they were willing to find out their partners' perceptions of the exchange in terms of linguistic and cultural gains. Learners also noted they expected to get general feedback from their partners on their speaking competence.

From the analysis of the aspects learners wanted to learn and receive feedback/correction on in each task and participants' weaknesses in speaking, it is clear to see that learners worked on their weaknesses during the oral exchange so that they could improve their speaking competence in English. However, most of them only focussed on the improvement of their grammatical competence, that is, vocabulary

and rules of syntax, sentence-grammar, and phonology (Canale & Swain, 1980). Only participants B and C in task 1 specified they wanted to learn how to address new people and how people in England used body language in introductions (sociolinguistic competence).

4.3.2 eTandem learning reflection

The following section presents findings from participants' perceptions of linguistic gains as well as a general evaluation of the exchange. During the project, learners were encouraged to write about the following aspects in their portfolio reflection formats:

- What I learned/developed/improved on
- Aspects of language I had not learned in class in relation to this skill/function/topic
- What fostered/affected my learning in a negative way
- What I found interesting/useful about the task

From the analysis of their reflection formats, it could be observed that learners did not write about all the aspects listed above. However, they made comments on how the exchange helped them improve their speaking competence in four areas in particular pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and grammar. Participants also noted that the oral exchange had helped them improve their confidence in speaking and learn cultural information. A summary of each participant's reflection entries is presented below with some excerpts illustrating their points.

A). Participant A

Participant A expressed she enjoyed practising English with a native speaker because she thought it was helpful for her. She wrote it was interesting to meet a person from another culture and learn information about her country in each task. Participant A also noted that it had been more interesting for them to carry out their free tasks as she and her partner had more background knowledge about the topic and therefore had more information to convey:

“In this session about sports, from my point of view I think that it was so interesting because we talked about a topic that we know more. I found interesting this session because we talked with more confidence and the talking was useful since I learned new vocabulary [about] sports”.

With regard to the aspects of her speaking competence she improved as a result of the exchange, she noted she had corrected her pronunciation of some words, learned new vocabulary, and gained confidence and fluency in speaking. In the last portfolio reflection format, participant A wrote: “My language partner [told] me that he noticed a progress in my English, that in the last session [I] was [fluent].

B). Participant B

Participant B wrote the eTandem oral exchange had been very useful for her to improve her speaking and listening skills. In relation to listening, she expressed that it had been difficult for her to do the first task due to the intonation of her partner in English; therefore, she had to pay more attention and listen carefully

in the following sessions. She also noted that she had improved her fluency and pronunciation of some words as well as extended her vocabulary knowledge during the exchange:

“...I improved the pronunciation of different words, aspect in which I received the help of [my partner]. Also, I need to mention that this topic was checked in class during my last semester but honestly I didn’t learn vocabulary related to this topic and the practice that I [had] with [my partner] was more useful”.

“In these two sessions I learned [much] vocabulary that I couldn’t learn in my classroom, in the session the topic was really interesting and I learned many things about celebrations in England. In terms of my language I improved my fluency and pronunciation of some words”.

Participant B mentioned the eTandem language exchange was very interesting because she got feedback from her partner, which she considered useful to have an idea of what to improve in the language. She also valued the opportunity to learn cultural information during the exchange.

C). Participant C

Participant C wrote that it was wonderful to speak to a person who was a native speaker of the language she was learning. She expressed that the feedback provided by her partner was helpful for her to improve her competence in the language as his explanations and examples were very clear. She felt very enthusiastic about

all the knowledge gained as a result of the exchange in terms of language and culture:

“The most positive thing about eTandem learning is that in each session I can’t stop learning. Every minute of the conversation I learn something new either when speaking or when listening [to] my partner. The practice I have is great I couldn’t have a better person to practice my English than a native speaker and even better a person that is studying languages”.

Participant C noted she had improved her pronunciation of some words and also grammar. However, she mentioned that the cultural knowledge derived from the exchange was the best part of the project for her. On the other hand, participant C also expressed that the free tasks negotiated with her partner had been more interesting for them since they had included more topics to talk about related to the tasks. Regarding the aspects that affected her learning, participant C wrote that she felt frustrated in the first session because the Internet was very slow and that caused problems for her and her partner to understand each other. She noted that having a good Internet connection was a really important factor during the exchanges. Finally, participant C expressed the following: “I think it would be great that all [B.A.] students [had] their own language partner, every teacher knows that the best way of learning is with practice and what a perfect thing if we as learners could do it with a native speaker”.

D). Participant D

Participant D was very brief in her reflections during the exchange and only noted that she had improved her speaking competence in four areas during the exchange, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammar. She also expressed that she had learned information about her partner's country and culture during the eTandem language learning project.

4.4 Post semi-structured interviews

This section presents findings from the post semi-structured interviews with eTandem Mexican participants at the end of the oral exchange. Results will be presented in four main subsections based on the research questions addressed in the study. In order to facilitate data interpretation, findings collected from the post semi-structured interviews will be triangulated with results from the pre semi-structured interviews and participants' eTandem learning portfolios, discussed in previous sections of this chapter.

4.4.1 Research question (a)

From students' perception, does eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC activities with English native speakers help them improve their speaking competence?

All four participants considered that the eTandem oral exchange with English native speakers had helped them improve their speaking competence in their

target language, especially in areas they had identified before as weaknesses: pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

A). Participant A

Participant A said at the beginning of the project that her weaknesses in speaking were pronunciation, vocabulary, and organising her ideas in English. She also mentioned that she felt afraid of speaking to her classmates and teachers in class. In the post semi-structured interview, she expressed that she had extended her vocabulary knowledge and also became more fluent in the language as a result of the exchange. In the reflection formats part of her eTandem learning portfolio, she also noted that her pronunciation of some words had also improved. She added that she felt more confident to speak English with other people after the eTandem language exchange.

B). Participant B

In the pre semi-structured interview, participant B expressed that her weaknesses in speaking were pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. At the end of the exchange, participant B noted that she had improved in three areas of her speaking competence: pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. She noted the same progress in the eTandem learning reflection format. With regard to her progress in pronunciation and vocabulary she said:

“...the problem that I had in speaking was pronunciation so I discovered that I improved my pronunciation of different words and also the vocabulary, [my partner] helped me with vocabulary of many things that maybe I didn’t know how [to say], she helped me, maybe you can say this, in this way, or in [an] informal way you can say this, and this was very important for me”.

C). Participant C

At the beginning of the project, participant C expressed that her weaknesses in speaking were pronunciation and grammar. In the eTandem learning reflection formats, part of her eTandem learning portfolio, she noted she had made progress in these two areas as a result of the exchange. In addition, she indicated in the post semi-structured interview that her confidence to speak English had also increased:

“ ...well, I think that I lost the fear to talk with someone that is native because I – when I’m nervous, my pronunciation is like kind of bad or difficult to understand but when you [gain confidence], I think i pronounce better, and that happened with [my partner], I think that now I like lost the fear as I told you”.

D). Participant D

Participant D pointed out in the pre semi-structured interview that the weaknesses in her speaking competence were pronunciation and vocabulary. She also

expressed that she felt stressed when she talked to her teachers, native speakers or older people. In her eTandem learning reflection, she stated that the aspects that she had improved of her speaking competence were pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and fluency. In the second interview, participant C noted she had corrected her pronunciation of some words and also became more fluent after the exchange. She also said she felt more confident to speak to native speakers because the experience with her eTandem partner had been positive:

“I [believed] that it [was] going to be very difficult for me because my pronunciation is not very [good] and I [felt] happy when [my partner] [understood] what I was saying; so I [felt] good and for this reason, I continued with the experience”.

In relation to the first research question, findings derived from the study suggest that the oral exchange with English native speakers helped learners improve their speaking competence. However, participants’ perceptions of improvement in speaking only included areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. These aspects correspond to grammatical competence and discourse competence, two of the four competences that according to Canale and Swain (1980) allow individuals to be communicatively competent in a language. Learners’ responses in interviews and reflections in their portfolios did not provide any evidence on the improvement of their sociolinguistic and strategic competence in speaking. Tian and Wang’s (2010) previous study revealed the same findings. Tian and Wang concluded that participants’ level of proficiency

in their target language, lack of knowledge of compensatory strategies, and insufficient feedback by partners had prevented them from improving their strategic and sociocultural competences.

This study on the one hand, found evidence in learners' responses to interviews and reflections that participants had used compensatory strategies to understand their partners' British accent and make repairs in communication (asking for clarification, repetition, using the text chat in Skype). Learners also expressed they had noticed their partners used informal language to communicate with them. Participant B, in particular, pointed out that her partner gave her feedback on vocabulary and expressions she could use in different contexts. Participant C stated she had also learned informal language used between young people in the UK. Therefore, there was evidence that participants learned rules of language in different contexts and practiced their compensatory strategies even when they did not mention any improvements in these two areas of their speaking competence.

4.4.2 Research question (b)

What aspects of the eTandem language learning experience do students believe contributed to the improvement of their speaking competence?

A). Interaction with native speakers

Participants A and C expressed in their portfolio reflections that the aspect that had contributed the most to the improvement of the speaking competence was the

opportunity to practice the language with an English native speaker. Participant C also noted in the post semi-structured interview that listening to her partner had also been useful because she could notice his pronunciation and use of words and phrases. By doing this, she could later incorporate those pieces of vocabulary into her lexical repertoire.

B). Feedback from language partners

Participants B and C emphasized in their reflections the importance of their partner's feedback for their progress in speaking. Participant C in particular expressed that the feedback provided by her partner was helpful to improve her competence in the language as his explanations and examples were very clear. On the other hand, participant B expressed in the second interview that she appreciated the way in which her partner had given her feedback because he did it politely without making her feel uncomfortable.

C). Written support

In the post semi-structured interview, participant D noted that the text-based chat in Skype had been useful for her and her partner to make clarifications when something had not been understood, especially due to her partner's accent in English.

Participants revealed they had benefitted from the interaction with a native speaker in terms of linguistic and cultural gains, as it was also found in studies conducted

by Mullen et al. (2009), Tian and Wang (2010), and Lee (2002, 2007a, 2007b). Learners also pointed out the importance of feedback for eTandem partners to learn based on the principles identified by Brammerts (1996), reciprocity and autonomy. Learners' similarity between academic profiles in this study seemed to have facilitated the provision of feedback on language and correction as Mexican and British participants were enrolled in a B.A. in languages (Calvert, 1992; Lewis, 2005; Vinagre 2007). The use of Skype text-based chat was also important as one compensatory strategy to make communication repairs.

4.4.3 Research question (c)

What kinds of knowledge and skills do students believe they gained through eTandem language learning synchronous verbal exchanges that they had not gained through F2F speaking classes?

Tasks 2 and 3 of the eTandem language learning program were designed based on the topic *Crime and Punishment*, one of the topics from the students' course syllabus. Although learners had already practiced that topic in their English classroom, it was included in the oral exchange so that participants could have the opportunity to practice their speaking skills with their partners in a different learning scenario. It was hoped that learners could identify knowledge and skills they gained as a result of the eTandem language exchange that they had not learned in their face-to-face speaking classes in relation to the topic.

A). Knowledge

Regarding knowledge, participants A, B, and C expressed they had learned cultural information such as what were the most common criminal activities in England, punishments and sentences for those crimes, and what were the most dangerous areas in London. Participants B, C, and D added they had also learned new vocabulary related to the topic, in particular participant C expressed: "...the language that we learn here is like very formal, I could notice that he doesn't use like formal phrases or formal questions, he like avoid some words".

Participant D mentioned she had learned informal expressions and slang from her partner in those tasks. Although participant B did not make any reference about vocabulary learning when she responded to the question in the interview, she noted she had also learned different vocabulary in her portfolio reflection (see section 4.3.2 of this chapter).

B). Skills

In relation to the skills learners practiced or gained in these tasks through the exchange, participants A, B, and D commented they had had additional and more authentic listening practice with their partners. Participant A answered: "...skills also listening because I listened, I heard some words that maybe I didn't [hear] before..." Participant B also said: "Ahh like for example in listening, it was another skill that I developed because I had many problem (sic) with this".

Participant D added:

“mmm, maybe listening because listening in the classroom is very artificial because – and the way – partner, she [speaks] very fast so I could practice my listening in [another] way [than] in the classroom”.

“...and also my listening because her pronunciation is very difficult so I had to say, could you repeat it and probably I used more my ear”.

Participant B also commented that she had had the opportunity to express her opinion in a different way than in the classroom:

“...like for example expressing opinions and definitely I gained many aspects about this because when I was in my class [it] was totally different, only expression okay, you have to say that and you don't have the opportunity to express your idea like you want and with [my partner], I expressed my opinions and sometimes she helped me with feedback...”

As it was stated in section 4.4.1 of this chapter, learners did gain practice and knowledge of sociolinguistic and strategic competences even though they did not mention it any specific improvement on these two areas of their speaking competence.

4.4.4 Research question (d)

According to learners, what aspects need to be considered to replicate eTandem language learning studies through synchronous oral CMC with English native speakers in future semesters in this particular teaching and learning context?

A). Language tasks

In their learning reflections, participants A and C expressed that it had been more interesting for them to carry out the free tasks negotiated with their partners than the tasks that were already set in the eTandem learning plan. The reason for this according to participant A was that they had more background knowledge about the free tasks and therefore, they had more information to convey to each other. Participant C added that the free tasks had been more interesting for them because they had incorporated more subtopics to talk about in relation to each task. In the post interview, participants C and D suggested incorporating more questions within each task so that learners had a more complete understanding of what they were expected to talk about in each session. Participants A and D also recommended to allow eTandem language partners to talk about more free topics as they felt the interaction was more spontaneous and interesting for them.

B). eTandem learning portfolio

All participants agreed that the eTandem learning portfolio was a good instrument to help them plan, implement, and reflect on their learning. Participants A and

B expressed that it was not necessary to add or exclude anything to make it better. Participant C, on the other hand, suggested incorporating space within the eTandem learning record for learners to make notes about the feedback/correction they were going to provide their partners with at the end of the exchange. Participant C also added that she considered the portfolio to be useful for learners to keep a record of their learning and also reflect on their experience. She said what the prompts included in the eTandem learning reflection format were useful for reflection.

C). Organization for the exchange

The four learners suggested incorporating the eTandem oral exchange into all English courses at the B.A. program so that all students could have a language partner and improve their speaking competence. Participant B also suggested replacing the self-learning portfolio used in all English courses with this type of speaking practice. On the other hand, all participants agreed that it had been very difficult for them to meet their language partners through Skype due to difference of time between Mexico and the UK. They suggested avoiding this situation in future projects.

Although Mullen et al. (2009) concluded in their study that task-based exchanges engaged language learners and kept them interested in the interaction, this study revealed that learners felt more motivated to speak to their partners based on free tasks negotiated by them as they found them more interesting and spontaneous.

Letting learners plan and design their own language tasks could support even more the principles of eTandem language learning identified by Brammerts (1996); however, course instructors/eTandem language learning facilitators should be careful the interaction between partners does not turn into a casual chat (Telles & Vassallo, 2006a).

Contrary to learners' perceptions in previous research (Walker, 2003; Truscott & Morley, 2003; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011), participants in this study found the use of learning portfolios helpful for planning, implementing, and reflecting on their own learning.

In relation to the seven criteria Lewis (2005) suggested for matching language partners in eTandem language learning, this study suggests the incorporation of another factor to these criteria, time zone. For learners in this project it was really hard to agree on a specific time to meet their partners in Skype as there is a huge difference of time between Mexico and the UK. Although learners expressed this factor had not affected the improvement of their speaking competence in a negative way, it is recommended to match partners according to their time availability and flexibility as well.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This chapter concludes this study by summarizing its findings as well as discussing the pedagogical implications of the study and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Summary of the study

This study has attempted to investigate the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of students' English speaking competence, based on their own reflections and perceptions of progress during and at the end of the exchange. To do so, pre and post semi-structured interviews as well as participants' eTandem learning portfolios were used as the two methods of data collection. Learners' perceptions of improvement as a result of the exchange were analysed based on Canale and Swain's (1980) definition of communicative competence. Communicative competence, according to Canale and Swan, consists of four types of competences, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. The knowledge and skills of these four competences is what allows individuals to be communicatively competent in a language.

A). Research question (a)

Findings obtained from the study suggest that the eTandem oral exchange with native speakers helped learners from the B.A. in ELT improve their speaking

competence particularly in areas such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency (grammatical and discourse competence). However, there was no evidence of participants' perceptions of improvement in understanding sociocultural rules of language and use of compensatory strategies to make repairs in communication breakdowns (sociolinguistic and strategic competences).

Learners noted, in their responses to interview questions and reflections, they had used strategies to compensate for communication breakdowns caused by their partner's British accent. Examples of these compensatory strategies included asking for clarification, asking for repetition and using Skype text-based chat. Moreover, participants also expressed they had noticed the use of informal language by their partners when communicating with them during the exchange. Participant B, in particular, pointed out that her partner gave her feedback on vocabulary and expressions she could use in different contexts. Participant C stated she had also learned informal language used between young people in the UK. Therefore, there was evidence that participants learned rules of language in different contexts and practiced their compensatory strategies even when they did not mention any improvement in these two areas of their speaking competence.

B). Research question (b)

With regard to the aspects of the exchange that contributed to the improvement of learners' speaking competence, the study found that the opportunity to practice

the language with a native speaker, feedback received from their partners, and Skype text chat had been key factors in students' progress in their speaking competence.

C). Research Question (c)

Findings from the study also revealed that learners did not only benefit linguistically from the exchange with English native speakers, but also culturally. In relation to the knowledge and skills that participants gained in eTandem language learning that had not gained in their English language classroom, participants expressed that they had learned mainly vocabulary and informal expressions related to the tasks. They noted that they also learned cultural information about their partners' country.

On the other hand, participants expressed they had gained additional and more authentic listening practice with their partners; therefore, they also developed their listening skills as a result of the exchange. Participant B commented she had also practiced her speaking skills in a different way than in the classroom because she felt free to express her opinions.

D). Research Question (d)

With regard to the fourth research question, the study concluded that the aspects that need to be considered or improved for future eTandem language learning projects were the design of language tasks by learners, the use of eTandem

learning portfolios to support language learning, and a better organization of the exchange. About language tasks, data revealed that learners felt more motivated to speak to their partners based on free tasks negotiated by them as they found them more interesting and spontaneous. The study also found the use of learning portfolios helpful for learners to plan, implement, and reflect on their own learning. On the other hand, findings suggest that learners' time availability and flexibility for eTandem oral exchanges should also be considered as criterion to match language partners.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

Based on the findings obtained in the study, it can be concluded that eTandem language learning constitutes an effective language learning scenario for the improvement of learners' speaking competence outside the classroom. Furstenberg . (2001, as cited in Lee, 2007a) state that the interaction with expert/native speakers of a language allows learners to be exposed to language within social and cultural contexts that are not available in traditional instruction. Therefore, it is necessary to provide language learners with additional speaking practice that can help them improve all the language competences described by Canale and Swain (1980) within their own learning context.

Through the incorporation of eTandem oral exchanges into English courses at the B.A. program, learners could have the opportunity to improve their speaking competence and compensate for some of the limitations characteristic of their

language background and learning context. Moreover, they would have the opportunity to develop their listening skills at the same time, get used to a native-like British accent as well as learn cultural information from their partner.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

It is suggested for future research the incorporation of carefully designed language tasks to provide learners with opportunities to improve their speaking competence in relation to the four types of competences described by Canale and Swain (1980). In addition, it is recommended to extend the length of the exchange so that learners can have more opportunities to improve their speaking competence in a significant way. If possible, it is recommended to establish eTandem language learning partnerships with learners with a similar academic profile, language proficiency, interests, and time availability so that both learners can make the most of their eTandem language learning experience and can mutually benefit from the exchange.

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Appendices

Appendix A

eTandem language partners' information questions

Thank you very much for responding to this eTandem language learning project invitation. As you have read, my research topic focuses on the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence, based on their own reflections and perceptions of improvement during and after the exchange. All of the information collected will be confidential and will only be used for research and teacher training purposes. Whenever data from this study are published, your name will not be used. The information will be stored in a computer, and only the researcher will have access to it.

In order to plan the schedule for the interaction and find the most appropriate language partner for you, I need you to answer the following questions please:

- 1) What is your occupation? Are you still studying at Southampton?
- 2) What is your level of Spanish? How long have you been learning Spanish?
- 3) Are you enrolled in a Spanish academic course now?
- 4) What topics/themes/competences would you like to practice with your language partner?

- 5) What days/time can you meet your partner through Skype?
- 6) How would you like to receive language feedback from your partner?
- 7) What cultural information about Mexico would you like to learn?
- 8) What are your hobbies/interests?
- 9) Have you used Skype before?
- 10) Are you available to participate in the six Skype sessions required for the research?

I really appreciate your quick response and I hope that everybody can be benefited from this project.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Martha Hernandez.

Appendix B

Consent form for a study in a foreign language context

Consent to participate in research

Project Name: An investigation into the effect of eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence based on their own reflections and perceptions of improvement during and after the exchange

Investigator: Martha Guadalupe Hernandez Alvarado

Telephone: 7712199640

Email: martha_her3@hotmail.com

La Licenciatura en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa en la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo has given approval for this research project. For information on your rights as a research subject, contact Hilda Hidalgo Aviles, head of the Linguistics Department or Jovanna Matilde Godinez Martinez, coordinator of the Licenciatura en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa.

Introduction

You are invited to participate in this research study. I will be studying the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of your English speaking competence. This form will describe the purpose and nature of the study and your rights as a participant in the study. The decision to participate or not is yours, if you decide to participate, please sign and date the last line of this form.

Explanation of the study

I will be studying the effect that eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers has on the improvement of Mexican university students' English speaking competence. Students enrolled in seventh semester in the Licenciatura en Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa will participate in this study. You will carry out 6 Skype-based speaking tasks with an English native speaker outside of class time, twice a week over three weeks. Each speaking task will take one hour; you will interact with your partner in English and in Spanish (30 minutes for each language).

As part of the study, you will also complete some written formats, a learning plan (with language tasks, learning objectives and areas you want to get feedback or correction on), 6 learning records (one for each of the 6 tasks where you will write what you learned and corrected in the session), and 3 learning reflections (one after two speaking sessions where you will write additional comments on your learning experience).

In addition, you will be interviewed before and after implementing eTandem with a native speaker in order to define your language and learning profile as well as to get information from your learning experience and feedback about the project. You will also be asked to record your Skype speaking sessions as evidence of your learning and most importantly as aids when filling in our learning records and reflections.

Confidentiality

All of the information collected will be confidential and will only be used for research and teacher training purposes. Whenever data from this study are published, your name will not be used. The information will be stored in a computer, and only the researcher will have access to it.

Your participation

Participating in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision to participate will in no way affect your grade in any class. If at any point you change your mind and no longer want to participate, you can tell the researcher. You will not be paid for participating in this study. If you have any questions about the research, you can contact Martha Guadalupe Hernandez Alvarado by telephone at 7712199640, by email martha_her3@hotmail.com, or in person at Direccion Universitaria de Idiomas office.

Investigator's statement

I have fully explained this study to the student. I have discussed the activities and have answered all of the questions that the student asked. If necessary, I have translated key terms and concepts in this form and explained them orally.

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

Student's consent

I have read the information provided in this Informed Consent Form. All my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Your signature _____ Date _____

Adapted from Mackey, A., and Gass, S. (2005, p. 323)

Appendix C

Pre semi-structured interview questions

Personal information

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What are you currently studying?
 - What year/semester are you in?

English learning background and language skills

4. How long have you studied English?
5. Why did you start studying English?
6. Where did you start studying English?
7. How old were you?
8. Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?
 - If so, where and how long? What did you do there exactly?
9. Which language skill(s) do you find most difficult? Why?
10. How proficient do you think you are at speaking?
11. Do you think you have any specific weaknesses in speaking? For instance:
 - Fluency
 - Lack of vocabulary
 - Frequent mistakes

- Difficulty to interact and keep a spontaneous conversation
- Use of very academic/bookish English

12. What do you think the reasons for those weaknesses might be?

- When you enrolled in the B.A., had you received any formal language instruction?
- Do you practice your speaking in real contexts outside the classroom on a constant basis?
- Do you practice speaking with native speakers?
- How efficient do you consider the teaching and learning of English at the B.A.?

13. How do you think your weaknesses can be overcome?

English language learning habits

14. How often do you practice English outside the classroom?

- Do you do it?
- Why not?

15. Have you ever taken part in a face-to-face/distance-learning eTandem exchange with English native speakers?

- Was it face-to-face or distance learning?
- What language did you use?
- When did it take place and how long did it last?
- What topics did you discuss with your partner?

16. Any other comments?

Adapted from Vinagre, M. and Muñoz, B. (2011, p. 94-99)

Appendix D

eTandem learning guidelines

An investigation into the effect of eTandem language learning through synchronous oral CMC with native speakers on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence

Coordinator: *Martha Guadalupe Hernández Alvarado*

1. What is the project about?

The project consists of pairing native speakers of Spanish with native speakers of English so that they help each other with their foreign language learning, especially, the development of their speaking skills. During six one-hour sessions, language partners will talk about specific topics, set in their learning plan before the Skype interaction, specifying what they want to learn and what aspects of language they want to receive feedback and correction on.

2. What are the principles behind eTandem language learning?

Reciprocity: Language partners should contribute equally and benefit mutually from the collaboration. “I help you learn you help me learn and this way we understand each other better.”

Autonomy: Each partner is responsible for his/her own learning process. “I am responsible for my own learning.”

3. What Internet tools do you need?

You only need a Skype account and access to the Internet twice a week over three weeks from November 14th-December 4th, 2011.

4. Which language should you use?

Language partners should speak in both languages, English and Spanish so that both learners benefit from the interaction at the same extent. In each of the six sessions, partners will speak 30 minutes in English and 30 minutes in Spanish practicing the topics they set before in their language plan.

5. What do you need for active learning?

A dictionary: Have an online dictionary open in another webpage while you do the Skype interaction to be prepared in case you need to look up a new word/ expression. Some dictionaries you can use are <http://www.wordreference.com> and <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

A portfolio: Complete a language record sheet at the end of each session, it will help you evaluate how much you are learning and will allow you to make decisions for future Skype-based learning.

In the language record sheet, you can write about ALL aspects regarding your learning process, but three aspects should be considered and described in detail:

- Development of task: Write down the information obtained from the interaction depending on the task set in the learning plan for that session.
- Vocabulary: Make note of the new words you learn, either from your partners or from the use of the dictionary to do the task.
- Errors: Make note of the errors your partners corrects for you and write down a few sentences with the corrected version so that it is easier for you to avoid them in the future.

In addition, you need to write a short reflection on your learning process describing what language aspects you learned, developed or improved; what fostered or affected your learning negatively; and what you found interesting or useful about the task. You need to write a reflection at the end of each week (after every two Skype sessions).

6. What should you talk about?

Listed below you will find a list of tasks you will need to carry out with your language partner. Remember that you should meet your partner twice a week through Skype, over the next three weeks (November 14th-December 4th). In each of the six sessions, participants will have the opportunity to speak 30 minutes in English and 30 in Spanish.

Week 1 starting November 14th

- a). Meet your partner and exchange personal information (name, age, studies, hobbies, interests, place of origin), negotiate topics and dates

for the exchange, any other information you consider relevant for future interaction.

- b). Talk to your partner about things that are against the law in your country, punishments, laws, and the legal system in your country. What do you think about punishments? Are they fair? Give examples.

Hand in a copy of your language record sheets and reflection to your Coordinator by the end of the week.

Week 2 starting November 21st

- c). Share ideas about how you would like the legal system to change for the better in your country. Give examples. How crime can be avoided?
- d). Free task to negotiate with your partner.

Hand in a copy of your language record sheets and reflection to your Coordinator by the end of the week.

Week 3 starting November 28th

- e). Free task to negotiate with your partner.
- f). Share opinions about what you think of the exchange, what you liked best and least, what you have learned concerning language and culture, whether you'd like to continue the exchange or not.

Hand in a copy of your language record sheets and reflection to your Coordinator by the end of the week.

Consider that language tasks should consist of four stages (Skehan, 1996):

1. Pre-task stage: Plan and preview new language independently before the Skype session.
2. Interactive stage: Meet your partner and discuss the question in hand, the task can take the form of a discussion, question and answer session, or short presentation.
3. Post-task stage 1: Participants give and receive corrective feedback on the oral performance of both partners depending on what was agreed in the learning plan. This stage can be carried out at the end of each session.
4. Post-task stage 2: The information obtained during the interaction is written up in the form required (learning record) to write their learning reflection afterwards.

7. About errors

Making errors is part of the learning process. However, it is important to learn from them so that we can avoid them in the future. To do so the following suggestions are recommended:

- Identify your error. What type of error is it?
- Write down your error and corrections. What errors do you make most

often? Why? (lack of vocabulary, you don't know certain grammar rules, you translate literally from one language to the other, etc.).

- Make a list of your most frequent errors and use it as a check-list every time you organize your ideas/brainstorm before a speaking task.

8. How to correct your partner's language?

- Think about what you would like your partner to correct in your speaking and do the same.
- Do not try to correct everything. Pick the most important mistakes depending on what you/your partner would like to be corrected on, mistakes that prevent understanding or sound awkward to you.
- Negotiate the way you are going to correct each other and when. It is important that you come to an agreement with your partner so that you always correct each other in a manner that works for both of you.
- Write comments with your corrections. You can also ask questions or suggest other ways of expressing something. You can also provide contextualized examples to help your partners remember expressions or colloquial usage of the language.
- Remember that in order for both of you to benefit from the exchange you should both take the task of correction seriously.

- Pay attention to your partner's mistakes and way of formulating things in English so you can learn even more about the way the English language works.
- Encourage your partner. In addition to your corrections, it is important to let him/her know about those aspects in which he/she is improving.
- Remember that making mistakes is considered a sign of progress in the process of learning a new language.

Adapted from Vinagre, M. and Muñoz, B. (2011, p. 72-103)

Appendix E

eTandem learning plan

Date	Topic	Learning Objective	Task	Language focus	What I want to learn	What I want to have feedback/correction on
	Meeting your language partner	Participants will be able to: introduce themselves exchange personal information with language partners negotiate topics and dates for the Skype interaction express how they would like to be corrected	Meet your partner and exchange personal information (name, age, age, studies, hobbies, interests, place of origin), negotiate topics and dates for the exchange, any other information you consider relevant for future interaction.	Exchanging personal information		

	Crime and punishment	Participants will be able to: talk about things that are against the law, and the punishments given for each of them in their country express opinions about their laws, punishments, and legal system in general	Talk to your partner about things that are against the law in your country, punishments, laws, and the legal system in general. What do you think about punishments? Are they fair? Give examples.	Describing and giving opinions			
	Crime and punishment	Participants will be able to: express wishes, hopes and desires about how they'd like the legal system to change in their country listen and paraphrase wishes, hopes, and desires	Share ideas about how you would like the legal system to change for the better in your country. Give examples. How crime can be avoided?	Expressing wishes, hopes, and desires			
	Free topic to negotiate with your partner		Free task to negotiate with your partner				

	Free topic to negotiate with your partner	Participants will be able to: express opinions about the eTandem learning experience give final language feedback to each other discuss about when and how to continue learning as language partners if possible	Free task to negotiate with your partner	Share opinions about what you think of the exchange, what you liked best and least, what you have learned concerning language and culture, whether you'd like to continue the exchange or not.	Giving opinions Saying farewell	
	Saying goodbye to your language partner					

Appendix F

eTandem learning record

Name: _____ Name of eTandem partner: _____ Date: _____ Session: _____

1. SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	
2. SKILL/LANGUAGE FUNCTION:	3. TOPIC:
4. TASK:	
5. DEVELOPMENT OF TASK: @	
6. ERRORS I RECEIVED FEEDBACK/CORRECTION ON:	
7. CULTURAL INFORMATION I LEARNED	
8. REFERENCE: (Web page, book, software, song, movie, etc.)	
9. NEW VOCABULARY:	
10. PROBLEMS I HAD:	

Adapted from Occena (1998)

Appendix G

eTandem learning reflection

Name: _____ Name of eTandem partner: _____ Date: _____ Number: _____

LEARNING REFLECTION:

- (What I learned / developed / improved on)
- (Aspects of language I hadn't learned in class in relation to the this skill/function/topic)
- (What fostered/affected my learning in a negative way)
- (What I found interesting/useful about the task)

Appendix H

Post semi-structured interview questions

From the eTandem language learning experience

1. Did eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers help you improve your English speaking competence? If so, what aspects of the eTandem experience do you believe contributed to the improvement of your speaking competence? Were your speaking weaknesses overcome as a result of the interaction?
2. What kinds of knowledge/skills did you gain as a result of the eTandem synchronous verbal exchanges that you had not gained through F2F speaking classes in relation to the topic *Crime and Punishment* and the language functions associated with it (describing, giving opinions, expressing and paraphrasing wishes, hopes and desires)?
3. Did you achieve the learning objectives set in the eTandem learning plan at the beginning of the interaction? Please give a percentage (0%= not at all, 100%= completely) to indicate your level of satisfaction in terms of fulfilling linguistic and cultural objectives.
4. Did you change your learning objectives throughout the project? Why? Why not?
5. In what other ways were you benefited as a result of the eTandem speaking exchange?

6. How useful were the eTandem learning guidelines provided to you at the beginning for the implementation of the Skype-based speaking exchange?
7. Was the eTandem learning portfolio useful to plan, implement, and reflect on your learning? What sections would you exclude and add to make it a better instrument for learning planning and documentation?
8. What aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the most?
9. What aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the least?
10. Did you have any problems during the implementation of the eTandem learning project?
 - Technical problems
 - Your partner did not communicate with you as planned
 - The relationship with your partner was cold and superficial
 - Problems understanding each other
 - Instructions in the guidelines were not clear
 - Tasks were not clearly stated
 - Time difference between Mexico and the UK made communication difficult
 - Do you believe these problems could have affected the improvement of your speaking competence in a negative way?
11. Do you think this eTandem experience will have any effects regarding your future learning experiences?
 - English learning and practice habits

- Autonomy
 - Attitudes toward English native speakers
 - Attitudes towards mother tongue
 - Attitudes toward the foreign language
 - Attitudes toward other language learning modes involving ICTs
12. In general, do you consider the eTandem learning speaking exchange to be a positive or negative experience? Justify your answer.
 13. Would you like to participate again in this kind of project? Why? Why not?
 14. Are you going to keep in touch with eTandem language partner? Why? Why not?
 15. What aspects need to be considered, in your opinion, to replicate eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching?
 16. What aspects need to be improved, in your opinion, to replicate eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching?
 17. What advice would you give other students who may be interested in participating in this type of learning mode?
 18. Any other comments?

Adapted from Vinagre, M. and Muñoz, B. (2011, p. 94-99)

Appendix I

Transcription convention

I	Interviewer
PA	Participant A
PB	Participant B
PC	Participant C
PD	Participant D
.	Falling intonation
,	Continuing contour
?	Questioning intonation
!	Exclamation
(...)	Long pause
(.)	Small pause
[]	Overlap
[[]]	Speakers start at the same time
-	Abrupt cut-off
—	Emphasis
—	Mispronounced word(s)
:::	Sound stretching
(xxx)	Unintelligible or names mentioned
(())	Other details
Hhh	Inhalations

Adapted from Richards (2003, p. 173-174 & 186)

Appendix J

Pre semi-structured interview transcripts

Participant A

01 I: Good afternoon!

02 PA: Good afternoon!

03 I: Thank you for attending this interview. Well, as you know my research focuses on the effect of eTandem learning through synchronous CMC with native speakers on the improvement of Mexican students' speaking competence. As part of the study, I'm interviewing participants to find out information regarding their English and learning background in order to set the context for my research and identify any relevant information for the study. Your name won't be mentioned in the study; however, the information deriving from the interviews, learning plan, records, and reflections will be analysed and reported in the research, but not your name, okay?

04 PA: Okay

05 I: So don't worry [about that]

06 PA: [((laughing))]

07 I: Okay, let's start with some questions. What is your complete name?

08 PA: (xxx) (xxx) (xxx) (xxx)

09 I: Okay, so how old are you?

10 PA: 21 years old

11 I: So, what are you studying now?

12 PA: The B.A. in English Language Teaching

13 I: So, what semester are you in?

14 PA: Seventh semester

15 I: Seventh semester, okay, regarding your English learning background
and language skills, so how long have studied English?

16 PA: Ahhh like five (.) six years

17 I: Five years? Before ahh before entering the (.) the B.A.?

18 PA: Yeah in the high school and in a (xxx) course, a course

19 I: So you had taken a previous course before?

20 PA: Yeah

21 I: At a language center or something?

22 PA: Yeah

23 I: At CEVIDE?

24 PA: Yes

25 I: For how long?

26 PA: Only the four basic

27 I: For basic courses? And then high school and then here

28 PA: Aha

29 I: Okay, ahh so have (.) have you been to an English-speaking country?

30 PA: No

31 I: No? Okay, so, which language skills do you find most difficult? Like
speaking, listening, reading, writing?

32 PA: hhh speaking and writing

33 I: So why? Why do you consider them more difficult?

34 PA: Speaking because I consider a shy person and is difficult for me and writing because I don't know to organize my ideas

35 I: Your ideas okay, so how proficient do you think you are at speaking? Are you good at speaking? Like your own perceptions about your speaking performance

36 PA: Sometimes depend (...) depend on the person that I -

37 I: It depends on the person you are talking to?

38 PA: Yeah

39 I: Can you give me an example?

40 PA: For example when I was - when I went to do my practice in ICBI I feel comfortable and my speaking was very fluency but here in the school I feel very shy and I have many problems

41 I: And why do you think is that?

42 PA: Really I don't know but (.) I think that is like a fear of my partners or my teachers I don't know

43 I: Uhum, okay, so do you think you have any specific weaknesses or problems in speaking?

44 PA: ahh yes maybe the pronunciation

45 I: Pronunciation?

46 PA: uhum

- 47 I: uhum, apart from pronunciation? Any other?
- 48 PA: (xxx) the same that the writing, how to organize my ideas or vocabulary
- 49 I: Uhum, is vocabulary a problem?
- 50 PA: Yes because I think that I need more
- 51 I: You need more vocabulary, okay so do you have or do you consider that you have any difficulties to interact and keep a spontaneous conversation?
- 52 PA: Mmm yes because (.) for the same reason that I think I need more vocabulary it's difficult to interact with other person
- 53 I: Okay ahh so about the reasons for those (.) those weaknesses, what do you think you have all these problems in speaking?
- 54 PA: (...) (xxx) that I don't practice, [(...)] only practice here (xxx) in the English lessons, but that's all
- 55 I: [uhum]
- 56 I: Okay, do you - so you don't practice speaking outside the classroom?
- 57 PA: No
- 58 I: Never?
- 59 PA: No
- 60 I: Okay - or do you practice speaking with native speakers?
- 61 PA: No
- 62 I: No? Okay, so how efficient do you consider the teaching and learning of English at the B.A.?

- 63 PA: Hhh
- 64 I: So, do you think that the teaching here and learning really helps you to have a good level (.) in English (.) or in speaking in particular?
- 65 PA: Yes (...) because help you to (.) to understand the language and (...) and all the classes are in English also this help you
- 66 I: Okay, uhuh so how do you think your weaknesses can be overcome? How can you solve those ahh those weaknesses (.) or those problems?
- 67 PA: I think that practice a lot of (xxx) and with (xxx) native speakers also in any moment that you can
- 68 I: And why native speakers? Why not non native speakers?
- 69 PA: Well, I think that (xxx) the native speakers because you understand, well you practice your listening also and it's different because the accents are different of non native speakers
- 70 I: Uhuh so, you think that because of the accent it is better to practice with native speakers?
- 71 PA: Uhuh
- 72 I: Okay, so finally, I'd (.) I'd (.) I'd like to ask you some questions about your English language education. So you said that you don't practice English outside the classroom right? So have you even taken part in a face-to-face or distance-learning eTandem exchange with native speakers?
- 73 PA: No

- 74 I: No? Never?
- 75 PA: Never
- 76 I: Okay, so do you have any other (.) other comments about your learning of English or your speaking (.) speaking skills or ways to improve your level of speaking? Any comments?
- 77 PA: (xxx) mmm, I don't know (xxx) it's good to practice with I said with native speakers and also because they (.) they can to correct (.) correct you in a good way and that's all, that's it.
- 78 I: Okay, so thank you very much for your time.

Participant B

- 01 I: Good (.) [evening!]
- 02 PB: [(laughing)] Good evening!
- 03 I: Thank you for attending this interview. Well, as you know my research focuses on the effect of eTandem learning through synchronous CMC with native speakers on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence. As part of the study, I'm interviewing participants to find out information regarding their English and learning background in order to set the context for my research and identify any relevant information for the study. Your name won't be mentioned (.) in the study
- 04 PB: [Okay]
- 05 I: [but]

the information deriving from the interviews, learning plan, records, and reflections will be analysed and reported in the research

06 PB: Okay

07 I: So let's start with some questions. What is your complete name?

08 PB: Okay, (xxx) (xxx) (xxx)

09 I: Uhum how old are you?

10 PB: 22 years

11 I: What are you studying now?

12 PB: I'm:: study the B.A. of (.) English Language Teaching

13 I: Uhum, what semester are you in?

14 PB: In seventh semester

15 I: Regarding your English learning background and language skills, how long have studied English?

16 PB: Okay like ahh (...) three years more or less

17 I: So, when you entered the B.A.?

18 PB: Yes

19 I: Before that no?

20 PB: No, well in the high school but (.) but in a good way no

21 I: So, when you entered the B.A. then

22 PB: Yes (xxx)

23 I: Okay, so have you been to an English-speaking country?

24 PB: No, never

- 25 I: Never Okay, so, which language skills do you find most difficult from the four, like reading, listening, speaking, writing? Which one for you is the most difficult?
- 26 PB: Okay, well, at the beginning of the B.A. ahh for me was very difficult speaking but ahh then with the practice and all kind of things I think that it is ahh an skill that I can develop now, well if not in a good way, I try to (.) to do my best effort but ~~definitely~~ writing
- 27 I: So writing is the most difficult for you, why?
- 28 PB: Ahh because I have to order my ideas in different way that I do in Spanish
- 29 I: Okay, good, so, how competent or how proficient do you think you are at speaking?
- 30 PB: Ohh well, this is very difficult ahh (...) maybe (...)
- 31 I: So, are you familiar with (.) with the levels of the Common European Framework?
- 32 PB: Okay, yes, so maybe ahh ((Spanish)) B1
- 33 I: B1?
- 34 PB: Yes
- 35 I: Okay, good. So do you have any comments or would you like to say something else about your (.) your competence (...) in speaking?
- 36 PB: Well, no
- 37 I: No, okay, do you have any specific weaknesses in speaking?

- 38 PB: Well, the pronunciation of some words is difficult for me, yes
- 39 I: Uhum, apart from that?
- 40 PB: No
- 41 I: Apart from (.) from pronunciation? I don't know fluency or making mistakes or -
- 42 PB: ahh okay, yes, making mistake, it is a big problem for me ahh I have like ahh- maybe I speak in a fluency way, well I think so, but I have many mistakes sometimes
- 43 I: Okay, so is it difficult for you to interact and keep a spontaneous conversation?
- 44 PB: Ahh, well, no, sometimes when - depending of the topic, if I don't have the vocabulary is difficult for me, I have to think first and then I have to (.) to connect my ideas and all kind of things
- 45 I: Okay so what do think are the reasons for those weaknesses like pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, organizing your ideas, so what are the reasons for those problems?
- 46 PB: Okay, maybe that I don't have the practice, well ahh the unique time that I have to practice is in the school and outside of this I don't have the opportunity to practice the language
- 47 I: Okay, so how efficient do you consider the teaching of English at the B.A.? So, do you think that (.) the teaching there is enough for you to have a good level of speaking?

- 48 PB: Okay, well, the teachers are very good but maybe if we - like ahh (...) - in terms of ahh good language but in - how do you say that? like the (.) real language, the real context of this, like for example if we - in the B.A. are many teachers that have the correct preparation or something like that but sometimes when arrive to LELI some teachers of UK or USA is different because you have the opportunity to practice this and maybe it is more useful that the person of this (xxx) tell me my (.) my mistakes or something like that
- 49 I: Uhum, so you consider more useful to talk to native speakers?
- 50 PB: Yes
- 51 I: Okay, so how do you think your weaknesses can be overcome?
- 52 PB: With practice, yes, or maybe to have interaction with the correct people
- 53 I: Native speakers?
- 54 PB: Yes, in this case (xxx)
- 55 I: Okay, mmm so, how often do you practice English outside the classroom? Never? Speaking in particular
- 56 PB: Speaking? Well, sometimes with my boyfriend and::: in my classes that I give to my students but it is -
- 57 I: Like how often (.) more or less?
- 58 PB: Like three times a week or something like that

59 I: Okay, so have you even taken part in a face-to-face or distance-learning eTandem exchange program with native speakers?

60 PB: No

61 I: No?

62 PB: No

63 I: Never? Okay, so do you have any other comments regarding your learning of English and your speaking skills, any problems with speaking?

64 PB: Okay, well, I am very interested in improve my language, the use of language is very important for me, the speaking part I think that in a teacher is very important this (.) this ability

65 I: Okay, so thank you very much for your time and cooperation (...) [in the project]

66 PB :

[Okay your welcome]

Participant C

01 I: Good afternoon!

02 PC: Hi, good afternoon!

03 I: Thank you for attending this interview. Well, as you know my research focuses on the effect of eTandem learning through synchronous CMC with native speakers on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence. As part of the study, I'm interviewing participants

to find out information regarding their English and learning background in order to set the context for my research and identify any relevant information for the study. Your name won't be mentioned in the study

04 PC: Ahh okay ((laughing))

05 I: however, the information deriving from the interviews, learning plan, records, and reflections will be analysed and reported in the research, but not your with name, okay?

06 PC: Ohh that's okay

07 I: So, let's start with some questions. What is your complete name?

08 PC: My complete name?

09 I: Uhum

10 PC: (xxx) (xxx) (xxx)

11 I: How old are you?

12 PC: I'm 21

13 I: So, what are you studying now?

14 PC: I'm studying the B.A. in Teaching English

15 I: Okay so, what semester are you in?

16 PC: I'm in seventh semester

17 I: Okay, regarding your English learning background and language skills, how long have studied English?

18 PC: Well, ~~actually~~ I started to study in a formal way when I started the B.A.

19 I: So, not before?

- 20 PC: Well, in the high school but it was like just one - two hours a week,
so I think that (.) that (.) that wasn't enough
- 21 I: Okay, have you ever been to an English-speaking country?
- 22 PC: Yes, I went to (.) United States (.) last (.) last June
- 23 I: So, where? Where did you go?
- 24 PC: I went to California in (xxx)
- 25 I: How long did you stay there?
- 26 PC: One month
- 27 I: Only for one month, what did you do there?
- 28 PC: Well, I went there for vacation but I (...) I was working with my dad,
I was helping him with his work
- 29 I: Ahh, could you practice English there? Like speaking English all the
time there (.) while you were there?
- 30 PC: Well, most of the time I speak Spanish because I was with my dad
and my brother but yeah I practiced it because there (.) well, in the place
he works ahh there are many native speakers and also the friends of my
(.) of my dad and when we went to the grocery store or like that, yes I
practiced (.) English
- 31 I: Okay, so what language skills do you find most difficult (.) like
listening, speaking, reading, writing?
- 32 PC: I think that listening, me is listening
- 33 I: So why listening?

- 34 PC: Yeah because - well, sometimes I understand when they speak so fast
I get lost easily
- 35 I: Okay okay, so how proficient or how competent do you think you are
at speaking?
- 36 PC: Well, I think that I can (.) talk with someone, yeah with somebody
but I think that (.) there are so many aspects that I need to improve like
my pronunciation and some point of (.) some grammar point but how
proficient? (xxx) in a percentage? ((Spanish)) no?
- 37 I: Or level?
- 38 PC: Yeah level, well, I think I'm (...) B2
- 39 I: B2?
- 40 PC: Yes
- 41 I: Okay, so ahh, do you think that you have any specific weaknesses in
speaking?
- 42 PC: Yes, my pronunciation
- 43 I: Pronunciation?
- 44 PC: Yeah and also when I don't know the (.) the grammar structure I (.) I
don't know how to (.) to express that
- 45 I: Okay, ahh vocabulary, is vocabulary a problem for you or not?
- 46 PC: Yes, yes of course but well, I think that with vocabulary you can
like explain when you don't know the exactly word but with grammar is
more difficult for me

47 I: Is it difficult for you to interact and keep a spontaneous conversation?

48 PC: Not really, well I think that no because - well, I (.) I experienced this last (.) last summer with (.) with my trip because people that, well I meet and, yeah, they (.) they told me that – well, my English is like good and they understand me easily

49 I: So that was not a problem for you?

50 PC: No

51 I: You could (.) you could communicate well?

52 PC: Yes

53 I: Okay, so ahh you said that your weaknesses could be pronunciation and like organizing your ideas to speak?

54 PC: Yes

55 I: Okay and vocabulary a little bit, right?

56 PC: Uhum

57 I: So, how do you think - oh no, sorry – so, what do you think that those are - what do you think are the reasons for those weaknesses?

58 PC: Well, because mainly because of the grammar structure that I don't (.) that I don't know very well and about vocabulary, there are some like technical terms that I don't know, for example, I went to the - in (xxx), I went to the bank and we went to open a new account, bank account, and then the (.) yeah the girl started to talk and talk about that like credit and

like that, I know this but now I know that I know how to speak in a bank but here in a super - well, ((Spanish)) yes just ahh the -

59 **I: Basic information?**

60 PC: Yes, basic information but as you know it's like ,you know the answer, well the question the answer, the question the answer but it doesn't work in real life so she started to talk and talk about credits and many things and I got lost, and I was like yeah - that was very (.) very bad because well, I (.) I (.) I thought that (.) that I would know how to (.) yeah how to interact in that situation but it -

61 **I: But the context was unfamiliar for you**

62 PC: Yes, the terms of about the - the vocabulary about the (.) the bank

63 **I: Okay, ahh so, how efficient do you consider the teaching and learning of English at the B.A.? So, do you think that everything that you learn there is enough for you to communicate well in English, referring particularly to (.) to (.) to speaking?**

64 PC: No, I don't think, well, yeah, they try, I think that they try to(.) to help us, for example with the group, the conversation group that is there with teacher Alicia and well, those kind of things but sometimes we can't because of the schedule and many things, but we can't attend so it doesn't work to the (.) to the semester that has (.) that have a heavy yeah (.) a heavy (xxx) of subjects, so I think that it is not enough just to - for

example in the - well, we speak English obviously in all the classes but it is not enough, I think that we have to work (.) by our own

65 I: So, what do you think can be done? You said that it is not enough, so what can be done to help students ahh become better speakers or speak the language better?

66 PC: Yeah, well, I think that (.) to speak is kind of difficult because for example, you can practice listening at home because you can buy a CD or something but speaking you need another (.) other person to interact right? So try to look for a person that can help you, I don't know maybe weekends or like that

67 I: Okay so, going back to your weaknesses that was pronunciation and organising ideas how do you think that can be overcome? How can you (.) solve these difficulties?

68 PC: With practice

69 I: Practice?

70 PC: Practice, I think that practice is the most important tool that you have to (.) yeah to work in one's weaknesses, because if you don't practice you will be there forever

71 I: So, do (.) do you practice English outside the classroom?

72 PC: Inside the classroom?

73 I: Outside the classroom

74 PC: Ahh, outside the classroom

- 75 I: Speaking (.) in particular
- 76 PC: No, I don't (.), for example, no because well, my sometimes with my dad, he know to speak very well, his accent is very well, very ~~natural~~, and sometimes when, well, we talk, he talk me in English but not all the time and is the my only source I have to practice
- 77 I: Well, how often would you say that you practice speaking outside the classroom?
- 78 PC: Outside the classroom maybe two times a week
- 79 I: Twice a week
- 80 PC: Twice a week and for example, the thing ((laughing)) now I do, I don't know how but I speak or when I think, I speak what I'm thinking, for example, I think something in Spanish and then I (.) I tell it, I tell in, I say it in English but
- 81 I: [t o
yourself]
- 82 PC: [y e s
only to myself]
- 83 I: Okay, do you practice with native speakers?
- 84 PC: Well, not really but maybe twice a month, yes and also is by telephone
- 85 I: On the phone, with friends?
- 86 PC: With friends or (.) or my dad

87 I: Okay, so have you even taken part in a face-to-face or distance-learning eTandem exchange with English native speakers?

88 PC: No, never

89 I: No, okay, so do you have any other comments regarding about your speaking skills or your learning of English at the B.A. or weaknesses or anything other thing you would like to share with me?

90 PC: Well, I think that the things that they try to do in the B.A. are good but maybe if (.) if they try to adapt or to cover all (.) all the B.A., for example, if they, well I think that they plan the schedule, so why don't plan an hour where all the semester, well, different semester can attend , I think that is very (...) well, is (...) yes is great what they doing there with the (.) with the native speakers that we have there but I think they should cover like all (.) all the students

91 I: Okay, so thank you very much for your time [and cooperation in this project]

92 PC: [Your welcome]

Participant D

01 I: Good afternoon!

02 PD: Good afternoon!

03 I: Thank you for attending this interview. Well, as you know my research focuses on the effect of eTandem learning through synchronous CMC

with native speakers on the improvement of Mexican students' English speaking competence. As part of the study, I'm interviewing participants to find out information regarding their English and learning background in order to set the context for my research and identify any relevant information for the study. Your name won't be mentioned in the study, so however, the information deriving from the interviews, learning plan, records, and reflections will be analysed and reported in the research, okay but not your with name.

04 PD: Okay

05 I: So, let's start with some questions. What is your complete name?

06 PD: My complete name?

07 I: Yes

08 PD: Okay, (xxx) (xxx) (xxx) (xxx)

09 I: Okay, so how old are you?

10 PD: 25 years old

11 I: What are you studying now?

12 PD: The B.A. of (.) English (.) in English Language Teaching

13 I: Okay so what semester are you in?

14 PD: Seventh semester

15 I: Okay, so regarding your English learning background and language skills, so how long have studied English?

16 PD: Mmm probably (...) five, six years

17 I: More or less?

18 PD: More or [less]

19 I: [So, do you] remember when you started studying
English?

20 PD: Ehh (...) three (.) three or four years ago

21 I: So, when you started the B.A.?

22 PD: Mmm, [no]

23 I: [Or before that?]

24 PD: No, before that

25 I: Before that, okay, in high school?

26 PD: Aha, probably

27 I: Okay, ahh, so, have you been to an English-speaking country?

28 PD: No

29 I: No?

30 PD: I never

31 I: So, which language skills do you find most difficult like reading,
writing, speaking, listening?

32 PD: For me, is writing

33 I: Writing, [that's the most difficult]

34 PD: [Writing and probably speaking]

35 I: Speaking too, okay, so how proficient do you think you are at speaking?
How good do you think you are at speaking?

- 36 PD: I think that (...) ahh practice (.) practice, because if I don't practise
ehh (...) sometimes I (.) I know the teacher what is talking about but I
sometimes I don't find the correct words to (.) to give my ideas
- 37 I: Okay but if you had to say how proficient you are at speaking, what
would you say? Like what's your level (.) of competence[in speaking?]
- 38 PD: [in speaking, I think that 50%]
- 39 I: Like intermediate more or less?
- 40 PD: Yeah
- 41 I: Okay, so do you think you have any specific weaknesses in speaking?
- 42 PD: Weaknesses? Like what?
- 43 I: Like ahh areas or yeah areas that are difficult for you, like areas you
need to work on (.) in speaking?
- 44 PD: Pronunciation
- 45 I: Uhum
- 46 PD: That kind of areas?
- 47 I: Uhum
- 48 PD: Pronunciation and I don't know if it is an area, but vocabulary
- 49 I: Vocabulary?
- 50 PD: Or is it lack?
- 51 I: Lack of vocabulary
- 52 PD: Lack of vocabulary and pronunciation
- 53 I: Okay, any other?

54 PD: Hhh, no about speaking, I think that's-

55 I: No?

56 PD: That is

57 I: Do you find hard or not to interact and keep a spontaneous conversation?

58 PD: Ahh with a native speaker or with a -

59 I: In general

60 PD: Ahh sometimes with a (.) with a teacher or older person, sometimes
I feel stressed but (.) when I don't feel stressed I (.) I can speak

61 I: So you said that, well you asked me if that was with a native speaker,
so do you think that this difference between talking to a native speaker
and talking to a nonnative speaker influences you, your performance or
your competence in speaking?

62 PD: Mmm, maybe

63 I: Yeah?

64 PD: Yeah

65 I: So, do you feel more stressed? Or what's the difference between talking
to a native speaker and talking to a nonnative speaker?

66 PD: Mmm, maybe the stress can be because the native speaker talk very
fast and my stress could be that I gl the things that he is telling me but (.)
if I can say, could you speak a little (.) a little bit slow

67 I: Okay

68 PD: (xxx), okay

- 69 I: Thank you, so you mentioned that some of your weaknesses would be vocabulary, pronunciation [uhum]
- 70 PD: [xxx]
- 71 I: [so how] do you think these can be overcome? So how can you solve these or how can you (.) develop these (.) these skills, or these subskills?
- 72 PD: Mmm, pronunciation with the (.) with practice ahh, yes with practice, that's the only thing that can work with that, and vocabulary, maybe read more
- 73 I: Okay by reading more?
- 74 PD: Uhum
- 75 I: That would help you? Okay, so, finally, I'd like to ask you some questions about your ahhh English language education, how often do you practice English outside the classroom?
- 76 PD: Outside, I think that, just with the homework, that's it
- 77 I: But speaking in particular?
- 78 PD: No
- 79 I: You never practice that, okay, ahh so have you even taken part in a face-to-face or distance-learning eTandem exchange with native speakers?
- 80 PD: No
- 81 I: No, you have never done it before, okay, ahh how efficient do you consider the teaching and learning of English at the B.A.?

- 82 PD: Ahh, how efficient?
- 83 I: I mean that the teaching and learning of English at the B.A. really helps you to have a good level? So, do you think that it's helping you or not? Or what's missing?
- 84 PD: I think that (...) that we have, I think that, it is, a problem because we have the all the subjects that you know are in English, so my question could be, why we don't speak (.) I think that, I don't know (.) if the teachers speak in English, and the English class obviously is in English and we practice in English, why we can't speak fluently
- 85 I: And what do you think could be the reasons for those (.) for those ahh -
- 86 PD: Maybe because the (xxx) me, like a student, we don't practice, we don't have the enough practice or we don't have to (.) the (...) to work ~~more~~ (.) because for example, I'm (.) I'm make a research about ~~portfolios~~ and the teacher (.) and the teacher that I was interview, she told me that we need to work outside, we need more that the (.) that the hours that we have it in the English class, so we need to work more, so probably I think that this is the reason
- 87 I: Lack (.) lack of practice?
- 88 PD: Uhum, lack of practice
- 89 I: Ahh and do you think that ahh lack of practice also influences your pronunciation and lack of vocabulary? Like you need to practice more in order to have a better pronunciation and also to have more vocabulary?

90 PD: Yes

91 I: Yes?

92 PD: Yes, I think (.) yes (...) yes because the - is like (.) how we learn to speak as Spanish, we practice, and practice, and practice, and practice

93 I: Okay good, so do you have any other comments about your learning of English or your speaking skills in particular, or how do you - how you can improve your speaking skills? Any comments about that?

94 PD: Ahh (.) most of the teachers talk (.) talk to me or told (.) told me that I need practice and I need to speak, for example with Alicia Fleming, with the club conversation mmm (...) with Annie, and they - most of the teachers told us that we need practice (.) and I don't know if is that -

95 I: Yeah, yeah, what you think

96 PD: Aha

97 I: Okay, thank you very much for your time and cooperation

Appendix K

Post semi-structured interview transcripts

Participant A

01 I: Hello (xxx)

02 PA: Hello

03 I: I'm (.) I'm going to make you some questions about your eTandem learning experience, okay?

04 PA: Okay

05 I: Ahh, did eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers help you improve your English speaking competence?

06 PA: [Yes]

07 I: [In your opinion]

08 PA: Yes, because (.) well, we - our talking was good and we have - he (.) helped me to (.) to improve my English and correct me in some (.) in good ways that (.) don't was rude - something like that

09 I: Uhum, if so, what aspects, in particular of the eTandem learning experience do you believe contributed to the improvement of your speaking competence?

10 PA: Ahh, the aspects? I think that (.) that look for synonyms to express my ideas and he understood what I want to (.) I wanted to say (...)

- 11 I: So (...) you said that by - you learned new synonyms, so probably the aspect that helped you improve your competence was vocabulary? That you learned more vocabulary?
- 12 PA: Yes, I learned vocabulary
- 13 I: Okay, so were your speaking weaknesses overcome as a result of the interaction?
- 14 PA: Ehh yes, because I said before I learned more vocabulary and (.) I practiced it and I think that (.) in my sessions was more **fluently**
- 15 I: So the (.) the aspects that probably contributed were fluency [a n d vocabulary]
- 16 PA: [a n d vocabulary]
- 17 I: Okay, so what kinds of knowledge or skills did you gain as a result of the eTandem synchronous verbal exchanges that you had not gained through F2F speaking classes in relation to the topic Crime and Punishment and the language functions associated with it? So you had the chance to (.) to practice this topic in the classroom and in eTandem, so what knowledge or skills did you gain in eTandem?
- 18 PA: Knowledge (.) about knowledge I (.) I knew about the (.) this topic, about England, and the crime and some situations that are happened in this country and skills also listening because I (.) I listened, I heard

some words that maybe I didn't heard before and speaking, talked and practiced my (.) my language

19 I: So, did you learn vocabulary that you didn't learn in class in relation to this topic?

20 PA: Yeah

21 I: Yes?

22 PA: ((Spanish))

23 I: Okay, ahh did you achieve the learning objectives set in the eTandem learning plan at the beginning of the interaction?

24 PA: Ehh, yes

25 I: So, please give a percentage to indicate your levels of (.) of satisfaction in terms of fulfilling linguistic and cultural objectives

26 PA: I think like a 80%

27 I: 80%?

28 PA: Yes

29 I: Did you change your learning objectives throughout the project?

30 PA: Mmm, maybe throughout the session because we are talking of something and later we changed the topic but the later returned the topic and something like that

31 I: Okay, so was it hard for you to concentrate on the same topic all the time?

32 PA: Mmm no, I think that sometimes it was bored and -

- 33 I: That's why you [changed the topic?]
- 34 PA: [aha the topic and then returned]
- 35 I: Okay, in what other ways, were you benefitted as a result of the eTandem speaking exchange?
- 36 PA: Mmm, another way too (...)
- 37 I: Apart from learning vocabulary and developing your fluency?
- 38 PA: I know more about (.) other culture, a different culture (...) - yeah
- 39 I: Okay, how useful were the eTandem learning guidelines provided to you at the beginning for the implementation of the Skype-based speaking exchange?
- 40 PA: I think that it was useful because I (.) I knew how to ~~develop~~ my learning plan and how - what kind of things I want to learn of my language partner
- 41 I: Okay, was the eTandem learning portfolio useful to plan, implement, and reflect on your learning?
- 42 PA: Yes
- 43 I: What sections could (.) would you exclude or add to make it a better instrument for learning and planning, and documentation?
- 44 PA: I think that it's okay in the same way that it is because you (.) you write all the aspects that are really need, you ~~develop~~ all your tasks and the things that were wrong or bad, what you learn or what not, I think that it's okay in this way

- 45 I: Okay, what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the most?
- 46 PA: What aspects? Ehh (...) to (.) to ~~talk~~ with (.) with him about other topics that are not in our learning plan because they were more spontaneous and he and me practiced different language and was good because both learned different vocabulary
- 47 I: Okay, so in this sense, you liked more the sessions that were free?
- 48 PA: Yeah
- 49 I: The sessions that were free, okay, what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the least?
- 50 PA: Mmm, what aspects? (...) I don't know, I think all (...) all the aspects I (.) it was a good experience
- 51 I: Okay, did you have any problems during the implementation of the eTandem learning project?
- 52 PA: Yes, ehh technical problems I think that was the unique problem that we have, the (...) - yeah because the - or (xxx) - the communication and all the things was okay and we have a good relation
- 53 I: The only thing was technical problems?
- 54 PA: Aha
- 55 I: Okay, do you believe that this problem ahh could have affected the improvement of your speaking competence in a negative way?

- 56 PA: No because if we (.) couldn't (.) talk (.) we (xxx), (xxx) - I don't know how to say, like planned again our session
- 57 I: Okay, so do think that (.) this eTandem experience will have any effects regarding your future learning experiences?
- 58 PA: Yes, in I think in autonomy, you have the opportunity to practice and you (.) you will be an autonomous learner, no because some (.) someone say you that you have to do, you know, if you want (.) do it
- 59 I: Okay, in general do you consider the eTandem learning experience to be a positive or a negative experience?
- 60 PA: A positive experience (.) because I had the opportunity to talk with a person, a native speaker and know many things about other country, other culture, and it was positive in my case
- 61 I: Okay, would you like to participate again in this kind of project?
- 62 PA: Yes, because I think that it's a (.) a good way to practice and improve your speaking and listening skills
- 63 I: Okay, are you going to keep in touch with your eTandem language partner?
- 64 PA: We don't put a date or something like that but we said that if one day both want to talk, we send us a mail or something like that
- 65 I: Okay, so what aspects need to be considered in your opinion to replicate eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F

English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching? So, what aspects need to be ahh considered?

66 PA: That (.) yes that if is possible that all the (.) the students have a (xxx) learning or language partner for practice and have more knowledge (.) about other things

67 I: Uhum, would you consider it ahh (xxx) - I mean that if students volunteered, they'd do it or something like compulsory for everyone?

68 PA: I think that (.) compulsory (.) maybe [(xxx)]

69 I: [(xxx)] Okay, so all of them can be benefitted?

70 PA: Yeah

71 I: Okay, so what aspects need to be improved in your opinion to replicate the eTandem learning through synchronous computer-mediated activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching?

72 PA: I think - I don't know but the (.) the (.) the schedules maybe because is - I think that most problem between the (xxx) learning and the students or something like that because there a problem that, well can (.) can do (...) something like that

73 I: So what do you mean that ahh probably you could practice with language partners that are not ahh in England probably - because the problem between the UK and Mexico is the time?

74 PA: The time, because for example, for us, the - who have the (.) the advantage was they because the (.) the schedule for the (.) for them was better than for us, (xxx) I think will be better if put a schedule that was great for both

75 I: For both

76 PA: Aha

77 I: Okay, so what advice would you give other students who may be interested in participating in this type of learning mode?

78 PA: That do it, that participate in (.) in the project because is (.) is good and you learn and you practice the language and you (.) know or meet other, another person

79 I: Okay, do you have any other comments?

80 PA: Mmm, well no (xxx) I think that is a good experience and I would like to (.) to do

81 I: To do it again?

82 PA: Uhum

83 I: Okay, thank you very much (xxx).

84 PA: You're welcome.

Participant B

01 I: Hello (xxx), good afternoon!

02 PB: Good afternoon!

- 03 I: I'm going to make you some questions about your eTandem learning experience
- 04 PB: Okay
- 05 I: Okay, so the first one, did eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers help you improve your English speaking competence?
- 06 PB: Yes, ~~definitely~~ ahh (...) -
- 07 I: If so, what aspects of the eTandem experience do you believe contributed to the improvement of your speaking competence?
- 08 PB: Ahh, like for example pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary, ~~definitely~~
- 09 I: Okay, were your speaking weaknesses overcome as a result of the interaction?
- 10 PB: Yes, sure
- 11 I: So, what were your speaking ahh weaknesses?
- 12 PB: Ahh, like for example, my fluency when I (.) talked was very (...) difficult to understand and when I talked with (xxx) changed (.) the pronunciation that I had
- 13 I: Okay, what kinds of knowledge or skills did you gain as a result of the eTandem synchronous verbal exchanges that you had not gained through F2F speaking classes in relation to the topic Crime and Punishment and the language functions associated with it?

- 14 PB: Ahh, like for example, expressing opinions and ~~definitely~~ I gained many aspects about this because when I was in my class was totally different, only expression okay, you have to say that and you don't have the opportunity to express your idea, like you want and with the (.) with (xxx), I expressed my opinions and sometimes she helped me (.), well she helped me with my feedback that maybe I commit a mistake or that ahh in that way is not correct, was not correct
- 15 I: Okay, did you achieve the learning objectives set in the e (.) eTandem learning plan at the beginning of the interaction?
- 16 PB: Ehh, yes in a 100%
- 17 I: 100%?
- 18 PB: Yes
- 19 I: Okay, did you change your learning objectives throughout the project?
- 20 PB: Ahh, yes
- 21 I: So, why did you change?
- 22 PB: Ahh because like for example, in the second opportunity that we had to choose the (.) the topic, I choose the (.) to learn about the different expressions that she has in (.) in her country and then, it was very difficult and like - yes difficult and then, we changed the topic for the (.) touristic places in England and Mexico
- 23 I: Okay, ahh in what other ways were you benefitted as a result of the eTandem exchange?

- 24 PB: Ahh like for example in (.) in listening, it was another skill that I developed because I had many problems with this
- 25 I: Okay, so you practiced your speaking [and listening?]
- 26 PB: [Yes, and listening at the same time]
- 27 I: Okay, how useful were the eTandem learning guidelines provided to you at the beginning of the - for the implementation of the Skype-based speaking exchange?
- 28 PB: It was very useful because you, well me, I know what aspect I should cover and (.) the step that I had to follow
- 29 I: Okay, was the eTandem learning portfolio useful to plan, implement, and reflect on your own learning?
- 30 PB: Yes ~~record~~ definitely because maybe, well when I realised my first learning record I (.) I reflect that I commit some mistakes, so ahh for the next time that I had the (.) the other session, I like - I learned of this mistake and I tried to don't commit
- 31 I: Okay, what sections would you exclude and add to make it a better instrument for learning, planning, and documentation?
- 32 PB: Well, I think that it is excellent and I think that I don't need to include anything
- 33 I: Was it hard for you?
- 34 PB: Ahh [well, at first]

- 35 I: [Is it like too much?]
- 36 PB: Ahh no, well for me was very interesting, yes
- 37 I: Okay, so what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the most?
- 38 PB: The interaction with ahh the native speaker, in this case (xxx)
- 39 I: Okay, what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the least?
- 40 PB: Ahh the difference of time with (.) with (xxx)
- 41 I: Okay, did you have any problems during the implementation of the eTandem learning project?
- 42 PB: Ahh, yes like for example, I had technical problems and the difference of time between Mexico and UK
- 43 I: Do you think that these two problems could have affected the improvement of your speaking competence in a negative way?
- 44 PB: Well not exactly, maybe the difference of time was very difficult because when I have time (.) when, when I had time, she couldn't and vice versa but not in my speaking development
- 45 I: Okay, do you think this eTandem learning experience will have any effects regarding your learning (.) future learning experiences?
- 46 PB: Definitely in my autonomy and ahh the attitudes toward native speakers
- 47 I: Okay, so do you think that those things changed?

- 48 PB: Yes
- 49 I: How (.) how did they change?
- 50 PB: Ahh like for example, at the first time that (.) we had the conversation, we well - I see (xxx), I saw (xxx) but then, I talked with her that I had many problems with listening so she helped me with the - that only with a calling, no with a video so it was very important for me because ahh (.) she motivated to me to (.) to have autonomy with the (.) with the instrument, with the listening, not especially with her but when I have time, I try to listen different - like for example news or music or something like that
- 51 I: Okay, in general do you consider the eTandem learning speaking exchange to be a positive or a negative experience?
- 52 PB: Positive
- 53 I: So could you explain (.) more? Why positive?
- 54 PB: Ahh because (...) as a student you can improve, well I can improve my language definitely and the problem that I (xxx), the problem that I have (.) that I had in speaking was pronunciation so I discovered that I improved my pronunciation of different words and also the vocabulary, she helped me with the vocabulary of many things that maybe I didn't know how can I say something and she helped me, oh maybe you can say this, in this way, or in informal way you can say this, and this was very important for me

- 55 I: Would you like to participate again in this kind of project? Why or why not?
- 56 PB: Ahh yes because it was very helpful for me
- 57 I: Okay, are you going to keep in touch with your eTandem language partner?
- 58 PB: Ehh well, in the (.) in that moment we decided that, we don't - that no for the difference of time but then she (.) sent me an email to continue with this because she need some help about the Spanish and this beneficial for me because I need sometimes her help in English
- 59 I: So you are going to continue [with] the project autonomously?
- 60 PB: [Yes]
- 61 PB: Yes
- 62 I: Okay, what aspects need to be considered in your opinion to replicate the eTandem learning through synchronous computed-mediated activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching?
- 63 PB: Ahh like for example that ahh (.) each semester ahh all the students follow this project, I think is very important, replace to the portfolio that we have in the B.A, I think that it is most important because you have the opportunity to practice with native speakers and (...) that maybe, well for me was very (.) was a pleasure have a conversation with (xxx), and

maybe we - if I (...) if I would change for a men was very difficult, could
be was very difficult

64 I: So you prefer your partner to be a woman?

65 PB: Yes

66 I: Okay, so you feel more comfortable?

67 PB: Yes (...) from the first time we (.) we did like a click, like a really
really (...) -

68 I: So you had a good relationship?

69 PB: Yes

70 I: Okay, so what aspects need to be improved in your opinion to replicate
the eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English
native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English
courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching?

71 PB: Ahh for me, I think that this is an excellent project, I don't change
anything but maybe ahh specify each time, each moment, that you don't
have options, that you have to (.) to have the conversations in that date
and in that hour

72 I: Uhum, okay, so what advice would you give other students who may
be interested in participating in this type of learning mode?

73 PB: Like ahh if they have the opportunity, make it, because this is very
very helpful for the (.) for the learning of the new language

74 I: Okay, so do you have any other comments?

75 PB: Ahh yes, that it was very useful for me because other times I had some problems with listening, as I said before and ahh it was very very useful because at the first time when I listened the British (.) accent that she has, it was very difficult for me but then with the practice and with the autonomy (.) to learn, it was very easy, so it is like a (.) a tool that helped me

76 I: So you said something about the portfolio that we have in our English lessons?

77 PB: Yes

78 I: So do you think that ahh it is (xxx), well you said something that probably we could substitute [the activities there with this kind of project?]

79 PB: [Yes, definitely (...)] yes definitely because well, as I (.) as students, I, me and my partners always one day before that - we have to (.) to keep (.) yes to keep our portfolios, we (.) we are writing the activities that we supposed that is before of that but with this, I think that you don't have to say, oh my God I have to do my portfolio, it was a pleasure for me, and if this (.) were my portfolio, I were very happy, I was very happy

80 I: Okay, okay, thank you very much.

81 PB: You're welcome.

Participant C

01 I: Good morning (xxx)!

02 PC: Good morning (xxx)!

03 I: I'm going to ask you some questions about your eTandem learning experience

04 PC: Okay

05 I: The first question, did eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers help you improve your English speaking competence?

06 PC: Yes, of course, well I think so because I think that I lost the (.) I lost the, like the fear to talk with someone that is native because I - when I'm nervous, my pronunciation is like kind of bad or difficult to understand but when you (.) when I get trust, trust? yeah, I think that I pronounce better, and that happened with him, I think that now I like - I lost the fear as I told you

07 I: Uhum, but regarding your speaking competence, so do you think that it helped you to improve it?

08 PC: Yes, yes because well, it is practice and even (.) when it was like one hour per session, I think that (xxx) like extra practice and it was great because to practice with a native speaker is fantastic, fantastic

09 I: Okay, so what aspects of the eTandem learning experience do you believe contributed to the improvement of your speaking competence?

- 10 PC: Well, of course the feedback that I received from (xxx) that was my
(.) my language partner and (.) beside the feedback, also to listen (.) listen
to him, it was also very useful because I can like notice the ~~pronunciation~~
and some words, some phrases and then I can use it now (.) those
- 11 I: Okay, so were your speaking weaknesses overcome as a result of the
interaction?
- 12 PC: Yes, yes of course, ahh it's (.) it is what I mentioned you about the
(...) (xxx) me like nervous with a new person and well, I think that that is
a weakness and with the interaction (.) through the interaction that I had
with him, I think that (.) it (.) I improved
- 13 I: Okay, so the next question, what kind (.) kind of knowledge or skills
did you gain as a result of the eTandem synchronous verbal exchanges
that you had not gained through F2F speaking lessons in relation to
the topic Crime and Punishment and the language functions associated
with it, that were describing, giving opinions, expressing, paraphrasing,
wishes, hopes, and desires?
- 14 PC: Well, I think that well, part of the knowledge that I got ahh was that
for example, it is just an example, that the - if we in class didn't see the
(.) for example the sentences of the -for the crimes (.) different crimes
and he explained me and also how is the crime in the city or what are
the (.) yeah the areas more like dangerous of London (.) and or why? or
like that and (...) also for example, I also learned to (.) well (...) yeah the

different punishments that (xxx) said that people is like no (.) not happy with the kind of sentences (.) to (.) given to those kind of crimes and well, we didn't know that because we didn't (.) we don't live there so I think that that is like extra information

15 I: Like, you could say that probably you learned more cultural information?

16 PC: Yes, [cultural information]

17 I: [And in terms of language?]

18 PC: [In terms]

19 I: [Was there any difference?]

20 PC: Not really, well I think that the language that we learn here is like very formal, I could notice that he (.) doesn't use like formal phrases or formal questions, he like avoid some (.) some words

21 I: Okay, did you achieve the learning objectives set in the eTandem learning plan at the beginning of the interaction?

22 PC: (...) yes, well, yes, I tried to keep on those objective but for example, (...) in (xxx) crime and punishment sometimes I like - it was two (.) two (.) yeah two session and I - it was kind of difficult to keep on the same topic because we sometimes we were like what else?, what else? because well, we were working with that topic before and I think what it was easier in the free topics because we include like more, maybe for example, if (.) if we (xxx) to develop the, for example that the crime and

punishment, the top topic, for example in subtopics like what kind of sentences, what kind of punishments ahh like that I think that we like - we can include more because at the moment we (.) we could forget that and is (xxx)

23 I: Okay, to what percentage do you think you (.) you achieved your objectives?

24 PC: I think like 80

25 I: 80%?

26 PC: 80%

27 I: Okay, did you change your learning objectives throughout the project?

28 PC: No, I tried to keep on and for example, the ones that were set at the beginning, the free topics, we also like keep, keep on mind those topics

29 I: Okay, in what other ways, were you benefitted as a result of the eTandem speaking exchange?

30 PC: Well, that now I have a language partner to work with and also all the cultural information that (.) that (xxx) and invaluable to, all the (.) yeah the details, small details that he told me I think that are very helpful

31 I: Okay, how useful were the eTandem learning guidelines provided to you at the beginning for the implementation of the Skype-based speaking exchange?

32 PC: Well, it was very useful because we - like there were like tips and for example, in feedback, how the feedback should be done and like that,

and I think that it was great because when we, well when I had a ~~doubt~~, I can (.) I could check and then to, well, to don't ask you but I think that they were clear

33 I: Okay, was the eTandem learning portfolio useful to plan, implement, and reflect on your learning?

34 PC: Yes because I take notes of the yeah the information that I was getting, and also to reflect because for example, in the first session I remember that I worked, well the first reflection, and there were problems, like technical problems and I tried to avoid those problems

35 I: Ahh, what sections would you exclude or add to make it a better instrument for learning, for learning, planning, and documentation?

36 PC: Mmm, I think for example that, well, we - there's a section that has like the feedback, the feedback received from the (.) from the partner but I think that also to - a section where we can like write, like take notes of the feedback that we are going to give him, because for example I, we, well, I wrote in a different sheet of paper than in the, the one that was of the plan

37 I: So, do you (.) do you believe it is a good learning instrument?

38 PC: The ones that you provide us?

39 I: Aha, like the formats, the learning record, learning plan, learning reflection format?

- 40 PC: Yeah it is because, for example, the language reflection has like questions, questions that guide (.) guide me to (.) to write because the first time I (.) I thought a reflection about everything or what? and then I read (.) I read the questions and they guide me
- 41 I: Okay, what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the most?
- 42 PC: Ahh all the cultural information that I learned from (.) from there and than, well, that he is very ~~interested~~ on - well, like he is learning a language also, he is very ~~interested~~ on keep learning
- 43 I: Okay, what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the least?
- 44 PC: Mmm, I don't have ahh any aspect that I didn't like, it's just like the (.) problems that I (.) that I have (.) that I had
- 45 I: Okay, so did you have any problems during the implementation of the eTandem learning project?
- 46 PC: Yeah, I had technical problems with the Internet because well, I don't live here in the city and sometimes here in the city and sometimes where I live that the light or the (.) connection or like that (...) like were problems because sometimes we had to postpone the date of the session
- 47 I: Okay, do you believe that this problem could have affected the improvement of your speaking competence in a negative way?

- 48 PC: Mmm, well, for (xxx), the technical problems were the Internet, so sometimes we were talking and the (.) and we lose the connection, and then we - when we got back to (.) to speak it was like what we are (.) we talking about and (...) but just that
- 49 I: But do you think this could have affected (.) the improvement of your speaking?
- 50 PC: Not really, not because well, we had some problems but we understand each other, so no, I don't think so
- 51 I: Okay, ahh do you think this eTandem learning experience will have any effects regarding your future learning experiences?
- 52 PC: Yeah for example, ahh now I think that I can (.), well, I (.) I (.) I'm kind of autonomous but now with this kind (.) with this program, I think that I can be more, more autonomy and that my practice habits can be like (xxx) (xxx) improved, and for example, now I'm fan of TICS ((laughing)) because I (.) I hasn't worked with, I has never worked with (.) Skype and I think it's a wonderful tool to (.) to learn and what a - and is great to have someone else to work with
- 53 I: Okay, in general do you consider the eTandem learning experience (.) exchange to be a positive or a negative experience?
- 54 PC: It is a positive and I think (xxx), not just positive is great, and all the adjectives I can add because I loved this experience and I think that I learned so much and I (...) I want to thank (.) to say you thank you for invite me

- 55 I: You're welcome
- 56 PC: ((laughing))
- 57 I: Okay, would you like to participate again in this kind of project?
- 58 PC: Yes, of course, because of all the benefits that I got from this one
- 59 I: Okay, are you going to keep in touch with your eTandem language partner in order to continue learning?
- 60 PC: Yes, we agree to continue with the sessions, at least one or two but per week, maybe weekends because like he is also in college, (xxx) in our free time
- 61 I: Okay, what aspects need to be considered in your opinion to replicate eTandem learning through synchronous computer-mediated activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching?
- 62 PC: Mmm, (...) I think that (...) to be considered some - (xxx) one aspect that should be considered is like - to include (.) to include this kind of project, for example, in the classes (.) in the English classes, too I think that it would be great if all the students from LELI has their own language partner
- 63 I: Okay so, you (.) you would recommend that everybody (xxx) had a language partner to work with?
- 64 PC: Yes, of course because I think that the best way of learning and to improve when you are learning a language is by practice

65 I: Uhum, so do you recommend that - because this (.) in this case for the project it was - well, students were invited to participate but voluntarily, so do you think that students should be given the same opportunity voluntarily or like something more compulsory?

66 PC: I think that (.) it is fantastic to be voluntary because for example, if you are (.) if you do this compulsory maybe they are not so interested to work with someone else and this, I think that this kind of project mmm require responsibility and autonomy also to (.) to work, and I think that someone who wants to practice will be voluntary

67 I: Okay, so what aspects need to be improved in your opinion to replicate the experience ahh in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A.?

68 PC: Well, I would recommend them that (.) to keep in mind the guide, all the (.) the recommendations that you gave (.) gave us and also to keep (.) to keep in touch with your partner, to try to (.) to have a good relationship

69 I: But about the organization, and structure of the tasks, and all that, what needs to be improved in your opinion?

70 PC: To be more like developed, to - for example, the topics to have some subtopics and more other options to (.) to work on

71 I: Okay, so (...) what do you mean by giving options?

72 PC: Yeah, for example, we had the topic crime and punishment, and as I was told (.) telling you, for example, to try what kind of crimes are the

most common, the sentences, and that and to include for example, one extra that we can add there to talk about

73 I: Okay, so what advice would you give other students who may be interested in participating in this type of learning mode?

74 PC: That take the (.) opportunity, that don't (.) don't think if it could be work or not, it could work or not because it will

75 I: Okay, do you have any other comments?

76 PC: Mmm, again to tell you thank you (xxx) ((laughing))

77 I: Okay, you're welcome, thank you.

Participant D

01 I: Good afternoon (xxx)!

02 PD: Good afternoon!

03 I: I'm going to make you some questions about the eTandem learning experience, okay?

04 PD: Okay

05 I: Ahh, the first one, so did eTandem learning through synchronous CMC activities with English native speakers help you improve your English speaking competence?

06 PD: Yes (...) because in some words she correct (xxx) some of my (.) some of my (.) some of my pronunciation

07 I: Okay, if so what aspects of the (.) the eTandem experience do you

believe contributed to the improvement of your speaking competence?

Only pronunciation?

08 PD: Ahh listening and sometimes writing because ahh sometimes I didn't understand what the (xxx) she - what they did - she said and she had to write, so I improved -

09 I: Okay, so but in speaking in particular, only your pronunciation?

10 PD: Uhum

11 I: Yes? Okay, so were your speaking weaknesses overcome as a result of the interaction?

12 PD: Sorry?

13 I: Were your speaking weaknesses overcome as a result of the interaction? In this case, mmm did you consider speaking is a weakness or was a weakness?

14 PD: Yes

15 I: And do you think that it helped you?

16 PD: Yes because I can (.) talk in fluently way (.) in a fluently way

17 I: Okay, so about question number 2, what kinds of knowledge or skills did you gain as a result of the eTandem synchronous verbal exchanges that you had not gained through F2F speaking classes in relation to the topic Crime and Punishment and the language functions associated with it?

18 PD: Well, I (.) I could learn about her culture, about her traditions and
(...) the things that (.) the things that they do in that country

19 I: Okay, so do you think that ahh regarding the functions of describing and
giving opinions, so you have practiced those functions in the classroom
and with your partner, so was there any difference? Do you think that ahh
in eTandem you learned something different that you had not learned in
the classroom?

20 PD: In this case, I think no

21 I: No, is like the same (.) the same things?

22 PD: Yeah, the same things (.) they express -

23 I: The same expressions? Everything?

24 PD: The same expressions, yeah

25 I: Okay, so did you achieve the learning objectives set in the eTandem
learning plan at the beginning of the interaction?

26 PD: I think that I followed in a 70 (.) 70%

27 I: Okay, so ahh you only achieved 70% of your learning objectives?

28 PD: Yes

29 I: Okay, so why only 70%?

30 PD: Because when we supposed to (xxx) about crime and punishment,
we are talking about different things, and for example slang from here in
Mexico, and other slang in the UK, and that kind of things don't (.) don't
(.) were not in the (.) in the objectives

31 I: In the plan?

32 PD: Aha?

33 I: And what was the topic or the objective that you used to substitute that?

34 PD: Ahh, for example ahh vacations, was the topic and the task was talk about her vacations, what did she do?

35 I: Only her? So you didn't -

36 PD: Both

37 I: Both of you? Okay, so did you change your learning objectives throughout the project? Yes, you told me

38 PD: Yes

39 I: Apart from that topic, did you change any other?

40 PD: Ahh were vacations (...) things that they (.) that she do in the school probably, the subjects, that's it

41 I: But from your initial plan?

42 PD: Yes, we changed (.) everything

43 I: Everything?

44 PD: Yeah almost everything (.) the only (.) we talked about free topics, that's the -

45 I: All of them were free?

46 PD: Aha

47 I: Okay so - ahh - what was the reason for that?

- 48 PD: Because ahh she don't have enough information and when I can start to talk about (.) the topic, she said ohh she (.) I don't know how to say ((Spanish, desviar)) (.) to other things and (.) and I think that was a rude way if I say, wait, we have to talk about that
- 49 I: Okay uhum, so about the next question, in what other ways were you benefitted as a result of the eTandem speaking exchange?
- 50 PD: In what (.) in what other ways? Mmm, I get a friend
- 51 I: Uhum, so you told me that you improved the pronunciation of some words and you probably became a little bit more fluent
- 52 PD: Uhum and also my listening because her pronunciation is very difficult so I had to say, could you repeat it and (...) and I (...) probably used more my ear
- 53 I: Okay, uhum, so the next one, how useful were the eTandem learning guidelines provided to you at the beginning of the (.) at the beginning for the implementation of the Skype-based speaking exchange?
- 54 PD: Mmm was useful because I have a (.) something to follow, so in that way -
- 55 I: it helped you
- 56 PD: Aha
- 57 I: Okay, so was the eTandem learning portfolio useful to plan, implement, and reflect on your own (.) own learning?

- 58 PD: Mmm yes because in the (.) in the ~~portafolio~~ I write the things that I
(.) that I get, that I learn
- 59 I: What sections would you exclude or add to make it a better instrument
for learning planning and documentation?
- 60 PD: Maybe the (xxx) the subject because sometimes the subject could be
for (.) could be boring maybe and the (.) the - I think, I don't know if I
am right but the thing is that we have to practice speaking
- 61 I: Yes
- 62 PD: So I think that it is better that they choose about things that they
(xxx) interest in, for example, what - the subjects, I don't know, the
things that she or he do, I don't know
- 63 I: But about (.) about the formats? I mean forget about the (.) the topics,
just focus on the formats, the plan, the learning record and the format for
reflection, do you think that they are okay?
- 64 PD: Yeah
- 65 I: Yeah, so you wouldn't add or exclude anything?
- 66 PD: No, it's okay because in the formats have describe the task and the
(.) the objective and is very (...) clear
- 67 I: Okay, what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the
most?
- 68 PD: Mmm to know a (.) to met a new (.) a native speaker

- 69 I: Okay, and what aspects of the eTandem speaking exchange did you like the least?
- 70 PD: The technical problems, that's it, because she is a (.) I was surprised because I believed that she was a little picky (...) and when I (.) when we start to talk, I discover that she is a (.) a kind person and he is a (.) - and she (.) she (.) she wants to help me
- 71 I: Okay, ahh did you have any problems during the implementation of the eTandem learning project?
- 72 PD: Yes, just technical problems and the ~~schedule~~, that's it
- 73 I: What do you mean by the schedule?
- 74 PD: Because we have ahh six hours of difference so probably I had to get up at 5 to talk about (.) to talk about the topic and I think that it was (.) it was difficult because it was very early
- 75 I: Uhum (xxx) okay, so do you believe that these problems could have affected your improvement of the speaking competence in a negative way?
- 76 PD: I think yes because at 5 o'clock, 5.30 we are not (.) in a (xxx) 100%, so maybe - the schedule, that's it
- 77 I: Okay, do you think this eTandem learning experience will have any effects regarding your future learning experiences?

- 78 PD: Mmm yes my English learning and practice habits (.) habits because
mmm I and my autonomy, now I want to (.) to look for more words and
(.) and stuff like that
- 79 I: Okay ahh, so in general do you consider the eTandem learning speaking
exchange to be a positive or a negative experience?
- 80 PD: Positive (.) positive experience
- 81 I: Why positive?
- 82 PD: Because (.) I believe that it (.) it will- it (...) (xxx) going to be very
difficult for me because my pronunciation is not very well and (.) and I
feel happy when she (.) she understand what I was saying so I feel good
and I (.) and for this reason, I continued with the experience
- 83 I: Okay, ahh okay, so would you like to participate again in this kind of
project?
- 84 PD: Yes, just (.) just specify the schedule because I think that for us it
was difficult because (.) because we had to adapt our time to (.) to the
other person
- 85 I: Okay, are you going to keep (.) to keep in touch with her, with your
eTandem language partner to practice the language?
- 86 PD: Yes, I (.) I think that we are going to do it (.) do it because now we
are in the face, and I have her personal mail so we are in contact (.) and I
hope that she could travel here because we are talked about that

87 I: Okay, so what aspects need ahh to be considered in your opinion to replicate eTandem learning through synchronous computer-mediated activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A.?

88 PD: Ahh I think the time (.) just (...) just the time and the technical problems because the last session mmm I don't know if was my internet but I can hear the (.) other things that she tell me and it was difficult because I can't understand, so I could you repeat it? And I had to (.) to very close for the computer but I think are technical problems

89 I: Okay, so and what aspects also need to be considered to help you or to help other students ahh do this kind of practice in combination with their classes, but aspects that could benefit (.) could benefit the language improvement?

90 PD: Ahh

91 I: In particular speaking

92 PD: Maybe that they have enough vocabulary (...) or advanced students

93 I: Uhum, okay, ahh so what aspects need to be improved, in your opinion, to replicate eTandem learning through synchronous computer-mediated activities with English native speakers in future semesters in combination with F2F English courses at the B.A. in English Language Teaching? What needs to be improved so that you can improve your language, speaking in this case?

- 94 PD: Ahh to give enough (.) enough vocabulary to practice or write the - maybe the questions or write an outline that I have to - I want to know this
- 95 I: But you did that in your learning plan
- 96 PD: Yeah, but for example in a free way, I (.) I want to (.) to know about the (.) her traditions, I want to know about (.) the culture I don't know, things like that, I don't know
- 97 I: Like probably to include more free topics? That's what you mean?
- 98 PD: Yeah, I think could be a better because (...) in my case or in our case with (xxx) it was difficult, it was boring for us talk about crime or talk - and it is a (.) a difficult topic
- 99 I: Okay, so what advice would you give other students who may be interested in participating in this type of learning mode?
- 100 PD: Just that they (...) they (.) they (.) must - if they want to know about something, they are ready
- 101 I: Ahh, what do you mean?
- 102 PD: ((laughing) if they (.) have a - if they don't have enough knowledge, they could do (.) do the same thing - to have a partner [to improve the skills]
- 103 I: [okay do you that having] a language partner, in this case a native speaker, can really help you to improve your level in the language?

- 104 PD: Yes
- 105 I: Okay, ahh so is there something that you practice or that you learn with an English native speaker that you don't learn in class?
- 106 PD: Mmm, maybe the listening because the listening in (.) in the classroom is very artificial because - and the way - my partner, he (.) she was speak very (.) very fast so ahh I could practice my listening in a other (.) in a other way that in the classroom
- 107 I: And was the vocabulary the same?
- 108 PD: No, she (xxx) she teach me some slang
- 109 I: That you didn't learn in class?
- 110 PD: Aha (...) learned in class
- 111 I: Okay, so do you have any other comments about the experience?
- 112 PD: Just I feel comfortable and it was fun
- 113 I: Okay, thank you very much (xxx).

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