

# Classroom tandem – Outlining a Model for Language Learning and Instruction\*

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Received: 13 April 2013 / Revised: 7 June 2013 / Accepted: 9 October 2013

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to outline classroom tandem by comparing it with informal tandem learning contexts and other language instruction methods. Classroom tandem is used for second language instruction in mixed language groups in the subjects of Finnish and Swedish as L2. Tandem learning entails that two persons with different mother tongues learn each other's native languages in reciprocal cooperation. The students function, in turns, as a second language learner and as a model in the native language. We aim to give an overview description of the interaction in classroom tandem practice. The empirical data consists of longitudinal video recordings of meetings of one tandem dyad within a co-located Swedish-medium and Finnish-medium school. Focus in the analysis is on the language aspects the informants orient to and topicalize in their interaction. The language aspects vary depending on what classroom activities they are engaged in, text-based or oral activities.

**Keywords:** Classroom tandem, Second language, Language education, Interaction, Language topicalization.

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## Introduction

Finland is an officially bilingual country, where both the Swedish and the Finnish language groups are guaranteed a constitutional right to education in their respective mother tongue. According to the law the education has to be organized separately, i.e. in monolingual schools. Despite this fact, during the last years there has been an intensive debate on the possibilities of creating bilingual schools in Finland. The debate concerns mainly what a bilingual school could mean in a Finnish context, but the concept has not yet been unambiguously defined. There are different understandings

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\* This article is a part of a three year (2012–2015) project Classroom tandem, a linguistic–pedagogic interdisciplinary project between the University of Vaasa and Åbo Akademi university, and the bilingual upper secondary school campus Lykeion in Vaasa. Project website [www.klasstandem.com](http://www.klasstandem.com)

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about the target group of a bilingual school: is it for monolingual or bilingual (Swedish-Finnish) pupils? It is also discussed whether the bilingual solutions should be included in the Finnish (majority language) or the Swedish (minority language) school system (see e.g. Karjalainen & Pilke, 2012; Tainio & Harju-Luukkainen, 2013). Parallel with this debate, the teaching of the second national language has been criticized for being form and grammar focused. More communicative language teaching has been demanded (Tuokko, 2009; Toropainen, 2010). Already established forms of bilingual teaching, for example immersion and other forms of bilingual cooperation, have also been included in the discussion (see e.g. Karjalainen & Pilke, 2012). One potential type of a bilingual cooperation between Swedish and Finnish schools is tandem.

Tandem learning entails that two persons with different mother tongues interact and learn each other's native languages in reciprocal cooperation. The aim of the interaction in tandem is that the participants use their target languages in interaction with a native speaker and thus get opportunities to improve their language competence. In classroom contexts, tandem is used for second language instruction in mixed language groups. Tandem learning is based on a social-interactional perspective on language learning, according to which learning and language learning are social and interactive phenomena that are situated in the social interaction between individuals (Lave, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In other words, there is a connection between language learning and social interaction; language use provides opportunities for language learning (see e.g. Kääntä, 2010; Firth & Wagner, 2007).

There are several facts that make tandem as a method for classroom teaching and subject of systematic research a current theme in the 2010's. Firstly, the national curriculum that has been valid since 2005 emphasizes the importance of communicative methods in language teaching and points out the importance of the ability to interact in the target language, as well as explicit and formal knowledge of language (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2003). As the curriculum is to be renewed by 2016, even more stress on interaction, both as an aim and as a means for learning, is to be expected. Secondly, in the discussion of and media debate about the parallel school systems for Finnish and Swedish speaking pupils, a much stronger cooperation between the language groups and schools has been demanded (Slotte-Lüttge et. al, 2013). Thirdly, there is a growing number of co-located Finnish and Swedish schools but the degree of cooperation between the schools varies a lot, and is often quite modest or even non-existent. (Sahlström et. al, 2013) Therefore there is a general need for and interest in new methods of cooperation between the two language groups.

Tandem as a method was developed in a German-French youth exchange in the 1960's (Pelz, 1995). In Finland tandem has, during the last decade, been established as a methodology for adults within adult education, where the most familiar example is FinTandem, which has been organized since 2002 in Vaasa, Finland (FinTandem, n.d.). As a consequence of positive experiences from FinTandem (Karjalainen, 2011) tandem in school context has been actualized. Since the first of January 2012, the Swedish upper secondary school Vasa gymnasium and the Finnish upper secondary school Vaasan lyseon lukio have been situated in a bilingual campus in Vaasa. Thus, the bilingual school campus provides a unique platform for research in and development of tandem in a bilingual school context. The aim of the classroom tandem project is to shed light on the use of tandem in a classroom context, by studying affordances and limitations for interaction-based learning opportunities in tandem classrooms. Furthermore, the students' and the teacher's role will be explored.

In this paper the focus is on tandem as a methodology in mixed language groups in the subjects of Finnish and Swedish as second national language. We present initial results from a study within the Classroom tandem project, focusing on the interaction of

one tandem dyad. Tandem in classroom contexts for adolescents in curriculum based programs is an almost unexplored phenomenon, even though there are some descriptions of the practical instruction methods in tandem classroom (see Holstein & Oomen-Welke, 2006). Even in schools where classroom tandem has an established position in the school's curriculum based language program it has not been the object of empirical research.

The aim of this paper is to outline classroom tandem by comparing it with informal tandem learning contexts and other language instruction methods. Furthermore, we shed light on the classroom tandem practice by describing the interaction of one tandem dyad. Research in informal tandem interaction has shown that situations where tandem partners orient to and explicitly topicalize different language aspects create possibilities to develop language competence (Apfelbaum, 1993; Rost-Roth, 1995; Karjalainen, 2011). By language topicalization, we mean digressions where the participants switch focus in their interaction from the discussion content to language form (e.g. lexicon, morpho-syntax, pronunciation) and then return to the original subject matter (cf. Karjalainen, 2011, p. 169). By focusing on topicalizations of different language aspects, we aim to build a greater understanding of the interaction and learning situations as well as the roles of the partners in a tandem classroom.

#### *Tandem learning in a classroom context*

Language learning in tandem implies that the target language is learned via authentic interaction situations with a native speaker (NS) of the target language, in reciprocal cooperation. This means that in tandem two persons with different native languages form a tandem dyad and learn from each other. (Brammerts, 2003) Partners in tandem dyads function, in turns, both as a second language learner in their target language, and as a model and resource in their native language (Karjalainen, 2011). Both languages function in turns as the target language and have thus equal status in tandem learning, both in classroom and in informal contexts.

The participants in tandem are not language teachers but native speakers. They should not be expected to be able to explain all grammatical rules in their native languages. The native speaker's expert role is built on their implicit knowledge about their native language and its use. They know how to express themselves in different situations, even if they can't always explain why to use that specific word or grammatical form. (cf. Brammerts & Kleppin, 2003, pp. 97–102; Karjalainen, 2011, p. 41) Participants in informal tandem forms decide their learning aims and means themselves, so the presence of a formal language teacher, a curriculum, and formal evaluation in classroom tandem opens an interesting and important discussion about the teacher's role in relation to the principle of learner autonomy in tandem.

#### *Tandem principles and different tandem forms*

The concept of tandem language learning is based on two principles: the principle of autonomy and the principle of reciprocity (Brammerts, 2003). The former implies that the individual learners decide what and how they want to learn and also monitor their own learning, i.e. act in accordance with learner autonomy. Learner autonomy means, by a generally accepted definition, 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981, p. 3; Little, 2007, p. 14). The learner can do this e.g. by deciding aims for learning, the content of learning, materials, methods, practical arrangements and by evaluating his/her own progress (Holec, 1981). However, learner autonomy should not be confused with working independently, alone, or without a teacher (Little, 1991; Karjalainen, 2011, pp. 23–26). As Little (2007, p. 14) states, learner autonomy is nowadays not understood as doing something by oneself but rather doing something

for oneself. Neither is learner autonomy an inborn skill, thus it has to be trained gradually, e.g. with support from a teacher (Holec, 1981).

The other tandem principle, principle of reciprocity is accomplished when both partners in a tandem dyad benefit equally from the cooperation, in practice they use equal amount of time and effort on both languages (Brammerts, 2003, p. 14). Although all tandem forms are based on these principles, especially the grade of autonomy depends on the target group. Thus the tandem forms directed to younger learners build more on developing learners' capability to steer and monitor their own learning than on them actually planning the whole learning process. Also the fact of informal v. formal language studies weighs in on the question of the grade of autonomy in tandem courses and classes. Formal language education is often more curriculum based and teacher driven, which also restricts the possibilities for full learner autonomy in all aspects.

The amount of formal instruction and control in tandem courses can vary depending on the aim and arrangement. The most informal forms of tandem include just the finding of a suitable tandem partner, leaving all the rest of the learning process (planning, executing, and evaluating) to the participants themselves. On the other end of this scale there are courses within formal education context where the teacher (and possibly an official curriculum) controls all aspects of the learning process. Even in the courses that follow a curriculum the goal should always be on involving the participants and developing their capability for autonomous learning by letting them plan, steer and evaluate their own learning as much as possible. How much freedom and responsibility that can be placed upon the learners themselves depends both on their age and experience of autonomous learning, and on the course setting, i.e. is there a curriculum that has to be followed.

The aspects of communicating a meaning and focusing on language form are combined in a unique way in tandem (Schmelter, 2004, p. 15), which combines the advantages of both informal and formal language learning situations (Rost-Roth, 1995, p. 132). This fact manifests itself for example in situations where NS corrects the non-native speaker (NNS) or asks for clarifications etc. Whereas corrections in other NS–NNS discussions would be considered impolite and face threatening, in tandem this is not only allowed but desirable for the language learning goal, and hence a common trait of the interaction (cf. Rost-Roth, 1995, p. 132). Apfelbaum (1993, p. 193) points out that even in tandem most corrections are nevertheless done in situations where the second language speaker initiates a problem in language production or otherwise orients to language form. Also all kinds of metalinguistic discussions that arise from the actual interaction situation are desirable in tandem, whereas they could be regarded as too time-consuming in everyday NS–NNS discussions where the goal is merely to get the message through (Karjalainen, 2011, p. 35). The fact that both partners get to act as both learner (in L2) and expert (in L1) also helps in creating an atmosphere where the participants trust each other and dare appeal for and receive corrections and support from each other, without interpreting it as face threatening. Support and corrections can also be more individualized in tandem dyads than in larger groups as the participants themselves can decide what aspects they want to focus on. (Kötter, 2003, p. 147; Karjalainen, 2011)

#### *Classroom tandem*

Classroom tandem is characterized as language instruction within language lessons that includes also explicit grammar instruction. Classroom tandem follows a curriculum, so that the overall aims and evaluation principles are the same for all learners. The competence to participate in interaction in the target language is an overall aim for all

language-teaching forms. In classroom tandem, interaction also functions as the main mean for the learning process. The primary language model is the native speaker in the tandem dyad, who acts as a model and an expert in the target language, but also the teacher's role as an expert in both language and content is significant. Also other students with the same native language are present in the classroom but interaction with them is not the main ambition in classroom activities.

The similarities and differences between informal tandem, regular language instruction, content-based language instruction, and informal interaction with target language users are discussed in Karjalainen (2011, pp. 31–37). Informal tandem is characterized by the presence of a native language speaker who is not a language teacher but who is willing to focus on the language learning process and language form as well as on the content. In informal tandem there is no teacher or other target language learners present, the learner has strong learner autonomy and total freedom to decide which topics or language aspects to focus on. The difference between this and to other discussions with native target language speakers is that the aspect of language learning is present all the time, and should thus be in focus. Informal tandem can hence be described as authentic target language interaction for learning purposes.

Classroom tandem is also based on cooperation between two persons with different native languages. Nevertheless, classroom tandem differs significantly from informal tandem. In classroom tandem a language teacher is present as well as other target language learners. The aims, means for learning, and evaluation are defined by the teacher, based on the curriculum. This means that the grade of learner autonomy is more restricted than in informal tandem. Even if the teacher stays mainly in the background in the classroom, the responsibility of the planning and evaluation is on the teacher. There is also more cooperation with other learners and native speakers of the target language. This makes it possible for both teachers and students to compare the students' language skills and development with other students, whereas in informal tandem contexts the evaluation of the learning process is entirely individual and made by the learner him/herself. These facts influence the whole learning context and should therefore be taken into account when discussing classroom tandem for language learning.

The significant difference when comparing classroom tandem with other language classroom contexts, like regular language instruction or content-based instruction methods like immersion and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (see table 1 for more information about immersion and CLIL e.g. in Baker, 2011, pp. 239–246), is the presence of and the interaction with a native speaking student. This implies that the interaction with other students with the same native language is not as important in classroom tandem as in regular or content-based language instruction, where other learners and the teacher are the primary interaction partners. Also the teacher's role in classroom tandem differs from other classroom contexts where teachers function as the main language model (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, pp. 110–114), while in classroom tandem the teacher's role is more to support students to use their native speaking partners as language experts and models. The teacher is an expert in both the tandem method and in explicit language instruction, as well as in evaluating the students' development.

The comparison of classroom tandem with regular and content-based instruction methods also shows differences beyond the presence of a native speaker. As in content-based instruction, interaction in classroom tandem, is also both an aim and a means for learning. Interaction as means for language learning and teaching implies that all parts of language, also grammar, are mostly learned implicitly by using them in social interaction. This is characteristic especially for immersion. (Lightbown & Spada,

2006, pp. 110–114; Baker, 2011, pp. 239–246) In regular language instruction there is more explicit instruction on grammar, whereas the interactional competence is not used mainly as means for learning, but more as an overall aim of the language education. In classroom tandem the implicit grammar learning is combined with explicit grammar instruction, and thus classroom tandem includes features of both regular and content-based instruction methods. In table 1 we present an overview of central aspects of these language learning and teaching contexts and illuminate the comparison. The starting point for this overview is classroom tandem that is compared to three other learning contexts.

Table 1. *Overview on different language learning and teaching contexts. CLIL = Content and Language Integrated Learning; L2 = second language; TL = target language.*

	<b>Classroom tandem</b>	<b>Regular language instruction (traditional classroom context)</b>	<b>Content-based language instruction (Immersion, CLIL)</b>	<b>Tandem language learning, informal contexts</b>
<b>Interaction partner</b>	- Native speaker of TL - Language teacher - Other TL learners	- Language teacher - Other TL learners	- Language teacher - Other TL learners	- Native speaker of TL
<b>Interaction and language function as</b>	- Aim for learning - Means for learning	- Aim for learning	- Aim for learning - Means for learning	- Aim for learning - Means for learning
<b>Grammar instruction</b>	- Explicit teaching - Implicitly but systematically through using TL in interaction and assignments	- Explicit teaching	- Implicitly but systematically through using TL in interaction and assignments	- Implicitly through using TL in interaction
<b>Type of lessons</b>	- Language lessons	- Language lessons	- All school subjects	--
<b>Curriculum</b>	- National	- National	- National	--
<b>Language model an expert</b>	- Native speaker of TL - Teacher	- Teacher	- Teacher	- Native speaker of TL

Tandem language learning can be described with a metaphor of riding a tandem bicycle, two persons working together to move forward. According to learner autonomy the learning partner should be steering the bicycle while the native speaker gives instructions on how to orient oneself in the target language landscape. Both partners' efforts are needed in both languages so that pedaling doesn't get too energy consuming for one partner, thus the principle of reciprocity. In tandem the point is not just to move forward, but the travelling itself is also an important part of the experience, i.e. the interaction is not only a means to learn but also has an absolute value in itself. (Karjalainen, 2011, pp. 1, 209)

In classroom tandem the partners in a tandem dyad are not alone on their way to the target language landscape. With them they have both the rest of the class, i.e. other tandem dyads, and two language teachers, one in each language. The whole class can be seen as one big tandem team that has the same time schedule for their journey to the same destination. But they do not have to proceed at the same tempo all the time, rather they should have the same destination but take in account their own strengths and weaknesses and focus on developing them. The teacher's role in classroom tandem is interesting, as s/he can be seen at the same time both as a coach and as a judge in a competition. Teachers set goals for their students, according to curriculum, explain these goals to students and give them material and support to achieve them. They also evaluate the learning process and results and give the students feedback and grades.

### **Method**

The empirical data of the classroom tandem project is collected within the teaching of the second national language (Finnish and Swedish), which is an obligatory subject in schools in Finland. In upper secondary schools the students can, in addition to the compulsory courses, also choose optional courses in the second national language. Even these courses follow the overall goals of the national curriculum.

The data used in this paper is from an optional course in a bilingual upper secondary school campus in a bilingual city. The course was organized in the Autumn term of 2012 for two periods of six weeks each. During the first period, the students attended one tandem lesson a week, and during the second period, two lessons a week. The course was organized so that lessons were held alternatively in Finnish, then Swedish (all-in-all 17 lessons of 75 minutes). Altogether 26 students, aged 16–18, participated in this tandem class, 13 with Swedish as L1 and 13 with Finnish as L1. The teachers organized the students into tandem dyads and the students worked the whole course with the same tandem partner. This division was based on a) a questionnaire on interests that are preferably somewhat similar, and b) students' previous grades in the target language, so that they would be approximately on the same level. If one of the partners was absent the students were directed to join another dyad for that class, but the basic work form was in the same dyad throughout the whole course.

The empirical data collected for this study consists of video recordings of all the interactions of one tandem dyad during the whole optional tandem course. This tandem dyad consists of two girls, Elina (Finnish as native language) and Josefina (Swedish as native language). They both have good grades in their target languages. The data was recorded with one video camera and one external microphone. The lessons have been recorded with the camera close to the tandem dyad so the gestures and gazes are fairly observable and the talk is clearly audible thanks to the external microphone. The external microphone was always placed on the L2 student. One researcher recorded the lessons from beginning to end.

The data has been coded with a focus on situations where the tandem partners orient to and explicitly topicalize language form in their interaction. Topicalizing language means that the dyads' focus is moved from meaning, which is mediated by language, to language itself. Tandem as a learning method is based on dual focus on meaning and language form (Rost-Roth, 1995; Schmelter, 2004, p. 15; Karjalainen, 2011). The data has been transcribed and analyzed using conversation analytical (CA) conventions. Talk and non-verbal actions like gestures, gaze, movement and use of artifacts are in focus in the analysis. The examples discussed are chosen to resemble topicalizations of different language aspects, e.g. lexicon, morphosyntax, graphology, and phonology, in both target languages Finnish and Swedish. The questions to be

answered are a) what language aspects the partners orient to and topicalize, and b) which partner initiates the language topicalizations.

## Results

The aim of this analysis is to give an overall view of how participants in one tandem dyad orient to and topicalize language in their interaction. We have chosen to focus on language topicalizations because they often lead to metalinguistic discussions with a partner with more expertise in the target language. These kinds of negotiations of meaning, where also language form can be focused on, have proved to create opportunities for language learning (Rost-Roth, 1995; Suni, 2008; Lilja, 2010; Karjalainen, 2011). The examples are chosen to represent both tandem languages and topicalizations of different language aspects. We are going to analyze both the second language speaker's and the native speaker's orientation towards different language aspects. The analysis also gives more information about the partners' roles in a tandem dyad.

The first example is from a Swedish lesson at the beginning of the course. Elina (E) and Josefina (J) sit in the classroom and discuss their families, favorite food, where they would like to travel and so on. The questions are based on task instructions on a paper given by the teacher. The purpose of the oral exercise during this lesson is that the tandem partners get to know each other better. Elina is now telling Josefina about what she did last weekend.

### *Example 1: mökki*

- 1 E: *ja va kanske med mina (.) ko|mpisar*  
*I was maybe with my (.) fri|ends*
- 2 J: |((nickar))  
|(( nods ))
- 3 E: (.) *oj vi va på min ö: (.) ena kompisens ö: |va e de*  
*(.) oh we were at my ehm(.) one friend's ehm: |what is it*
- 4 |((ser uppåt))  
|(( gaze up ))
- 5 (1.0) |*mökki*  
*(1.0) |summer cottage*
- 6 |((ser mot J))  
|((gaze at J))
- 7 J: *villa*  
*summer cottage*
- 8 E: |*jäå villa* |*just de*  
|*yes summer cottage* |*that's right*
- 9 |((nickar en gång))  
|(( nods once ))
- 10 J: |((nickar)) |*oke:j (.) de e ju kul*  
|(( nods )) |*oka:y (.) that's fun*

Elina is telling Josefina that she was at her friend's summer cottage. In line 3, Elina initiates a word-search for the Swedish word *villa* ('summer cottage') as she hesitates

(ö:, which is followed by a pause). Elina then continues by saying *ena kompisens* ('one friend's'), which is followed by more hesitation ö: and an explicit question *va e de* ('what is it'), while she looks away as she is thinking. But in line 5 she asks Josefina for help by turning gaze to her and code switching to Finnish, *mökki* (line 5). Josefina responds by providing the Swedish word *villa*. Elina responds with a confirming *jåå* ('yes') and repeats aloud the Swedish word *villa*, in line 8.

In this situation, the word-search is initiated by the second language speaker, and repaired by the native speaker. This is a typical example of word-searches in second language discussions (e.g. Brouwer, 2003; Kurhila, 2003). The second language speaker initiates a language topicalization, in this situation, a word-search, and the native speaker responds by providing the word in the target language, which is in the next turn repeated by the second language speaker. The repetition can be seen as an orientation towards language learning (cf. Lilja, 2010, p. 209). Focus in oral activities is often on the lexical level. Immediately after the language/lexical problem, e.g. the word-search, is solved, the discussion continues. This interaction pattern with dual focus on both language and content is typical also in informal tandem contexts (Karjalainen, 2011, pp. 168–172).

Word-search is not the only lexical aspect topicalized in the data. The following example is from a Finnish lesson. Josefina interviews Elina about her background and writes down the answers on a paper. This will later be written to a personal portrait on a computer. In the following example Elina answers the question about where she lives, which is in a "rintamamiestalo", a Finnish word for a type of detached house built after the Second World War for the families of soldiers who fought in the frontlines.

*Example 2: rintamamiestalo*

- 1 E: |joo vaalean: |keltaisessa  
|yes in a light |yellow
- 2 J: |keltaisessa (.) niin mitä sä sanoit  
|yellow (.) what did you say
- 3 E: |vanhassa rintamamiestalossa  
|in an old rintamamiestalo
- 4 |((ler ))  
|((smiles))
- 5 J: |vanhassa (.) rintamamies?  
|in an old (.) rintamamies?
- 6 |((skriver och stavar ))  
|((writing and spelling))
- 7 E: |£joo£ (.) se on semmonen  
|yes (.) it is like
- 8 |((fnissar))  
|((giggles))
- 9 J: ((fnissar, skriver)) |miestalossa (1.0)  
((giggles, writes)) |miestalossa (1.0)

- 10                   |(( stavar ))  
                      |((spelling))
- 11 |okei  
    |okay
- 12 |((pustar ut))  
    |(( exhales ))
- 13 E: |semmonen semmonen ku (.) silloin sodan aikaan  
      |it is like like a (.) back in time during the war
- 14 rakennettiin semmosii tietynlaisia taloja semmosii  
      they built those kind of special types of houses
- 15 |(tiettyihin kyliin)  
    |(in some villages )
- 16 J: |ahaa  
      |ahaa
- 17 E: nii se on |semmonen (.) semmonen aika vanhahko (.) talo  
      so it is |kind of (.) kind of old (.) house
- 18 J:     |oke:i  
          |oka:y
- 19 o:i (.) ((skrattar lite)) (.) |okei (.) öö  
    o:h (.) (( chuckles )) (.) |okay (.) ehm
- 20                   |((orienterar sig mot att gå  
21                   vidare med uppgiften))  
                      |((orienting to proceed  
                      with the task))

In line 1, Elina tells Josefina where she lives. At the same time Josefina is writing down the answer. In line 2 Josefina interrupts Elina, by repeating her last word *keltaisessa* ('in a yellow') and asking *niin mitä sä sanoit* ('what did you say'). Elina answers *in an old "rintamamiestalo"* and smiles. Josefina writes and spells aloud the word *rintamamiestalo*, emphasizing the first word "*rintama*" ('frontline'). She orients to the word *rintamamies* (someone who fought in the frontline, a veteran') by repeating it with a questioning intonation. Elina responds with a confirming *joo* ('yes'), whereby she starts explaining the meaning of the word in Finnish and giggles (line 7). Josefina continues spelling and writing "*rintamamiestalossa*" (line 9). When the writing is completed, which Josefina expresses by saying *okei* ('okey') (line 11) and exhaling (line 12), Elina continues explaining the meaning of the word (lines 13–19), while Josefina responds with *ahaa* (line 16) and *okei* (line 18). They chuckle together, whereby Josefina orients to proceeding with the task in focus.

In this example, the tandem partners orient to the word *rintamamiestalo*, but on different aspects of the word. The language topicalization initiated by the second language learner is about what word it is and how it is spelled, i.e. the language form (line 2 and 5). The native speaker, on the other hand, interprets the situation as a question about the meaning of the word (i.e. semantics) *rintamamiestalo* (line 7). It is

not observable, whether the meaning of the word is a problem for the second language speaker or not. Nevertheless, Josefina focuses on continuing the task in question instead of the metalinguistic discussion. This shows that the orientation of the tandem partners is not always towards the same thing: language form and content (cf. Karjalainen, 2011, pp. 145–168).

Example 3 is from a Finnish lesson in the beginning of the course. Elina and Josefina write tandem contracts according to the teacher's instruction. In the tandem contracts they agree on what kind of linguistic support they want from each other and how they should contact each other outside school during the tandem course. In the following example they work with the contract in Finnish so Josefina, as the learner of Finnish, is writing.

*Example 3: toisillemme*

- 1 J: o(do)tas nyt (.) lähetetään tekstiviestiä  
hey wait (.) we will send a text message
- 2 (2.0) |toisianne.  
(2.0) |each other
- 3 |((stavar))  
|((spelling, incorrect expression))
- 4 (.) voiko näin sanoa?  
(.) can you say like this?
- 5 E: |lähetetään tekstiviestiä toisianne  
|send a text message each other
- 6 |((läser))  
|((reading))
- 7 (.) ei (.) laita mieluummin että (.) eeh (2.0)  
(.) no (.) it could rather be like (.) ehm (2.0)
- 8 |lähetetään tekstiviesti toisillemme  
|send a text message to each other
- 9 |((korrekt uttryck))  
|((correct expression))
- 10 J: okei (.) |toi (5.0) noin?  
okay (.) |that(5.0) like that?
- 11 |((stavar och skriver))  
|((spelling and writing))
- 12 E: joo |ja sitte ota toi ä (tuolta) pois  
yes |and then take that "ä" away
- 13 |((pekar))  
|((points at a letter))
- 14 ((J fnissar, E ler))  
((J giggles, E smiles))
- 15 E: suomen kieli on vähän |(. (outoa)

*Finnish is kind of |(.) (strange)*

16 J: |*nii se kirjoittaminen on väh*  
|*yeah writing is kind o*

17 (2.0) ((*suckar*))  
(2.0) ((*sighs*))

Elina and Josefina have agreed that they can contact each other outside school by sending text messages. In line 1 Josefina starts saying *odotas nyt* ('hey wait'), which can be seen as hesitation and orientation to language. While Josefina is writing, she is spelling aloud, in line 1–3. When she comes to the word *toisianne* ('to each other'), she hesitates, which can be noticed from a two second pause, before speaking the word aloud (line 2). The sentence *we will send a text message to each other* ('lähetetään tekstiviesti toisillemme') is expressed incorrectly in Finnish. Both the Finnish word *tekstiviestiä* ('text message') and *toisianne* ('each other') are in an incorrect morpho-syntactic form. Immediately after a micro pause, Josefina requests for help from the native speaker Elina, *voiko näin sanoa* ('can you say like this') (line 4). Elina reads Josefina's incorrect expression aloud (line 5) and says 'no' before she starts correcting the sentence, in lines 7–8. Elina orients first to the expression *toisianne* ('each other') and says *laita mieluummin että lähetetään tekstiviesti toisillemme* ('it could rather be like send a text message to each other'). Josefina continues writing, corrects the text and requests for confirmation by saying *noin* ('like that') (line 10). Elina responds with a confirming *joo* ('yes'), but continues immediately after by pointing out an incorrect conjugation of the word *tekstiviestiä* ('text message') by saying *ja sitte ota toi ä tuolta pois* ('and then take that ä away') in line 12. After this they both smile and giggle together. Finally, Elina points out that the Finnish language is kind of strange (lines 15–16).

The language aspects the tandem partners orient to in their interaction in this text-based activity is about morpho-syntactic forms in Finnish. A metalinguistic discussion initiated by the second language learner leads to topicalizations of several language aspects by the native speaker. At first, the second language speaker Josefina asks about the whole sentence (*can you say like this*), which is responded to by the native speaker Elina, who topicalizes the incorrect form (*toisianne*). After the correction the second language speaker requests confirmation (*like that*). The native speaker confirms, but orients immediately after this, in the same turn, to another language aspect, by correcting the word *tekstiviestiä* ('text message'). This shows how Elina (in line 12) orients to the role of a language expert in her native language, whereas she at the same time tries to soften the face-threatening by pointing out that Finnish is a strange language.

The following example is from a Swedish lesson, where Elina and Josefina sit in the classroom working on a computer with a Swedish text about Josefina's background. In the text there are two words with incorrect spelling, *blott* instead of the Swedish word *blått* ('blue') and *Vestervik* instead of the Swedish place name *Västervik*.

*Example 4: blått me å västervik med ä*

1 E: *de e fel*

*it's wrong*

2 ((*E och J skrattar*))

((*E and J laugh*))

3 E: |(*hon*)

- |(*she*)
- 4 J: |(*läser texten tyst för sig själv*)  
|(*reading the text quietly for herself*)
- 5 J: |*ööh blått skriver man me Å*  
|*ehm "blue" should be written with an Å*
- 6 |(*pekar på skärmen*)  
|(*points at the screen*)
- 7 E: *åhå ja*  
*oh yes*
- 8 J: (*fnissar*)  
(*giggles*)
- 9 (3.0)
- 10 J: *å: västervik e me Å*  
*a:nd västervik should be with an Å*
- 11 (.) *där i början*  
(.) *there in the first part*
- 12 E: *åhå ja*  
*oh yes*
- 13 J: |*men de e ju såndä int egentligen viktiga saker men*  
|*but those things are not actually that important but*
- 14 |(*viftar med handen*)  
|(*waves her hand*)
- 15 (*E och J fnissar*)  
(*E and J giggle*)
- 16 E: *ja (.) okej (.) öö*  
*yes(.) okey (.) ehm*

Elina initiates a language topicalization in the text by saying *det är fel* ('it is incorrect') (line 1), possibly based on automatic correction markings on the computer screen, whereby they laugh together. Josefina reads the text quietly to herself, responds by orienting to the incorrect spelling of the Swedish word, "blott" (blue), hesitates, and says *blått skriver man me Å* ('"blue" should be written with an Å'). Elina responds by a confirming *åhå ja* ('oh yes'), whereby Josefina giggles. After a pause of three seconds Josefina continues her orientation towards language aspects in the text by commenting that *västervik e me Å* ('Västervik should be with an Å') (line 10). Elina responds once again by a confirming *åhå ja* ('oh yes'). Josefina continues by pointing out that those things, graphemes, are not actually so important and waves her hand. They both giggle together.

The language aspects the tandem partners orient to in their interaction in this text activity are about spelling (graphemes) in Swedish. The grapheme å is not used in Finnish as the corresponding phonemes [ɔ] and [o:] are written by the grapheme o. In Swedish the phoneme [ɛ], as in the word *Västervik*, can be written with both graphemes ä and e depending on the surrounding graphemes, whereas in Finnish the

most phonemes are represented by their own graphemes (ISK, 2004, p. 41), and the grapheme ä stands for [æ] and e for [e].

A language topicalization is initiated by the second language speaker Elina (line 1), whereby the native speaker Josefina makes two corrections of the Swedish spelling, lines 5 and 10. As in the example 3 (toisillemme), the single initiation to a metalinguistic discussion, made by the second language speaker, leads to an orientation towards several language aspects. Also in this example the native speaker orients to the role of a language expert in her native language, whereby she tries to soften the face-threatening by pointing out that spelling is not actually so important.

Also the next example is from a Swedish lesson. This time the tandem pair sits in a computer class working with a Swedish text about FinTandem (a tandem language course arranged in Vaasa). The Finnish students are supposed to read the text aloud. The task is to focus on and discuss Swedish pronunciation. The pronunciation of Swedish and Finnish differs from each other, which can cause problems, especially for Finnish learners of Swedish as L2. According to the teacher's instruction the Swedish-speaking students are supposed to correct their partners.

*Example 5: arrangerat*

- 1 E: okej (.) så ska jag börja?  
okey (.) so shall I start?
- 2 J: ja-a  
yes
- 3 E: eeh |sedan några år har vasa ar (.) betarin- institut  
ehm |for a few years vasa ar (.) betarin- institut has
- 4 (.) arrangerat  
(.) arranged
- 5 |((läser från pappret, inkorrekt uttal på "arrangerat"))  
|((reading from a paper, incorrect pronunciation on  
"arranged"))
- 6 (.) hu s (.)  
(.) how (.)
- 7 hu |ska man  
how |is it
- 8 J: |arrangerat  
|arranged
- 9 |((korrekt uttal))  
|((correct pronunciation))
- 10 E: |arrangerat en språkkurs som kallas för tandem  
|arranged a language course that is called tandem
- 11 |((fortsätter läsa, med korrekt uttal))  
|((reading, correct pronunciation))

Elina starts reading the text aloud, in line 3. When she comes to the Swedish word *arrangera* ('arrange'), she is unsure of the pronunciation of the word, which can be noticed from her hesitation, a micro pause both before and after speaking the word aloud. Elina's pronunciation of the word *arrangerad* ('arranged'), in line 4, is incorrect. Immediately after speaking the word aloud, she recognizes that the pronunciation was incorrect and requests help by saying *hu ska man* ('how is it'). Josefina responds by pronouncing the word aloud in a correct way, in line 8. Elina responds by repeating the word *arrangera*, this time with a correct pronunciation, whereby she immediately continues reading the text aloud (line 10).

In this situation, the language aspects the tandem partners orient to in their interaction is about pronunciation of a Swedish word, i.e. spoken language. Despite the fact that the tandem partners are supposed to correct each other in this oral pronunciation exercise, the correction is not initiated by the native speaker. The language topicalization, in this case the question about the pronunciation of the Swedish word *arrangera* ('arrange'), is initiated by the second language speaker, and responded to by the native speaker. Even in this context, where the corrections initiated by the native speaker are encouraged by the teacher, the tandem dyad follows the tandem principle of autonomy, i.e. it is the second language speaker who decides which language aspects he/she orients to in their interaction (see chapter Tandem principles and different tandem forms).

Immediately after the correction, made by the native speaker, the second language speaker continues reading the text aloud and the pronunciation exercise goes on. In other words the language topicalization does not lead to any further metalinguistic discussion on pronunciation principles in Swedish.

## Discussion

The analysis of the empirical data presented in this paper shows that the language topicalizations made by the tandem dyad vary depending on the classroom activity they are engaged in. In text-based activities, the students are engaged in reading, writing or reworking a text. However, text-based activities do not exclude oral interaction between the tandem partners, or even focus on aspects of spoken language. This can be seen e.g. in example 5 where Elina and Josefina are engaged in a text-based activity, reading aloud. The purpose of this text-based activity is to train pronunciation, i.e. focus is on a spoken language aspect. As a matter of fact, in most activities and in almost all examples presented in this paper, oral and text-based activities are combined. The students either discuss something that they write down (examples 2 and 3), re-work a text by discussing and rewriting it (example 4) or read a text aloud (example 5). The purely oral activities are represented by example 1, where Elina and Josefina discuss different questions that the teachers have planned to help the students get to know each other. Even in purely oral activities in the analyzed data, the teachers most often give questions as the starting point for the students' discussions. The nature of these activities is, nevertheless, oral activity.

In oral activities the typical focus on language is on lexicon: the second language speaker is searching for a word and the native speaker's role is to help find the word. This is mostly marked by direct requests for help and code switching, as in example 1. This resembles the results of research in informal tandem dyads' oral interaction (Karjalainen, 2011). In oral activities in the data analyzed for this study, there are no documented cases where the native speaker corrects the second language speaker's language production or choice of words without the second language speaker first initiating the metalinguistic discussion, e.g. by using hesitation markers or explicit questions. Also, in text-based activities, it is unusual for the native speaker to correct

the second language speaker without the second language speaker herself initiating a metalinguistic discussion in general. This can be done by hesitating or mentioning that there is something wrong in the produced text (see example 4). The fact that the focus on language is most often initiated by the second language speaker is in line with the tandem principle of learner autonomy. According to the principle of autonomy, it is the second language learner who chooses which language aspects s/he wants to focus on, and what kind of support, feedback and corrections s/he wishes to get from the native speaker partner. (see chapter Tandem principles and different tandem forms).

There is a significant difference in how the native speaker orients to the language expert role in text-based activities and oral activities. In oral activities the native speaker mostly “acts as a dictionary”, i.e. helps the second language speaker to find a word that she is searching for. After finding a mutual understanding, the partners orient to the content and continue the discussion. In text-based activities the native speaker more often takes an active expert role by correcting and explaining different language aspects, e.g. lexicon, graphology, morphology, and syntax. (cf. Little, 2003.) The starting point for metalinguistic discussions that include corrections and explanations is often initiated by the second language speaker, but the discussions tend to extend to more than one aspect at one time. This means that once the second language speaker orients to language form in general, the native speaker not only focuses on one aspect, but comments on several aspects on her own initiative. The situation develops into a chain reaction of corrections, as in example 4.

According to our understanding of the results, the difference in how actively the native speaker orients to the language expert role in oral respective text-based activities can be explained by the nature of the activity. In general, people tend to regard linguistic correctness more in detail in written language than in spoken language. The fact that there is a written text present also makes it possible to first formulate a longer text and then rewrite it by correcting and explaining several aspects at one time. Even in informal tandem, written communication (e.g. e-mails) stimulates more direct corrections and more extensive focus on language form, whereas in oral interaction the partners are more likely to focus on meaning and to overlook incorrect forms if they can understand each other (Brammerts & Calvert, 2003).

The aspects discussed in the analyzed data are typical problems for Finnish learners of Swedish as L2 and Swedish learners of Finnish as L2. Finnish and Swedish differ significantly from each other in language structure. Finnish is an agglutinative language using morphology to express relations between sentence elements, where the phonemes and graphemes correspond strongly to each other (ISK, 2004; Flyman Mattsson & Håkansson, 2010, p. 110f.). Graphology (see example 4) and pronunciation (see example 5) are typical problems for Finnish learners of Swedish as L2. In Finnish as L2, on the other hand, it is often the morpho-syntax that is problematic (see example 3). Even though also Swedish has some agglutinating features, it is a more analytical language where relations between language elements are expressed by e.g. lexical order and prepositions, and it has more variation in how different graphemes are pronounced in different contexts. (Språkrådet, 2006)

A more detailed examination of the language topicalizations, and especially correction chains (examples 3 and 4), shows that the native speaking partners tend to reduce the face threatening factor of these corrections by comments like ‘Finnish is kind of strange’ and ‘but those things are not actually that important’. This behavior is found in several situations even though the starting point in tandem learning is that the native speaking partner’s role is to support the second language learner, also by corrections. Rost-Roth (1995) and Karjalainen (2011) argue that tandem itself reduces the face threat of corrections, as the situation is built on reciprocity and the explicit aim

is to improve language skills. Corrections are used to achieve the goal of language learning and the partners change roles and thus get to act both as learners and as experts. This makes the situation equal and thus reduces the face threat. The fact that both tandem partners in this study use explicit comments to reduce face threatening in their corrections indicates though that they experience these situations as at least potentially face threatening. This can at least to some extent be a result of their young age or inexperience in giving feedback and corrections. Further studies in aspects that are considered face threatening in classroom tandem are needed, to find out how the tandem dyads and teachers can contribute to an atmosphere where corrections and feedback are experienced as positive rather than negative threats of the interaction and learning process. Results of this paper can further be used as a ground for a discussion of how classroom activities in tandem can be arranged to create optimal learning possibilities and what the teacher's role is in tandem classrooms.

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study of classroom tandem open an interesting language didactics discussion about how tandem in formal education can be organized in an optimal way in the classroom. We have outlined classroom tandem in relation to other language learning and instruction contexts. Because classroom tandem is a relatively unexplored instruction form it is important to define its characteristics and to distinguish it from other language instruction contexts with some similar features.

In classroom tandem there are three prime characteristics. Firstly, the main interaction partner is a native speaker of the target language. Secondly, the native speaker's role is to function as an expert in the target language and to be a language model and support for the second language learner. The language expertise in tandem should not be mixed with a linguist's explicit knowledge of language, as this is not a requirement in tandem. Instead, the native speaker knows how s/he, as a language user of the same age, would express her-/himself in that situation. Thirdly, an important feature of classroom tandem is that it is arranged in mixed language groups where both groups, and thus both partners in a tandem dyad, aim to learn from each other. They take turns in acting as the learning respectively supporting partner, which makes the cooperation reciprocal and equal. This reduces the face-threatening situation of asking questions about language and corrections. However, our analysis shows that even in this situation, partners in a tandem dyad use strategies to decrease the face threatening fact when correcting each other. This shows how sensitive it is to correct one's discussion partner in an authentic interaction situation.

The interaction between the partners is central in tandem language learning. Therefore we have focused on analyzing the interaction in one focus tandem dyad. We have studied how partners in this tandem dyad orient to language and topicalize different aspects of language and how the native speaking partner orients to the expert role in these situations.

Based on detailed analyses of the language in use, we have described specific social situations in the tandem classroom, both oral and text-based activities that create possibilities for second language interaction and learning. Orientation towards language form and topicalizations of different language aspects are an important part of tandem dyads' cooperation. They lead to metalinguistic discussions, which have proved to create opportunities for language learning (e.g. Suni, 2008; Lilja, 2010; Karjalainen, 2011). In tandem, the partners can focus on the specific language aspects that the second language learner finds necessary, interesting or difficult in that context, and that s/he is thus motivated to learn. As the tandem partners themselves choose which aspects to focus on, an analysis of language topicalizations also affords more

information about what aspects they have the possibility of learning. This is especially important in a formal tandem form like classroom tandem, where the aims for learning are set by a curriculum that is the same for all participants. Further research on language learning possibilities in classroom tandem and how the learning processes are constructed over time are of special interest in the Classroom tandem project in the future. It is also important to deepen the understanding of the teacher's role in classroom tandem contexts.



### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our gratitude to The Harry Schauman Foundation for the economical support for Classroom tandem project during the academic year 2012–2013.

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