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# Handbook for Foreign Language Learning in Online Tandems and Educational Settings



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EDITION

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### 3.1 Integration of Electronic Tandems into Classroom Instruction

**Abstract:** This article describes the necessary considerations of incorporating eTandem activities into the classroom to enhance third-language acquisition and cultural awareness with groups of German and Spanish students. We aim at providing an overview of how project-based eTandem affects the role of the teacher, especially regarding the complexities of synchronising web-based sessions with several foreign partners at once. We explore the implications of integrating eTandem into the teaching curriculum, and we discuss our views on how to organise the projects, elicit feedback, promote student motivation and evaluate results. We conclude with a series of recommendations for future, project-based and teacher-led eTandem collaborations based on the results of our experience in the academic year of 2015/2016.

#### 1 Introduction

In this article, we summarise our experience monitoring two groups of students of Spanish and German as foreign languages (levels A2-B1) in the framework of the electronic-Tandem language exchange programme L3TASK, led by the Faculty of German as a foreign language at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena (Germany), with partners in Vienna, Barcelona, Madrid, and Alicante. We describe the collaborative exchange that took place between the Institute of Romance languages at the Friedrich Schiller University and the French and German department of the University of Valladolid (Spain) with the aim of using online communication to enhance third-language acquisition. Additional Tandem partners were kindly provided by Dr. Javier Martos and Bettina Kaminski, M.A., at the Faculty of German Philology of the University of Seville (Spain).

Our online exchange took place in the academic year of 2015/16 and was carried out over two academic semesters. During the previous semester, we had already familiarised ourselves with the L3TASK project and had encouraged voluntary participation, gathering students' names and e-mail addresses for Tandem matching, but otherwise disengaging ourselves from organisational work.

In the following sections, we present our main reasons for incorporating electronic Tandems into our classes and making the electronic-Tandem exchange an integral part of our course syllabus to support student collaboration and provide

teacher-based feedback. We provide an overview of the implications of introducing Online Tandem activities into our class work, and describe the methods and strategies employed to encourage relevant and valuable conversations between the students of all three universities and to overcome the main obstacles encountered along the way. Furthermore, we include our views on how to elicit feedback and how to obtain the highest benefits from the collaboration, and we conclude with a series of recommendations gained from our experience and aimed to improve our communication in the future.

## 2 Reasons for web-based collaboration

Whereas students both in Jena and Valladolid are eager to practice their speaking, there is often not enough time in regular language courses due to the number of participants. Students are encouraged to spend some time abroad to learn and speak the language in the target country, but university grants are limited. Also, it is difficult to find native speakers in the same age group for regular face-to-face Tandems. In Spain, there is a growing numbers of young learners of German looking for opportunities to practice their oral and aural skills with native speakers. The fact that many young people have started to learn German in Spain as a third language might well have its roots in the high unemployment rates in Spain which have recently driven many young people to seek work in Germany or to improve their chances of a better professional future in the travel and tourism industry by studying German<sup>1</sup>. This trend has extended to some university departments, resulting in larger learner groups where actual language use is limited and the practice of oral skills must be kept to a minimum.

In this context, web-based Tandems offer the perfect solution, in agreement with the commitment expressed by the European Union to encourage third-language acquisition in a rapidly developing multilingual Europe (Jessner 2008). L3TASK provides a vital means of enabling valuable communication between foreign-language students, helping them to develop their skills in a second foreign language (German, Spanish, or Chinese).

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1 As the online magazine *La Región Internacional* reports, according to the German Federal Statistics Office there was an increase of 8,3% in the number of Spanish immigrants arriving in Germany in 2014. Approximately three fourths of them were below the age of 35 ([www.laregioninternacional.com](http://www.laregioninternacional.com), 04/08/2015).

### 3 Advantages of teacher-led over self-directed Tandems

Self-directed Tandems tend to place responsibility on the learners by relying on them for the selection of conversation topics, ensuring adequate functioning of technical equipment, organising times and dates, finding ways of motivating themselves and evaluating their own improvements. Not surprisingly, some learners find this a chore and a further burden to add to their already full class schedule. Intensive monitoring on the part of the instructors has been shown to enhance the Online Tandem experience (Kan/ Stickler/ Xu 2013) by removing some of this pressure. More frequent Tandems actually happen, fewer students quit the project, better teacher-based guidance and support help consolidate the students' improvements, and a better rapport between the two universities often develops, with ideas and feedback flowing back and forth during the course of the syllabus. Furthermore, by turning the self-directed online Tandems into an essential part of the course with teacher-led, project-based activities, instructors are able to turn the learners' attention toward specific cultural topics, support autonomous learning by providing in-class guidance on technical questions, and add regular feedback to better monitor the students' achievements.

An additional advantage of teacher-led, project-based Tandem sessions is that the teachers choose the best schedule to suit the organisational demands of both groups of learners. A critical aspect of international Tandem work is the fact that foreign universities have different semester schedules. The overlapping of semester start and completion deadlines implies that efforts have to be made to find several weeks in common during the core of the semester, not too early in the term (to allow for teacher preparation and avoid student fluctuation) and not too close to the end of the term (to avoid disrupting exam preparation).

Also, by providing the students with a schedule and ensuring that the conversations take place and are recorded, the instructor is able to step in and support the students when motivation wanes. At the beginning of the project, we noticed that most students were happy to join in and were able to *motivate themselves*<sup>2</sup>.

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2 As Ushioda (2013) has shown, when it comes to technology-supported language learning, there are two types of powerful, internal motivational forces. The first one affects those students with an inherent interest in technology, who are usually eager to discover its benefits for second- or third-language acquisition. The second group is made up of students with a strong personal interest in language learning; in their case too, curiosity is awakened by the chance to implement a particular technology to make the most of the learning experience. External pressure in the form of compulsory assignments, reward points or credits, is often counterproductive. Hence, in spite of the teacher's undeniable supportive and organisational role, it is essential to look for

However, when one of the teaching partners was absent for several weeks due to illness we realised that, without a strong support from their instructors, the conversations did not take place in spite of the students being highly motivated to carry out their tasks. In other words, some sort of teacher supervision must take place; self-directed Tandem work cannot be (in our experience) as effective as supervised, teacher-led Tandems. Hence, we consider the role of the teacher in organising and monitoring electronic Tandem exchange to be invaluable, especially towards the end of the academic semester.

## **4 Carrying out the electronic-Tandem exchange during the two academic semesters**

### **4.1 Preliminary steps and technical questions**

Our first task was to find groups with equivalent levels in Jena and Valladolid who were open to new didactic challenges. After a joint discussion with the heads of both departments, we settled for two courses in Jena with levels A2-B1 and one course in Valladolid with a good A2 level, bearing in mind that, were the collaboration to prove successful, it could be extended in the future to include more courses. Furthermore, it was necessary to make sure that both universities had multimedia rooms with online facilities, and that a time could be found when all students were on campus and the teachers were present, in order to adequately control and monitor the experience. From the beginning, the L3TASK team in Jena provided us with technical instructions (how to download *ooVoo*, how to register, what information to provide for the matching) a careful plan of how the exchange was to be organised, worksheets on different topics and a list of frequent questions and answers.

During the first weeks of the semester and based on the information kindly provided by the L3TASK team, we carefully outlined the project to our students, devoting a few minutes at the beginning of each session to informing them of all the details (which multimedia room was reserved, the times when they were expected, how many inscription questionnaires had been collected so far, how many pairs were already matched, etc.). These sessions gave us the opportunity to clarify any doubts and give feedback to the project team.

While the students were already familiar with digital learning and the use of videoconferencing software, the teachers were not and thus had to get acquainted

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internal motivation; in other words, eTandem should be a matter of individual tailoring and free choice, as with other types of web-based collaborative learning.

with all the multimedia aspects of Tandem learning. In order to provide help with arising problems, it is vital to carry out at least one or two sessions at home to try out the software; a good idea is to 'skype' with your teaching partner abroad and test that the cameras work, the recording function is easy to activate, where the recorded files are stored, etc. It is also advisable to carry out a test in class. This can take place either between the teacher and one of the students, or between the two teachers. Ideally, the teacher should record the conversation and draw the participants' attention to the correct uploading of the files.

During the preliminary steps, we were worried about the clash between the sizes of the groups. A slight mismatch of student numbers is easily overcome by the organisation of so-called tridems, whereby two students on the one side are matched to one student on the other (the online programme *ooVoo* has a video-conference group function, with which up to a dozen students can be invited to take part in the conversation). A perfect correlation of student numbers was impossible to achieve, and a few days into the winter term it became clear that there were sixteen German participants, whereas the group in Valladolid only included four Tandem candidates. Fortunately, there was still enough time before the first online session to find a third partner, and the L3TASK team in Jena provided us with partners at Seville University.

The Tandem sessions were placed evenly over two months (respecting the Christmas break). Extensive checking and collating of deadlines took place in order to ensure that all three instructors were not abroad during the Tandems and could (a) introduce the intercultural topics to be discussed and (b) be physically present during the exchanges to provide assistance with linguistic and technical problems. We also endeavoured to allow enough time between the Tandem sessions to avoid overwhelming teachers and students with extra work. At the end of the first semester, however, we noticed the disadvantage of having breaks between the Tandem sessions: students seem to grow tired and lose the thread, moving on to other more pressing matters. Therefore, in the summer term we decided to concentrate the four Tandem sessions into one *Tandem month* to avoid losing the students' interest and to easily monitor their feedback in the form of worksheets and recordings. We found the constant interruptions of the syllabus to depart from the unit and deal with a Tandem topic quite distracting. An intensive Tandem month would allow us to focus more actively on the intercultural subjects before tackling more traditional class contents. Also, both Spanish universities preferred to finish the Tandem activities before the end of May, since their final exams usually start at the beginning of June. We also endeavoured to find an afternoon time slot during which regular lessons were finished, but it was still early

enough to enable participation of students commuting between their homes and the university multimedia rooms. We settled for 6pm, with a 15-minute 'buffer' to allow for the connection to take place.

## 4.2 Project design and learning materials

The project involved several steps: An intercultural topic would be scheduled for a specific week, whereby the German instructor would cover the German side of the topic, and the Spanish one would do the same in her language; the instructors would hand out worksheets that covered similar aspects of both cultures. One day before the electronic-Tandem session, the students would receive a short questionnaire based on the contents of the lessons that would serve as protocol for the conversation. During the course of their talk, the students were expected to fill out the questionnaire using the information gleaned from their partner's answers and to record at least four minutes of their talk with the *ooVoo* recording function, finally uploading the audio (or video) file and storing it in the joint *Dropbox* folder.

When it came to choosing the topics, the L3TASK blog (<https://etandems.wordpress.com/>) offered enough material to serve as inspiration. Our intercultural background and our experience in the two countries also helped us in finding topics that expanded the students' scope of interest and presented cross-country variations. It has always been important for us not to neglect the cultural implications of the languages taught in class. Among other reasons, many of our students come to our lessons to prepare themselves for a semester at a foreign university. Previous interaction with native speakers helps them predict cultural challenges, diminishes the possibilities of experiencing *culture shock* and ensures a more successful and enjoyable experience abroad (O'Dowd 2000).

For this project, we settled for the following subjects during the winter term: getting to know each other (*Kennenlernen / Háblame de ti*), your home country (*Die Heimat / la Patria*), Christmas (*Es weihnachtet sehr / Navidad*) and food (*Esskultur / la Cultura del Comer*)<sup>3</sup>. We soon realised that each socio-cultural didactic unit could be easily incorporated into our syllabi with the help of a basic methodological teaching guide (for a bilingual lesson plan, see Annex 1) and activities to implement in class. Vocabulary included lexical items and expres-

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3 For the summer term, we developed the following topics: the school system (*Die Schullandschaft / el Sistema escolar*), sexism in language and society (*Männer und Frauen / Hombres y Mujeres*), humour (*Worüber lachen die Deutschen? / ¿De qué nos reímos los españoles?*), and music (*Musik / la Música*).

sions practised in specific situations (introducing each other, describing one's home town), abstract concepts and notions that could be universally understood (the notion of home country, the origin of Christian festivities) as well as special grammatical constructions (morphology and semantics of different past tenses such as *indefinido* and *imperfecto*, communicative functions of sentences, temporal subordinate clauses, epistemic implications of adverbs, modal verbs and verbal mood, nominalisation, imperative forms and impersonal constructions in cooking recipes, etc.).

A regular working rhythm was established. After a quick brainstorming session, didactic units and lesson plans were drafted simultaneously and both teachers mailed each other their ideas (see Annex 2). A basic plan was devised in Spanish, sent to Valladolid for correction and translation, and returned in German with additional ideas, worksheets and valuable suggestions; sometimes, both teachers expanded simultaneously the basic notions to produce bilingual materials that followed a common thread but deviated in their individual realisation. The materials were then sent to L3TASK for filing and inclusion in the L3TASK *Dropbox* and, finally, copies were issued per e-mail to our partners in Seville. As a decisive key to our positive collaboration we must mention that there were no constraints to fulfil a number of teaching hours per topic or to follow a rigid list of contents. The instructors gave each other enough freedom of choice and autonomy to respect individual teaching styles and goals.

Some cultural aspects could be roughly categorised into cultural themes such as *the art of eating (Esskultur)*, symbolism in gift giving, the German education system, traditions, festivities, etc. These *cultural models* summarise and encapsulate the speaker's experience within a community (Holland/ Quinn 1987)<sup>4</sup>. Words were presented in a context that felt realistic and authentic (Wang 2007)<sup>5</sup>, in association with visual elements or in texts and dialogues, never isolated or in the form of endless and boring vocabulary lists. In order to make vocabulary learning easy and enjoyable, we used different activities such as crosswords, rhymes, riddles – *Was kann das wohl sein? Worum handelt es sich hier?* –, cryptograms,

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4 “*Cultural models* are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it” (p. 4).

5 According to Wang, one of Chapelle's most relevant criteria for CALL task appropriateness consists in authenticity, i.e. the creation of situational tasks that resemble real life in the target culture, in order to encourage meaningful interaction and a personal commitment to learning.

multiple choice activities – *Was passt wo? Welches Wort passt? Was passt nicht?* Games were implemented because of their potential to make the lessons more dynamic and communicative, and to remove some of the blocks that may hinder self-confidence in the context of adult education (Vernon 2014).

The worksheets (see Annex 3) devised to be copied and handed out to the students for keeping track of the conversations contained questions for prompting the partners' interaction and a series of bilingual instructions to deal with last-minute communicative problems (*I can't hear you, can you repeat what you just said, can we talk later, etc.*). We predicted that we could not rely on autonomous and largely spontaneous interaction alone. As Müller-Hartmann (2000) has seen, the exploration of cultural themes in the context of project-based telecommunication exchanges works best when there is a healthy balance between autonomous collaborative student interaction and close teacher monitoring. Hence, the question-and-answer worksheets provided enough guidance but allowed them to talk without constraints. In this respect, it was useful to follow Kurtz's directives<sup>6</sup> as how to encourage communication by providing external constraints in the shape of scripted instruction while making room for unscripted interaction and deviations from the topic.

It proved useful to introduce the topics not too long before the corresponding Tandem session; thus, our participants were not distracted by other subjects and were looking forward to discussing the ideas recently studied in class. Additionally, since we were all running on a tight schedule and there were plenty of grammatical subjects to be covered before the end of term, we endeavoured to teach concisely, relying on home preparation as well as classroom work. The viewing of short videos was facilitated via our faculties' Moodle platform and work could be carried out in advance by the learners in the form of inverted-classroom tasks.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.3 Coping with unexpected technical complications

In spite of our careful arrangement of dates and the constant flow of information via ooVoo and e-mail between all three teachers, we noticed that the physical distance between the three universities did cause some problems; for instance we had to deal with the instructors' conflicting goals and expectations about the

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6 An interesting study of Tandem methodology can be found on his website: [juergenk.wordpress.com](http://juergenk.wordpress.com).

7 These tasks, also called "flipped classroom" activities, are made available to the students (often digitally) and tackled by them outside the classroom, individually and at their own pace, before the lesson.

recordings. For some teachers, it is vital to ensure that the students obtain enough exposure to the target language by turn taking during the talks. Here, it makes sense to be as flexible as possible and weigh out the best options in the students' interest. It is useful to remember that the Tandems take place between adult learners and that, although we can recommend a fair distribution of language input, they are ultimately responsible for their own learning.

It is advisable to remind students to activate the link they have received from L3TASK. If they do not activate this link, they will have no access to the *Dropbox* files. Their conversations will be saved on their hard disks after being recorded, and not in their *ooVoo* folder. If this happens, the teachers can drag and drop the document from each individual *Dropbox* account onto the joint one; for this, they will need the students' explicit invitation via e-mail. Also, do remind them that the student who has pressed the *ooVoo* recording function is responsible for activating the files and will receive a downloaded document containing the file. The documents often take several hours to download completely. Many students will eventually find the recording after browsing through their hard disk days later. Unexpected problems might occur during the actual session (sick students, delays, the loss of passwords, the wrong hardware...). In order to communicate with the partners during the conversations, it is advisable to open a further communication channel with the help of *WhatsApp* or another online chat application.

It is likely that the time allotted for conversations (in our case 40 minutes) will extend for much longer than predicted. If the participants show no signs of shyness or anxiety and are asking and responding fluently, our advice is to go with the flow and not to interfere. However, instructors might find that the participants neglect to fill out the protocols during the conversations (following the scripted tasks seems to hinder fluent conversation). They can take them home with them and fill them out later, or the teacher can choose to collect them anyway. By making sure that they are gathered at the end of each session, the instructor underlines their importance and hints at better feedback next time.

Some Tandem-savvy pairs might decide to stay at home and continue the eTandems from their own computers, the instructors will have to rely on the students' autonomy in the following weeks and trust that the technical obstacles can be overcome without assistance<sup>8</sup>. The advantages are manifold: the students' own computers are usually better than those at the university multimedia rooms;

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8 The recordings that took place at home showed that the students were perfectly capable of dealing with technical problems. One participant recorded everything with her Smartphone and mailed the resulting four conversations to her instructor (it was audio data, but the sound quality was excellent). One student asked not to be seen on

the participants have plenty of flexibility to arrange a suitable time with their partners; they enjoy the privacy of their own homes; and they can make use of their webcams. Also, it is an important step to enhance the students' responsibility in directing their own learning process. Some disadvantages include the lack of control on the part of the teachers; it is relatively easy for a participant to blame their partner if something goes wrong (the instructor cannot possibly find out whether it is true, since she has not been present during the conversation); and, finally, we lose the team atmosphere that is so enjoyable during the sessions.

#### 4.4 Evaluating students' feedback

At the beginning of the project, we decided to tell our students that they were taking part in a pilot project in which we would be *learning by doing*; hence, they would not be graded on the basis of their performance, but each pair was expected to record a minimum of four conversations and upload them to our joint *Dropbox* account. During the winter term the student groups taking part in the electronic Tandems were composed as follows:

University	L3 level: A2	L3 level: B1
Jena (GE)	6	10
Valladolid (SP)	4	
Seville (SP)	16	

Of the 16 folders opened in our L3TASK *Dropbox* one was empty due to lack of communication; two others remained empty since the students refused or were unable to upload their conversations. The remaining folders were regularly updated with recordings of considerable length (as it turned out, they seldom confined themselves to the five minutes suggested in the instruction manual mailed to the participants)<sup>9</sup>.

The fact that the E-Tandem experience was considered semi-voluntary and no specific grade was awarded for the students' efforts proved somewhat detrimental. At the end of the term, in practice, only those tasks for which a mark was awarded were taken seriously by most students. Instead of a stress-free, inviting atmosphere, for some students the lack of reward credits became a free ticket to avoid

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screen, so her partner converted all the video files into audio files before sharing them with the L3TASK team.

9 For exact quantitative accounts of the length and frequency of the students' recordings, please contact the L3TASK team.

performing the Tandems, an attitude that was especially pervasive during the last two or three weeks of the semester, when end-of-term reports and exams rolled around and students became busy with other – more demanding – subjects. Some protocols were handed back, but many excuses were found to avoid filling them out<sup>10</sup>. The most common one was that the partners had been too busy speaking to do any actual writing; however, the lack of recordings in some cases showed that one or both participants had lost interest before completing the four sessions (this is not the only reason why E-Tandem collaboration sometimes fails to take place; for a exhaustive analysis, we refer to O’Dowd/ Ritter’s 2006). Also, many conversations allegedly took place but were never found because the computer (or the partner’s computer) had filed them into the wrong folder. Unfortunately, it is easy to pass on the responsibility to the foreign partner, who falls outside of the teacher’s jurisdiction. However, the protocols proved useful for recycling the topics in class, providing a follow-up discussion, raising specific questions for debate and inviting the participants to share their experiences in the group.

When the time comes to evaluate the recordings, if a consistent number is obtained, the teacher can award grades based on the improved fluency of the interaction, the adequate use of linguistic features included in the worksheets, the successful implementation of the cultural notions recently acquired, they ability to invite and carry out a successful conversation, etc. However, this can only realistically take place if we have enough recordings to ensure a homogeneous evaluation of all students. In our case, five out of 16 pairs uploaded four (or more) conversations to *Dropbox*. The following chart shows the contents of the teachers’ *Dropbox* at the end of the winter term:

E-Tandem pair	Recordings (as of 15/02/15)
C-C (P1)	1
F-I (P2)	–
J-A (P3)	1
K-C (P4)	2
L-F (P5)	4
M-L-A (T1)	–

10 15 worksheets/ protocols were handed out at every session in Jena. Out of a total of 60 protocols, only 21 were filled out (to some extent) and returned to the teacher for control and correction.

E-Tandem pair	Recordings (as of 15/02/15)
M-A (P6)	9
N-P (P7)	2
N-M (P8)	5
P-I (P9)	2
RF-Sara (P10)	5
S-P (P11)	-
S-P (P12)	1
S-U (P13)	2
V-L (P14)	2
Z-I (P15)	9

Even if the recordings are not exhaustively analyzed and graded, useful feedback can be obtained. The instructors can watch the videos and ask students to explain a specific point or two that struck them as particularly interesting during their conversation (for example, to clarify a gesture performed by one of the partners). Another possibility is to select a few successful recordings and ask the students' permission to share them with the class. With the necessary technical expertise, one could produce a video by including fragments of each of the recordings to encapsulate the group's experience that semester. Alternatively, the teacher could transcribe part of a conversation and share it with the class, to illustrate how a researcher would analyse their interaction. This information can raise awareness of conversational tools such as correcting, turn taking, repeating, translating, code-switching or the use of a lingua franca.

#### 4.5 Motivating learners in the long run

After the initial novelty, the students' interest might wear off. As a consequence, some will opt out of the programme in subsequent semesters. When faced with a dwindling number of Tandem participants, we suggest continuing with the intercultural topics as planned, a practice that in our case has become a welcome addition to the regular class schedule, ultimately serving as encouragement for those who were indecisive about signing up for the programme.

If, due to lack of intrinsic motivation within one of the groups, the instructor needs to make the eTandem work optional (i.e. restricted to a small group of students in a larger group), evaluating and grading can become problematic.

only one small part of the class is actively engaged in the conversations, it might be a good idea to include an optional question or task (for instance, an oral test) in the final exam only to be completed by those students who do not actively take part in the online Tandems. Good results can be achieved by creating a system of rewards (perhaps more appropriate than sanctioning non-participants)<sup>11</sup>.

## 5 Conclusion and recommendations for teacher-led e-Tandems

To sum up, this project was valuable both for instructors and students; the instructors benefitted from the application of new teaching tools and from inter-departmental as well as international collaboration. The online Tandems helped develop the students' fluency and, most importantly, considerably increased their confidence in the target language. Solving technical problems in another language has proved to be a good way of developing their linguistic skills, too. International friendships were born; some of the German students travelling to Spain with grants are visiting their Tandem partners during their stay. Some partnerships were so successful that the participants spoke several times a week, choosing their own topics and uploading many more recordings than expected. Some pairs developed a supportive relationship and assisted each other in essay writing, task completion or exam preparation. A *WhatsApp* group with all the participants' names was created so that videoconferences could take place spontaneously; this way, students could be invited at short notice to join one of the talks taking place. In other words, the project seemed to grow and branch out into new areas thanks to the students' autonomous activity, supporting the idea that freedom of choice and internal motivation are inseparable aspects of web-based collaboration (Ushioda 2013).

Finally, and by means of recommendation for future teacher-led eTandem collaboration, we would like to conclude this article with the following suggestions:

- a. When working with a foreign instructor, make sure you have met before and there is good professional chemistry between you. Do not forget to 'skype' or telephone a few times before the beginning of the eTandem activities. Remain in touch with the help of an online conversation application and send each other reminders and updates on any details regarding planning and project

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11 The way the students are evaluated in Germany, for example, is dictated by the so-called *Modulbeschreibung* (the description of the subject as featured in the Federal State's curriculum standards). It is up to the instructor to figure out the best way to reward student participation in non-compulsory activities, while still respecting the rules established by the University and the Educational Board.

development. Frequent rapport helps overcome the cultural challenges that happen not only at student level; coordinating an eTandem project with a foreign instructor must take into account the distance between the two countries, the different semester deadlines, holidays, daily schedules, examination periods and many other unforeseen complications.

- b. If you use questionnaires as conversation protocols, insist on collecting them even if they are not completely filled out. In our case, only a fraction of the protocols were returned and no demands were made for more consistent feedback. This resulted in dwindling interest on the part of the students, a development that can be measured by looking at the number of worksheets returned to the German instructor for correction in the winter term.

Topics	Questions
(1) Háblame de ti (mid-November)	8
(2) Patria (early December)	7
(3) Navidad (mid-December)	6
(4) La cultura del comer (January)	0

- c. Do not underestimate intrinsic motivation; when offered the chance to practice eTandem as a facultative activity in the summer term, only six out of a total of 23 students of Spanish declined the offer. Yet all six wished to be added to a waiting list. In other words, the majority of the participants were willing to become involved in the eTandem programme, although it was not a credit-bearing activity.
- d. Student autonomy should be balanced with strong and reliable teacher support. If you promise to evaluate the students' recordings, make sure you do so. One student confessed that his instructor's failure to analyse and grade the conversations he uploaded during the winter term made him feel let down. This frustration resulted in a refusal to continue the eTandem exchange with his partner during the summer term.
- e. Trust the students' technical expertise. eTandem does not necessarily have to happen in the university's multimedia room with the multimedia computer; it can take place e.g. with the help of laptops, in-built or portable webcams, gaming microphones or mobile devices such as tablets or mobile phones. Teleconferencing programmes contain a plethora of functions that enable group conferences across several cities at the same time. Software and applications are developed every day to facilitate the sharing of data. Often, students

volunteer new ideas and improvements to the teachers' most carefully crafted plans. Keep an open mind and welcome the chance to continue learning.

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## Annex 1: A bilingual lesson plan on Christmas

Heilige Nacht	Noche de paz
<p>Bald ist Weihnachten, aber zuerst kommen noch Nikolaus und die Adventssonntage. Bitte lesen Sie die Texte <i>Der Nikolaustag</i> und <i>Weihnachten in Dresden</i> (aus <i>Presse und Sprache</i>).</p> <p>1. Unterstreichen Sie die wichtigsten Gedanken und Inhalte!</p> <p>2. Was finden Sie zum Thema Vorweihnachtszeit in den Texten?</p>	<p>Para esta unidad nos basaremos en las hojas de trabajo de Klett/ <i>Con Gusto</i>/ Arbeitsunterlagen diseñadas para las sesiones antes de Navidad.</p>
<p>(Lern)Wortschatz. Mind-map: Wir sammeln gemeinsam Ideen zum Thema <i>Weihnachten in Deutschland</i>, um interkulturelle Vergleiche zu ziehen und um bewusst zu machen, welche Feste es gibt und welche nicht.</p> <p>Tannenbaum/ Christbaum, es riecht nach Harz und Tannenduft, Adventskranz, Christkindfigur, Adventskalender, Mandel-, Plätzchen- und Schmalzkuchenduft, Glühwein, Bratäpfel, Mitternachtsmesse, Kirchenglocken, Lichterglanz, Kirschzweige, Christbaumkugeln, feine Festtafel, Kerzenleuchter, Lichterketten, ein Fest der Hoffnung, ein Leierkastenmann spielt Weihnachtslieder ...</p>	<p><b>Noche de paz.</b> Mapa asociativo en la pizarra alrededor de la palabra/ concepto Navidad (estrella, turrón, establo, belén, ángeles, pastores, luz, pandereta, cuna). Completar el mapa con otras palabras que asocien con la Navidad.</p>
<p><b>Klassische deutsche Weihnachtslieder.</b> Eine Auswahl: Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht; O Tannenbaum; Alle Jahre wieder; Kling, Glöckchen, klingelingeling; Ihr Kinderlein kommet, o kommet doch all'; O, du fröhliche; Kommet ihr Hirten. Wir hören uns die Lieder an, lernen die Texte und singen evtl. mit.</p>	<p><b>Villancico trabalenguas.</b> Entregar la hoja de trabajo número 3 con el villancico "Rin Rin" ("Hacia Belén va una burra..."). Los versos del villancico están desordenados. Escuchar y solucionar las tareas, completando con los conceptos mencionados. Cantar todos juntos (si se animan). Ojo con el sonido /r/</p>

Heilige Nacht	Noche de paz
<p>Für die etwas Moderneren: Helene Fischer "Ave Maria" (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCNgQUVPqdk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCNgQUVPqdk</a>) und Andrea Berg "Leise rieselt der Schnee" (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9g0yrLd28M&amp;index=1&amp;list=PL4C734C67D8727294">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9g0yrLd28M&amp;index=1&amp;list=PL4C734C67D8727294</a>)</p> <p>Jetzt kann Heiligabend kommen. Mit den Geschenken unter dem Baum wird es einem ganz feierlich zu Mute, denn man weiß, dass bald die Bescherung kommt. Schauen Sie sich nun den Sketch von Lorient an, "Weihnachten bei Hoppenstedts" <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5ur7htqcc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5ur7htqcc</a></p> <p>Am Heiligabend versucht Familie Hoppenstedt, sich zu einigen, wie sie ihr persönliches Weihnachtsfest verbringen will. In welcher Reihenfolge soll der Abend verlaufen? Zuerst Weihnachtsprogramm im Fernsehen gucken, oder doch lieber zuerst das Weihnachtsgedicht von Dicki anhören und dann die Bescherung und Geschenke auspacken, damit man es sich schließlich gemütlich machen kann? In welcher Reihenfolge erfolgt nun das ganze Abendprogramm? Notieren Sie!</p> <p>Was bedeutet der <b>Begriff Gemütlichkeit</b> (wie in dem Satz <i>Wir wollen es uns erst mal richtig gemütlich machen, oder sei doch gemütlich</i>)?</p>	<p><b>Villancico absurdo pero querido.</b> Entregar la hoja de trabajo número 4 con "Los Peces en el Río" y completar las tareas.</p> <p>Como sugerencias adicionales, usar un capítulo subtítulo de la serie "Cuéntame" (<a href="http://www.rtve.es/alcanta/videos/cuentame-como-paso/cuentame-como-paso-t10-capitulo-179/368628/">www.rtve.es/alcanta/videos/cuentame-como-paso/cuentame-como-paso-t10-capitulo-179/368628/</a>) así como la siguiente versión de "Los Peces en el Río" (incluyendo el anuncio introductorio), <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EmpcXopDwo">www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EmpcXopDwo</a></p>

Heilige Nacht	Noche de paz
<p>Textverständnis und Textarbeit an den im Unterricht behandelten Texten. Sagen Sie, was richtig und was falsch ist!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Der Nikolaus kommt am 24. Dezember.</li> <li>• Knecht Ruprecht bestraft die Kinder für ihre bösen Taten mit seiner Rute.</li> <li>• Der Adventskranz hat 5 dicke rote Kerzen.</li> <li>• An dem Tag vor Nikolaus putzen alle Kinder besonders gründlich ihre Stiefel und stellen sie in den Flur, ganz nahe bei der Türe.</li> <li>• Der Tag der Heiligen Drei Könige (Melchior, Kaspar und Balthasar) wird am 6. Januar nur in katholischen Gegenden gefeiert.</li> <li>• Am 24. Dezember, dem Heiligen Abend, wird in den D-A-CH-Ländern das Fest von Christi Geburt gefeiert.</li> <li>• Martin Luther erfand das Christkind.</li> </ul>	<p>Con lo aprendido hasta ahora, señalar si las siguientes frases son verdaderas o falsas. Por ejemplo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• En Navidad se come un dulce típico llamado turrón. El turrón se hace en casa.</li> <li>• Los españoles se regalan cosas el 25 de diciembre.</li> <li>• En muchas casas hay un belén y un árbol de Navidad.</li> <li>• Las canciones de Navidad se llaman villancicos y son muy tristes y solemnes.</li> <li>• La Navidad es una fiesta religiosa. Se sigue una dieta especial.</li> <li>• En Navidad hay que lavar la ropa en el río.</li> <li>• Los Reyes Magos vienen a casa el día de Fin de Año y dejan carbón a los niños malos.</li> </ul>
<p>Wir zeigen den Teilnehmern, was ein Schwibbogen (Lichterbogen) ist, was es für Adventskalender gibt (Türchenkalender, Säckchenkalender) und was für typisch deutsches Weihnachtsgebäck gegessen wird – ganz anders als in Spanien: Zimtsterne, Orangenbrot, Christstollen, Lebkuchen, Lebkuchenhäuschen, Honigkuchen, Vanillekipferl, Marzipanplätzchen, Spekulatius, Dominosteine, Kokosmakronen ... LECKER! WIR NASCHEN ALLE!</p>	<p>Llevar algunos objetos significativos a clase: turrón, una pandereta, una botella de anís, un billete de lotería del Gordo, una bola para el árbol, doce uvas en un vaso... Explicar que los estudiantes pueden hacer lo mismo el día del tándem, animarles a traer objetos típicos de la Navidad en su país.</p>

## Annex 2: Outlining the eTandem topics for the summer term

Temas para el semestre de verano 2016

Fechas	Deutsch A2/B1	Español A2/B1
4 de mayo	<p><b>Das Schulsystem.</b> Die deutsche Schullandschaft: Gesamtschule, Gymnasium, Realschule... Die Strukturdebatte in Deutschland: die Schüler sind früh mit der Auswahl konfrontiert. Alternative Unterrichtsformen in Deutschland (Waldorf, internationale, konfessionelle Schulen ...). Auszubildende – Azubis. Abitur. Auslandstudium. WGs und Bafög. Praxis und Theorie. Wie lange gehen wir zur Schule?</p>	<p><b>El sistema escolar.</b> Colegios de pago y colegios públicos. Colegios “de curas” y “de monjas”, internados. Religión en clase. El comedor escolar y el horario de clases: en España se come en casa. Uniforme escolar. El paso del parvulario a preescolar. Idiomas en el colegio, colegios bilingües. Las vacaciones en España. ¿Qué pasa cuando hace calor? (Hitzefrei). La reforma de la LOCSE, la ESO. Institutos y formación profesional. El respeto al profesor, profesores tradicionales. Los castigos, los suspensos, los repetidores (cómo ha cambiado la situación a lo largo de los años). La Selectividad. “De letras” y “de ciencias”. Las universidades y su papel en la España de hoy. Estudiar idiomas en España: ¿mucho teoría, poca práctica? Estudiamos y vivimos en casa.</p>
11 de mayo	<p><b>Männer und Frauen.</b> Eine schöne Frau ist meistens dumm. Frauen verteidigen sich: Irren ist männlich. Wie ist die Lebenswirklichkeit in Deutschland? Das Rollenbild der Frau gestern und heute. Gleichstellung in Politik und Gesellschaft. Die Rolle der Frau in Ost und West. Ist die Zeit des “Entweder-Oder” (= Kinder oder Karriere) endlich vorbei? Oder zählt jetzt eher das “Und” (= Familie und Beruf)?</p>	<p><b>Hombres y mujeres.</b> El español: ¿un lenguaje machista? (miembros y ¿miembras?) El papel tradicional de la mujer: el ama de casa vs. el <i>rodríguez</i>. Profesiones típicas de hombres y mujeres. La emancipación: ¿desde cuándo votan las mujeres? Cómo salir con un español: Quién paga el café, quién <i>sujeta la puerta</i>, quién <i>conduce</i>, quién le lleva al otro las bolsas. Mujeres en puestos de responsabilidad: ministras, políticas, banqueras, directoras.</p>

Fechas	Deutsch A2/B1	Español A2/B1
	Die Verhaltensregeln brechen. Wer packt im Haushalt an? Wer kocht zu Hause, wer putzt? Was verdienen Frauen in Deutschland? Die Frauenquote. Gleichstellung in der Ehe und bei der Arbeit. Frauen in Führungspositionen.	La vuelta al trabajo después de los hijos. El divorcio, la separación, la violencia machista. Típicas expresiones y chistes. Los matrimonios mixtos (entre dos nacionalidades) y los matrimonios de un solo sexo.
18 de mayo	<p><b>Musik.</b></p> <p>Bekannte Künstler in Deutschland: populäre Musik ist von Schlagern und volkstümlicher Musik mitgeprägt (Heino, Udo Jürgens, Roberto Blanco, Helene Fischer, Roy Black, Cyndy und Bert, Katja Ebstein, Jürgen Marcus, Andrea Berg, Jürgen Drews, Joy Fleming. Was singen die Deutschen, wenn sie feiern (EM-Lieder, Stammtischlieder). Die Geschichte der Deutschen Nationalhymne.</p> <p>Was muss man kennen? Punkrock (Nina Hagen, die Ärzte, die Toten Hosen). Pop und neue deutsche Welle (Nena, Mückner Freiheit). Internationale Pop-Produktion (Modern Talking, Alphaville, Boney M., Europe, Tokio Hotel (eine Teenager Band). Poprock der Gegenwart (Udo Lindenberg, Peter Dinklage, Herbert Grönemeyer). Folklore (Jodlerklub Wiesenberg, Tölzer Knaben-Chor, Zithermusik)</p>	<p><b>Música.</b></p> <p>El estudio de la música en el conservatorio (menos que en Alemania). La música tradicional española: flamenco, guitarra española, el norte, influencia árabe... Instrumentos típicos españoles. El cantautor y la censura (Castaño, Serrat...). Música moderna: el pop y el rock español (la Movida, Los Dinarama, Radio Futura, Los Sabina...). Los mejores grupos españoles hoy en día. ¿Qué se busca en las discotecas? Bakalao, Reggaeton (y flamenco en el sur). La música indie. Los Cuarenta Principales y su papel en la sociedad. La radio: una cuota de canciones en español (Eros Ramazzotti canta en español). Canciones tradicionales del folclore: himnos, pasodobles. <i>La Canción del Verano</i> (Schlager): Los Pajaritos, La Bomba, La Macarena...</p>
25 de mayo	<p><b>Humor. Worüber lachen die Deutschen?</b></p> <p>Klischees. Böse Zungen behaupten, dass die Deutschen erst lachen können, wenn sie ihre Arbeit erledigt haben. Humorvolles in Reimen und Gedichten verpackt (Ringelnatz, Tucholsky, Wilhelm Busch, Karl Valentin). Schadenfreude. Humor in typischen Lebenslagen: beim Amt und mit der Polizei (Autoritätsverlust), in der Ehe, Ausländerwitze. Manta- und Blondinenwitze.</p>	<p><b>El humor. ¿De qué nos reímos?</b></p> <p>Chistes de Lepe. Estereotipos: entran un francés, un inglés y un español en un bar... El humor situacional: los curas y la iglesia; la infidelidad en el matrimonio; la homosexualidad; el humor y la muerte; la política y la crisis (nos reímos de la autoridad). Publicaciones humorísticas. El humor español en la historia.</p>

Fechas	Deutsch A2/B1	Español A2/B1
	<p>Die Lacher der 70er und 80er Jahre haben sich mit Lorient und Otto Waalkes amüsiert; parodiert werden die kleinbürgerlichen Spießer. Tabus (andere Religionen und Hautfarben). Angela Merkel: alle lachen über <i>Mutti</i>. Ostfriesenwitze. Osis. Humorzeitschriften (z. B. Eulenspiegel). Satire in TV: die Heute Show. Vom Kabarett (Oliver Welke) zum Comedy-Boom (Mario Barth).</p>	<p>Tabús modernos y cómo (no) romperlos. Grandes humoristas: Gila. Martes y trece. Los Morancos. Tricicle. El humor en la tele. ¿Qué es un chiste verde?</p>

## Annex 3: Communication protocol worksheet

### El sistema educativo en España / die Schullandschaft

¡Importante: no olvides grabar al menos 5 minutos de esta conversación! Puedes decir a tu compañero: “¿Podemos grabar ahora?”

- Kennenlernen.** Es la primera vez que trabajas con esta persona. Pregúntale cómo está, dónde vive, qué estudia, cuántos años tiene, cuáles son sus hobbies, cuántos hermanos tiene... Demuestra interés y déjale tiempo para hablar.
- Colegios de educación primaria.** Pregunta a tu compañero si recuerda su educación primaria. ¿Cómo se llamaba el colegio? ¿Cuál era su asignatura favorita? ¿Qué idiomas extranjeros estudió allí? ¿Era un colegio laico o religioso? ¿Privado, público o concertado?
- Instituto de educación secundaria.** ¿Cuál era su profesor favorito? ¿Repitió curso alguna vez? ¿Cómo se llamaban sus amigos? ¿Todavía tiene contacto con ellos? ¿Era un instituto tranquilo o con problemas (sociales, de integración, de comportamiento...)?
- La selectividad.** ¿Qué recuerdos tiene tu compañero de los exámenes de selectividad? ¿Tuvo mucho estrés o miedo? ¿Sacó buena nota - o suficiente para estudiar la carrera que quería?
- ¿Qué tipo de alumno fue tu compañero de tándem? Pregúntale.

Alguna vez...	¿Sí o no? Escribe lo que pasó.
¿Faltaste a clase para ir a dar una vuelta con tus amigos?	
¿Usaste una chuleta en un examen?	
¿Hiciste una gamberrada? (solo o en grupo)?	
¿Te castigó un profesor?	
¿Sacaste una Matrícula de Honor?	
¿Ayudaste a un compañero en problemas?	

### Frases útiles

No te oigo (ich höre dich nicht)

No te veo (ich sehe dich nicht)

Habla más alto (bitte sprich lauter)

Hay eco (ich höre Echo)

¿Puedes repetir? (kannst du wiederholen?)

¿Puedes hablar más despacio? (bitte sprich langsamer)

Necesito pensar (ich brauche eine Pause zum Denken)

Espera un momento, por favor (bitte warte einen Moment)

Tengo que dejarte, lo siento (ich muss dich leider verlassen)

¿Nos vemos otro día? (sehen wir uns an einem anderen Tag?)