A Dutch-French e-Tandem project: A qualitative analysis of learning outcomes

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Key objectives of an e-tandem project between a Dutch and a French university are to give students extra time for interaction in the target language, to enhance their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and to prepare them better for study abroad. The project is part of a faculty-wide initiative to introduce telecollaboration across the disciplines. An action research approach is used to investigate to what extent the exchanges meet the intended outcomes. This is particularly relevant, because a case for telecollaboration as sustained educational practice still has to be made (Lewis and O’Dowd, 2016).

The faculty-wide telecollaboration project is in its 4th year now. The tasks are modelled on O’Dowd and Ware (2009). Surveys conducted invariably show a high level of appreciation by participating students and positive responses relating to the intended learning outcomes overall.

In the present study, we examine the student work itself. Time-on-task and output are measured through quantitative measures, such as duration of the recordings per task, time on task per group, and calculations of the number of words produced. Student appreciation and the development of the intended learning outcomes are examined through qualitative analyses of written assignments, reflective journals, and audio and video recordings of the exchanges (totaling more than 30 hours per year).

The first exploratory study based on the reflection journals of 2014-15 found that students regard telecollaboration as an attractive and effective way of learning about language and culture. Although this may confirm the positive survey results, we are looking beyond the knowledge component of ICC for evidence that bears on the attitude and skill components (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002). We will present the findings from the study so far. These are based on student work from two consecutive years involving data of 11 to 15 pairs of students.

References:

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[297 words, excl references]

Abstract

This action research study presents the results of a qualitative analysis of two consecutive years of student work from a Dutch-French e-Tandem project. After a brief outline of quantitative measures of time-on-task and output, the focus will be on a qualitative analysis of reflection journals, writing assignments, and audio and video samples of the exchanges to examine how students experience the exchanges and what evidence there is of intercultural communicative competence development.

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