



Child-to-child interaction and corrective feedback during eTandem ESL–FSL chat exchanges

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Abstract

This study examined the role of corrective feedback in the context of an English as a second language (ESL) and French as a second language (FSL) eTandem chat exchange involving Grade 6 students. The students were enrolled in intensive programs in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario and had an elementary to low-intermediate level of language proficiency. Tasks were completed on a weekly basis over a 9-week period. Six tasks completed by 13 pairs were retained for analysis. The analysis showed that the ESL and FSL students provided three types of feedback: explicit feedback, recasts, and negotiation of form. Unlike the study by Morris (2005), which involved Grade 5 second language (L2) Spanish students, the preference in this study was for explicit feedback. This difference was attributed to the tandem approach which emphasizes training in how to give feedback as well as school culture. Differences between the amount of feedback provided during the ESL and FSL exchanges were also observed. Here, too, the influence of school culture appears to have been a factor. The ESL students appeared to be more positively oriented to L2 learning, reflected in a higher appreciation of the tandem learning exchange. Implications for teaching and the need of future research are discussed.

Keywords: *Computer-Mediated Communication, Telecollaboration, ICT Literacies, Social Context*

Language(s) Learned in This Study: *English, French*

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Introduction

This study reports on an eTandem language learning project that involved a chat exchange between two groups of Grade 6 ESL and FSL students. Although the tandem approach to language learning originally involved face-to-face exchanges, with the advent of the Internet online tandems—eTandems or teletandems—involving emails, chat, or videoconferencing have also emerged (for a historical overview, see Wolff, 2009). What distinguishes the tandem language learning approach is that two second language (L2) learners with different first languages (L1s) collaborate to learn their partner's first language (Brammerts, 1996; Little & Brammerts, 1996). More generally, the approach is associated with two main principles: reciprocity and autonomy. In line with the principle of reciprocity, half the exchange should be in one language, half in the other. As partners are also expected to give each other feedback, it is strongly recommended that training in this area be provided. As such, their roles alternate between that of L2 learner and that of L1 tutor. The principle of autonomy is reflected in how students assume their roles and the initiative they take in order to take advantage of the tandem partnership and learn their L2. Although most of the published research to date has focused on adults, the present study contributes to the few studies which have involved children.

Literature Review

From a linguistic point of view, chat has been described as having features which are reflective of both

written and oral language. As chat takes place in real time, it encourages students to use language more spontaneously and can thus play a role in developing fluency (Abrams, 2003; Payne & Whitney, 2002). As noted by Sauro and Smith (2010), “the chat window provides interlocutors with a more enduring and reviewable visual record of the exchange” (p. 556). Drawing on an interactionist perspective of language learning (Chapelle, 1997, 2016; Gass, 2002; Long, 1996), a number of studies have demonstrated the potential of chat for language learning, as it enables L2 learners to notice new features as well as gaps in their own interlanguage (Pellettieri, 2000; Sauro, 2012; Sauro & Smith, 2010; Shekary & Tahririan, 2006; Smith, 2004, 2005).

With respect to tandem learning, a number of studies have involved email (e.g., Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Priego, 2011; Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011) and videoconferencing (e.g., Cappellini, 2013; El-Hariri, 2016; Flick, 2013; Guillén, 2014). To our knowledge, however, only two have involved chat, both with adults: one study by Kötter (2003) and another by Bower and Kawaguchi (2011). Kötter’s (2003) study involved a tandem exchange between 15 American university students and 14 German university students. Although specific statistical analyses were not provided, Kötter reported analyzing the chat scripts to identify the forms and frequencies of negotiation of meaning. Compared to previous face-to-face studies, Kötter’s participants made more frequent use of clarification requests. The use of such requests confirmed the assumption that in such environments “students usually preferred their partners to rephrase or amend their utterances” (p. 158).

In the study by Bower and Kawaguchi (2011), 11 pairs of Japanese and Australian university students completed three open-ended discussion tasks. In contrast to the chat exchanges, much more corrective feedback was provided in follow-up emails, where students could spend more time reflecting on errors. However, regarding this feedback, the Japanese students provided substantially more metalinguistic explanations and reformulations of ungrammatical items or forms than did the Australian students. These results were attributed to the Japanese students’ high exposure to the L2 at school as well as the importance accorded to both L2 and L1 grammar instruction. By contrast, foreign language classes were not a “curricular priority” (p. 62) for the Australian participants, and grammar teaching was not emphasized for either the L2 or the L1.

With respect to tandem language learning and chat studies more generally, few have involved children. Although to our knowledge, no published tandem chat studies with children currently exist, three studies (Thurston, Duran, Cunningham, Blanch, & Topping, 2009; Tolosa, Ordóñez, & Alfonso, 2015; Tolosa, Ordóñez, & Guevara, 2017) have investigated children engaged in asynchronous online reciprocal peer tutoring exchanges. In the study by Thurston et al. (2009), 9–12-year-old students in Scotland and Catalonia wrote five texts in their L2s over an 8-week period (i.e., English and Spanish, respectively), gave each other feedback on errors in their L1, and used the feedback to correct their texts. The analysis showed that tutors were able to detect 35% of the errors in their tutees’ texts. The most frequently used correction strategy was to indicate the error and give the correction. Although no significant differences for experimental and control groups were observed for fluency or complexity in a pre- and post-writing test, the experimental group did produce significantly fewer errors. Questionnaires also revealed that both Scottish and Catalan students’ attitudes toward language learning improved significantly compared to those of the control groups. According to the authors, this finding suggested that the students found peer tutoring “a motivating real context that gave their communication meaning” (p. 470).

As in the study by Thurston et al. (2009), a study by Tolosa et al. (2017) focused on online asynchronous reciprocal peer tutoring and the completion of five texts over an 8-week period. More specifically, this study involved 27 students from New Zealand and 21 from Colombia, ages 11–14, who were all beginners of their L2s: Spanish and English, respectively. Analysis of pre- and post-writing tests showed significant differences in fluency, accuracy, and complexity for the New Zealand students and in accuracy and complexity for the Columbian students. In contrast to an earlier study (Tolosa et al., 2015), more attention was given to structuring the writing–feedback–rewriting cycle and providing students with support in terms of how to provide correction. This increased attention to training and monitoring was considered the main

reason for the observed formal gains.

In addition to the two asynchronous tandem studies referred to above, two other non-tandem studies shed light on children's ability to engage in chat activities. In a study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017), 16 10-year-old Spanish beginner level EFL children were engaged in a chat exchange with English native speakers (NSs) of the same age who were not Spanish learners. Over a 5-week period, pairs worked together to complete three jigsaw picture sequencing tasks (40 minutes per session). The NS children were instructed to help their partners use English correctly, and the non-native speakers (NNSs) to use as much English as possible and ask for help. Interactional strategies were categorized into three groups: task-specific discourse, negotiation strategies used to overcome difficulties or breakdowns in communication, and social exchanges. The greatest percentage of strategies were task-related, that is, asking for and exchanging information about each other's pictures. However, a significant proportion of negotiation strategies were also identified, in particular those related to clarification requests and self-repetition as well as seeking lexical assistance and self-correction. Recasts and explicit correction were rarely used. The mean number of negotiation episodes for all three tasks per pair ranged from 0.3 to 6.0 (overall average 2.4 for all pairs). Although successful uptake of the targeted lexis occurred infrequently, pre- and post-vocabulary tests for these items showed that children's lexical knowledge had improved significantly over time.

In Morris' (2005) study, the analysis involved 46 Grade 5 students who were learning Spanish in an immersion program in the United States. The students, who were at an intermediate and upper-intermediate level, were paired up with classmates and completed one jigsaw task in a 25-minute session without any prior modelling or training. Using pictures as a stimulus, the pairs worked together to produce "one collaborative essay" (p. 33) about an individual's routine activities. The interactions in the chat logs were coded for the types of corrective feedback, types of errors which led to feedback, and evidence of repair (i.e., uptake). Morris found that 64% of the errors which received corrective feedback were syntactic, 33% were lexical, and 3% involved L1 use. The vast majority of errors (95%) were signaled by means of negotiation of form and only 5% by recasts. None involved the use of explicit corrections. The study thus showed that child-to-child interactions during the chat exchange primarily involved implicit negative feedback similar to patterns found in face-to-face interactions. The lack of explicit feedback was further attributed to the students' reticence to be perceived by their interlocutors as "abrupt and impolite" (p. 31), as well as to a lack of formal instruction in Spanish grammar. In addition, 68% of the errors were repaired, a percentage considered high by the researchers.

In view of the dearth of studies involving children engaged in tandem learning and chat more generally, the present study investigated corrective feedback in the context of an ESL-FSL eTandem exchange involving Grade 6 children. The research questions, largely adapted from Morris (2005), were as follows:

1. Do L2 learners participating in a tandem chat exchange provide each other with corrective feedback?
 - a. during the English part of the exchange
 - b. during the French part of the exchange
2. What types of learner errors lead to what types of corrective feedback?
 - a. during the English part of the exchange
 - b. during the French part of the exchange
3. Does corrective feedback lead to uptake?
 - a. during the English part of the exchange
 - b. during the French part of the exchange
4. In the case of uptake, what types of corrective feedback lead to uptake?
 - a. during the English part of the exchange
 - b. during the French part of the exchange
5. How do the ESL and FSL students view the tandem chat exchange as a strategy for learning their L2?

Methodology

The present study is situated within a qualitative research paradigm. As noted by Patton (1987), this approach is particularly useful for “programs that are developing, innovative, or changing, where the focus is on program improvement, facilitating more effective implementation, and exploring a variety of effects on participants.” (p. 18). In the present case, the objective was to explore the implementation of an innovative teaching approach: eTandem chat exchanges with young learners. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

School Contexts and Participants

The tandem project was conducted with Grade 6 students enrolled in public school intensive language programs in towns located throughout the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Within Quebec, where French is the official language, the ESL students attended a French-medium school. By contrast, the FSL students were in an English-medium school in a primarily English-speaking area. The tandem project was thus implemented as an attempt to enable students to have contact with NSs of the language they were learning. The intensive ESL program took place during a 5-month period; students were selected based on a number of criteria (e.g., level of autonomy, interest in learning ESL, study and work habits). The FSL intensive program extended over the entire school year; students enrolled on a voluntary basis. All students in the two classes participated in the tandem exchange, specifically 26 ESL students (13 boys and 13 girls; mean age = 11.5) and 24 FSL students (10 boys and 14 girls; mean age = 12.0). Based on their teachers’ assessments, the students of both classes were at the elementary to low-intermediate level of L2 proficiency.

For this project, the ESL teacher (the first author) was also involved as a researcher, here referred to as the teacher-researcher. In terms of a qualitative paradigm, where the researcher role can vary in terms of actual involvement in the context being investigated, the teacher-researcher functioned as a full participant (Patton, 1987, p. 74). The FSL teacher was contacted by the teacher-researcher after emailing Ontario schools offering French immersion programs. The teacher-researcher also acted as a resource person to provide suggestions for tasks and technical support. As an insider with experience working with ESL students in intensive classes, she also provided insights into the interpretation of the results.

The Tasks

To facilitate interaction, students were assigned tasks that reflected real-life situations they could easily relate to (e.g., summer vacation, Halloween, Christmas, their family, their school, favorite TV shows). The instructions for the tasks were given in the students’ L1s. For each session, there were two different topics, one for the French exchange and one for the English exchange, to better ensure that the students did not run out of things to say. Students were only given a task sheet for the topic they had to ask about. In other words, they did not know what topics they would be asked about in their L2 by their partners (for an example of how the tasks were presented to students, see [Appendix A](#)). The exchange took place in the computer labs of the students’ respective schools. The Gmail chat interface was used, as it was publicity free and enabled students to easily print out copies of their chat scripts.

Data Collection Instruments

For this project, data were obtained from two sources: the chat scripts and the questionnaires. Chat scripts were printed out following each chat session and collected by the teacher-researcher. An initial questionnaire was given to all the participants to have them self-evaluate their language skills and provide information about their language backgrounds, their reasons for learning the L2, and the extent of their familiarity with computers and chat. The questionnaires were used by the teacher-researcher to pair up students. At the end of the study, a short questionnaire with Likert-type questions was administered to students in their L1 to elicit information about their personal appreciation of the chat sessions.

Data Collection Procedures

As shown in [Table 1](#), the project took place over a period of 12 weeks. Due to the limited number of

computers in the Quebec school, chat sessions were done on two different days in the same week to ensure that every student had the opportunity to have a one-on-one exchange. To respect the tandem format, the sessions were held for the first 30 minutes in one language followed by 30 minutes in the other. As the teacher-researcher was more familiar with the chat interface, it was decided that the Quebec students would invite their Ontario counterparts and initiate the sessions; the teacher-researcher monitored the time and told students when to change to the other language. Students completed 18 tasks (two per session). Due to the larger number of Quebec students, two students in this group did the chat sessions twice; these students were not included as part of the analysis. At the end of each chat session, students printed out copies of their chat scripts.

In order to keep students organized, each student was given a binder that was used to keep track of various documents including reflection forms (see [Appendix B](#)) completed at the end of each exchange. On their reflection forms, students were asked to note items they had learned while referring to their chat scripts and briefly reflect on their appreciation of the session with their partner. As recommended in previous studies, the tandem exchange was integrated into the regular classroom activities (Flick, 2013). Training was given to students to familiarize them with the goals of tandem learning and how to provide feedback (Brammerts, 1996). In this latter regard, teachers showed excerpts from a chat session and discussed how implicit feedback (e.g., recasts, reformulations) and explicit feedback could be given. A reminder to help their partners was also included on their task sheets.

Table 1. *Procedures and Scheduling used for Carrying Out the Study*

Schedule	Activities
Week 1	Information re: the tandem project given by FLS and ESL teachers to their respective students. Initial questionnaire used to form pairs completed by students. Consent forms for students and parents distributed and collected.
Week 2	Trial run sessions with computers using the Gmail chat interface. FLS and ESL students, supervised by their respective teachers, chatted with their classmates from their respective classes.
Weeks 3–11	Period during which the FLS and ESL chat sessions took place on a weekly basis with partners.
Week 12	End-of-project questionnaire administered by FLS and ESL teachers to their respective students.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted using the chat scripts of 13 pairs who had completed six of the nine chat sessions. The following terms are defined below: *corrective feedback*, *types of errors*, and *repair*. In the examples which follow, *A* refers to an Anglophone student, and *F* refers to a Francophone student.

Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback was operationalized in terms of three types: explicit correction, recasts, and negotiation of form. Explicit correction “directly and clearly indicates that what the learner has said is incorrect” (Morris, 2005, p. 34). In the present study, typical comments which served to identify explicit correction were *you should say*, *do you mean*, *you mean*, *c’est préférable de dire (it’s preferable to say)* or, *on dit (one says)*; as in [Excerpt 1](#)).

Excerpt 1. Pair 10, Session 3

A: *est ce que tu sais cette film? (Do you know [savoir] this film?)*

F: *on dit est ce que tu connais ce film (One says do you know [connaître] this film?)*

In this excerpt, the Francophone explicitly draws the Anglophone partner's attention to differences in the use of *savoir* and *connaître*, which in English can both be translated to *know*. This excerpt also illustrates reactive focus on form as the problem is signaled by the interlocutor "in response to learners' actual or perceived errors" (Ellis, 2001, p. 23). In this study, both a reactive and proactive focus on form were evidenced. Proactive focus on form refers to the teacher's or the learner's "attention to a form that is perceived to be problematic even though no production error in the use of the form or difficulty with message comprehension has arisen" (Ellis, 2001, p. 22). In [Excerpt 2](#), the Francophone student asks his partner what *spaz* means.

[Excerpt 2. Pair 6, Session 1](#)

A: *im a spaz or at least my teacher thinks I am =)*

im joking

so is my teacher is to

oops said it wrong

F: *wath??*

E: *spaz meanslike a mess =D*

F: *sorry but the first thing you said I don't understand*

E: *spaz = mess*

F: *ok!!!*

E: *mess= =0*

A recast is defined as the "immediate implicit reformulation of an ill-formed utterance" (Morris, 2005, p. 34). In [Excerpt 3](#), the Francophone student has a problem with the word order of adjectives in English.

[Excerpt 3. Pair 10, Session 2](#)

F: *What is your programme t.v. favourite???*

A: *my favourite tv programme is much*

music

However, as noted by Smith (2003), within a chat context, delays can intervene between the trigger and the response resulting in split negotiation routines. As this feature was observed in the present study, responses could be immediate or delayed.

As defined by Morris (2005), "negotiation of form provides learners with signals that facilitate peer- and self-repair rather than mere rephrasing of their utterances. Negotiations differ from explicit correction and recasts in that negotiations do not provide learners with a correct form" (p. 34). In [Excerpt 4](#), the Anglophone's request for clarification (*what*) leads the Francophone student to change the preposition *on* to *in*.

[Excerpt 4. Pair 13, Session 4](#)

F: *which persone work on your school*

A: *what*

F: *which persone work in your school*

Types of Errors

The three types of errors originally identified by Morris (2005) were syntactic, lexical, and unsolicited L1 use. In the present study, two additional types were added: lexico-syntactic and spelling. Syntactic errors referred to such items as the “lack of or use of articles, determiners, prepositions, pronouns, errors with subject–verb agreement, gender, verb morphology, pluralization, and word order” (p. 34). In the present study, an utterance was coded as having a syntactic error if only one error was involved. In [Excerpt 5](#), the Francophone student corrected his Anglophone partner’s mistake with the gender of a possessive adjective.

Excerpt 5. Pair 2, Session 3

A: *est ce que tu veux dire le nom de ton blonde (do you mean the name of your [ton] girlfriend)*

F: *ta blonde (your [ta] girlfriend)*

Lexical errors referred to such items as “inaccurate, imprecise, or inappropriate choices of lexical items and non-target derivations of nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives” (Morris, 2005, p. 34). As for the syntactic category, those coded as lexical errors were also limited to one specific occurrence within an utterance as in [Excerpt 6](#).

Excerpt 6. Pair 8, Session 2

A: *quel age est il? (how old is he?)*

F: *on dit (quel age a-t-il) il a treize ans (One says (what age has he) he has thirteen years)*

In the preceding excerpt, the Anglophone used *être* (to be) to express someone’s age in French whereas the appropriate verb would have been *avoir* (to have).

It is of note that in Morris’ original study (2005), the examples provided for syntactic and lexical errors were all very clear-cut insofar as they were limited to discrete, single occurrences within an utterance. By contrast, the data of the present study provided numerous instances when more complex reformulations of an utterance were necessary in order to correct different types of errors or more than one error in the context of a phrase or clause. To facilitate coding, a lexico-syntactic error category was created. Lexico-syntactic errors referred to phrases or clauses involving corrections of two or more syntactic or lexical errors or the use of the L1. [Excerpt 7](#) provides an example.

Excerpt 7. Pair 6, Session 2

A: *quell est ta livre preferer (What is your book prefer)*

F: *c’est préférable de dire quel est TON LIVRE PRÉFÉRÉ (it is preferable to say what is YOUR PREFERRED BOOK)*

A: oh ok

In [Excerpt 7](#), the Anglophone student made two errors: (a) *ton* (the gender of the possessive adjective in reference to *livre*) and (b) *preferer* (the form of the adjective). The Francophone student corrected both errors by reformulating the problematic phrase as *ton livre préféré*.

As defined by Morris (2005), unsolicited L1 use referred to instances when participants used their L1 when the L2 would have been more appropriate or expected. In the present study, use of the L1 was referred to as code-switching. In [Excerpt 8](#), the Anglophone’s switch to the English word *junk* was rephrased by the Francophone as *pas bon*.

Excerpt 8. Pair 11, Session 3

A: *mon ordinateur est junk (my computer is junk)*

F: *ah! Ton ordinateur est pas bon (ah! Your computer is not good)*

Although Morris (2005) did not attend to spelling errors, it was decided to include them in this study as students frequently focused on them. Correction of spelling errors within an utterance was tallied separately from other types of error corrections. In [Excerpt 7](#) for example, in addition to the correction of the lexico-syntactic error, the Francophone rewrites *quell** (*what*) as *quel*. Thus, for this episode, two types of errors were recorded: one for spelling and one for the lexico-syntactic category.

Repair

As defined by Morris (2005), repair (i.e., uptake) referred to “immediate responses to feedback” (p. 35). Repairs occurred during both reactive (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and preemptive focus on form episodes (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001). Corrective feedback can be categorized as successful (the correct form is reused) or unsuccessful (the provision of feedback is acknowledged but it is not reused by the learner; see Ellis et al., 2001). Although acknowledgements were tabulated, they were considered as no repair (or no uptake), due to the fact that it was difficult to know what the learner was referring to or whether the corrective feedback was truly noticed (Ellis et al., 2001). The uptake, especially in chat contexts (Smith, 2005), can be immediate (following the signaling of the problem) or delayed (occurring later on in the exchange after a number of turns have taken place).

Interrater reliability was ensured by having an independent researcher code 30% of the corpus for types of corrective feedback, types of errors, and instances of repair. This researcher was fluent in English and French and had a PhD in applied linguistics. Interrater agreement was 95%. The project was approved by the university ethics committee.

Results

The first research question investigated whether the L2 learners participating in the tandem chat exchange provided each other with corrective feedback. The analysis revealed a total of 370 instances of corrective feedback for the 13 pairs: 156 for the English exchanges (42.2%) and 214 (57.8%) for the French exchanges. For the six 1-hour tandem sessions, the mean number of instances per session (combined for the English and French exchanges) was 4.7. The total number per pair for the six sessions ranged from 10 to 44. As such, means per session for pairs ranged from 1.7 to 7.3. Although the numbers of instances varied, all pairs gave each other feedback in both the ESL and FSL exchanges. The results for the first research question thus confirm that Grade 6 students with an elementary to low-intermediate level of language proficiency were capable of providing each other with corrective feedback during a tandem chat exchange.

The second research question investigated what types of learner errors led to what types of corrective feedback. As shown in [Table 2](#), 61.9% of instances of corrective feedback targeted syntactic (32.2%) and lexico-syntactic errors (29.7%). Spelling errors accounted for 24.6% of the corrective feedback. Lexical errors accounted for only 10.0% of the feedback given (although they were also part of the lexico-syntactic category). As well, most of the corrective feedback provided was explicit (62.4%). Recasts accounted for 27.0% of instances of corrective feedback and negotiation of form for the fewest (10.5%).

Table 2. *Number of Instances of Corrective Feedback per Type of Error for All Pairs*

Type of Error	Type of Corrective Feedback				Total
	Explicit	Recast	Negotiation of Form		
Syntactic	72 (19.5%)	46 (12.4%)	1 (0.3%)		119 (32.2%)
Lexical	23 (6.2%)	3 (0.3%)	11 (3.0%)		37 (10.0%)
Spelling	70 (18.9%)	20 (5.4%)	1 (0.3%)		91 (24.6%)
Code-switching	6 (1.6%)	3 (0.8%)	4 (1.1%)		13 (3.5%)
Lexico-syntactic	60 (16.2%)	28 (7.6%)	22 (5.9%)		110 (29.7%)
Total	231 (62.4%)	100 (27.0%)	39 (10.5%)		370 (100.0%)

In the French chat sessions (Table 3), syntactic errors led to more than twice as many instances of corrective feedback as in the English exchanges (22.4% vs. 9.7%). In other words, the Francophone students gave considerably more feedback in response to syntactic errors than their Anglophone peers in the English exchanges. More specifically, 12.7% involved explicit feedback in the French chat exchanges compared to 6.8% in the English exchanges. In the case of recasts involving syntactic errors, the Francophone students also provided more corrective feedback during the French exchanges than the Anglophone students during the English exchanges (9.5% vs. 3.0%).

Table 3. *Number of Instances of Corrective Feedback for English and French Sessions*

Type of Error	Type of Corrective Feedback							
	Explicit		Recast		Negotiation of Form		Total	
	English	French	English	French	English	French	English	French
Syntactic	25 (6.8%)	47 (12.7%)	11 (3.0%)	35 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	36 (9.7%)	83 (22.4%)
Lexical	10 (2.7%)	13 (3.5%)	1 (0.3%)	2 (0.6%)	4 (1.1%)	7 (1.9%)	15 (4.0%)	22 (5.9%)
Spelling	37 (10.0%)	33 (8.9%)	12 (3.2%)	8 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	49 (13.2%)	42 (11.4%)
Lexico-syntactic	32 (8.6%)	28 (7.6%)	9 (2.4%)	19 (5.1%)	10 (2.7%)	12 (3.2%)	51 (13.8%)	59 (15.9%)
Code-switching	2 (0.5%)	4 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.8%)	1 (0.3%)	3 (0.8%)	3 (0.8%)	10 (2.7%)

The third research question examined whether corrective feedback led to repair. As shown in Table 4 and Table 5, corrective feedback was frequently acknowledged in both the English and French chat exchanges. Actual repair was infrequent, although it did occur in both parts of the exchange. Out of a total of 154 instances of corrective feedback in the English exchanges, only 24 involved repair (15.6%). Of the 216 instances of corrective feedback identified in the French chat exchanges, 21 (9.7%) led to repair.

The fourth research question investigated what types of corrective feedback led to repair. In the English exchanges (see Table 4), repair occurred fairly equally in terms of the different types of corrective feedback. By contrast, in the French exchanges (Table 5), negotiation of form stood out as it led to the majority of the repairs. For the combined groups, the most frequent type of corrective feedback that led to repair was negotiation of form. In the French exchanges, recasts were the least effective in terms of leading to repair.

Table 4. *Type of Corrective Feedback Leading to Repair in the English Chat Sessions*

Type of Corrective Feedback	Repair		No Repair	
			Acknowledgements	No Indicator
Explicit	7	(4.5%)	63 (40.9%)	36 (23.4%)
Recast	9	(5.8%)	12 (7.8%)	12 (7.8%)
Negotiation of Form	8	(5.2%)	5 (3.2%)	2 (1.3%)
Total	24	(15.5%)	80 (51.9%)	50 (32.5%)

Table 5. *Type of Corrective Feedback Leading to Repair in the French Chat Sessions*

Type of Corrective Feedback	Repair		No Repair	
			Acknowledgements	No Indicator
Explicit	5	(2.3%)	92 (42.6%)	28 (13.0%)
Recast	1	(0.5%)	28 (13.0%)	38 (17.6%)
Negotiation of Form	15	(6.9%)	4 (1.9%)	5 (2.3%)
Total	21	(9.7%)	124 (57.4%)	71 (32.9%)

The fifth research question investigated how the ESL and FSL students viewed the tandem chat exchange as a language learning activity. As shown in Table 6, the great majority of ESL students (91.3%) liked using the computer for learning their L2. By contrast, only 63.2% of the FSL students favored such an approach. As shown in Table 7, 69.5% of ESL students believed that chatting helped them to learn English *a lot* or *some*. By contrast, with respect to learning French, the majority of FSL learners chose *some* or *a little* (52.7%). The results thus show that the FSL students were less favorable to the use of chat for learning their L2 than the ESL students. Whereas 87.0% of ESL students said that they had reused something they had learned from the chat sessions, only 52.6% of the FSL students reported doing so (see Table 8). With respect to reading over the chat transcripts as a tool for learning, the ESL students showed a higher degree of appreciation. As shown in Table 9, more than twice as many ESL students responded *a lot* or *some* compared to the FSL students, with 65.2% and 31.2% respectively.

Table 6. *Appreciation of the Computer as a Learning Tool*

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>not at all</i>
How did you like using the computer as a tool for learning English? (<i>n</i> = 23)	19 (82.6%)	2 (8.7%)	2 (8.7%)	0 (0.0%)
How did you like using the computer as a tool for learning French? (<i>n</i> = 19)	3 (15.8%)	9 (47.4%)	5 (26.3%)	2 (10.5%)

Table 7. *Appreciation of the Use of Chat for L2 Learning*

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>not at all</i>
Do you think that chatting helped you improve your English? (<i>n</i> = 23)	9 (39.1%)	7 (30.4%)	6 (26.1%)	1 (4.3%)
Do you think that chatting helped you improve your French? (<i>n</i> = 19)	0 (0.0%)	9 (47.4%)	9 (47.4%)	1 (5.3%)

Table 8. *Appreciation of Reuse of Something Learned during Chat Sessions*

	Yes	No
Have you been able to reuse something you learned while chatting? (ESL; <i>n</i> = 23)	20 (87.0%)	3 (13.0%)
Have you been able to reuse something you learned while chatting? (FSL; <i>n</i> = 19)	10 (52.6%)	9 (47.4%)

Table 9. *Appreciation of Chat Transcripts for L2 Learning*

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>not at all</i>
Did reading over your chat transcripts help you learn more English? (<i>n</i> = 23)	9 (39.1%)	6 (26.1%)	8 (34.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Did reading over your chat transcripts help you learn more French? (<i>n</i> = 19)	0 (0.0%)	6 (31.6%)	8 (42.1%)	5 (26.3%)

Discussion

The discussion for this article revolves around four issues: provision of corrective feedback, type of corrective feedback, repair, and pedagogical implications.

Provision of Corrective Feedback

As revealed by the present analysis, L2 Grade 6 students were shown to be capable of providing corrective feedback to each other during ESL–FSL tandem chat exchanges. These results support those of Morris (2005), who also demonstrated that children in elementary grades, specifically Grade 5 Spanish L2 learners, were able to provide each other with feedback. However, in contrast to that study, where the children had an intermediate to high-intermediate level of proficiency, those in the present study were in an elementary and low-intermediate range. Similarly to the study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017), the present study suggests that even students with lower proficiency levels are capable of providing feedback during a chat exchange.

Although in the present study both Anglophones and Francophones gave feedback, more feedback appeared to be provided by the Francophone students during the French sessions than by the Anglophone students during the English sessions (57.8% vs. 41.9% of total instances, respectively). Several reasons might explain these differences. First, as observed by the teacher-researcher, the FSL students appeared to have a lower level of L2 proficiency than the ESL students. On this basis, it might be argued that there were more opportunities for the Francophone students to provide correction. Another possible explanation pertains to students' perceptions of their respective L2s. Students in the intensive ESL program had gone through a selection process and, as confirmed by the teacher-researcher, had a positive attitude toward learning English. By contrast, the Anglophone students, as confirmed by their teacher, had a more negative attitude toward learning French (even though they had volunteered to be in the program). Questionnaire results further confirmed that the ESL students had a much more positive attitude with respect to the chat project. A third reason could also pertain to individual differences among students. As shown in both eTandem learning projects (Priego, 2011) and other types of L2 school learning contexts (e.g., Gillette, 1994; Parks, 2000; Parks, Huot, Hamers, & Lemonnier, 2005), the way students orient to the task at hand has implications for language learning strategies and learning outcomes. In the case of eTandem exchanges, future research needs to pay greater attention both to general attitudes toward the L2 as well as to the way individual students invest or fail to invest in the targeted tasks.

Type of Corrective Feedback

In terms of the present study, both Anglophones and Francophones provided each other with all three types of corrective feedback: explicit feedback, recasts, and negotiation of form. However, of particular note is that the preference of the children in this study was for explicit feedback (62.4% of the total instances of given feedback). Although the finding appears to support those tandem studies involving children in asynchronous reciprocal peer tutoring exchanges (Thurston et al., 2009; Tolosa et al., 2017), it contrasts with Morris' (2005) study where the Spanish L2 students had a preference for implicit negative feedback, mainly in the form of negotiations.

With respect to the preference for explicit feedback, one important influence could be the classroom culture. As explained by Morris (2005), the program in which his Spanish immersion fifth graders were enrolled emphasized “thematic and cultural content over linguistic form” (p. 32). In addition to the absence of explicit feedback, most of the corrections focused on lexical items rather than grammar—a result which Morris also attributed to the content-based focus of the curriculum. In the present study, not only was explicit correction privileged, but grammar-related corrections were also three times as numerous as lexical ones. As reported by the teacher-researcher, although the intensive ESL program was communicatively oriented, it also emphasized the instruction of grammar and vocabulary. Following consultation with the FSL teacher, it was determined that the French immersion program in the Ontario school was more content-based and communicative than the intensive English program in Quebec. It is also important to note that within the Quebec school system, grammatical accuracy is an integral and important part of L1 instruction. Taking into account both the L1 and L2 instruction to which Francophones were exposed may help explain why the ESL students gave more feedback overall as well as more explicit types of feedback. Although this topic requires further investigation, a study by Gagné and Parks (2013), also involving intensive Grade 6 ESL students in Quebec, showed that their L2 learners had a preference for explicit feedback while engaged in face-to-face cooperative learning tasks: “[these learners] were at ease in terms of both asking for and giving help with the language” (p. 200). Likewise, emphasis given to grammar teaching in L1 and L2 contexts was suggested by Bower and Kawaguchi (2011) as a reason to explain differences in the amount of feedback provided by Japanese and Australian university students during a tandem exchange.

A second reason could relate to training with respect to giving feedback. Although the way negotiation strategies were categorized in the study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017) makes direct comparison difficult, the two strategies typically associated with negative feedback (i.e., recasts and explicit corrections) were evidenced, but not frequently used. In their study, students were instructed to ask each other for help and use as much English as possible, but no specific training in feedback strategies appeared to have been given. By contrast, and as recommended within a tandem approach, students in the present study received training, including how to give explicit feedback. The need for training has also been emphasized in the context of asynchronous tandem language learning exchanges (Thurston et al., 2009; Tolosa et al., 2017).

Repair

Despite a substantial number of negotiation episodes observed in the study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017), actual instances of repair (or uptake) were infrequent. This contrasts with the results of Morris' (2005) study where repair was high. The total rate of repair found by Morris was 68% compared to only 15.5% (English exchanges) and 9.7% (French exchanges) in the present study. This may be due to the nature of the tasks involved. Although both Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017) and Morris (2005) used jigsaw tasks, a type of task which has been shown to be particularly useful in terms of generating negotiation (Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun, 1993), tasks in the present study were open-ended in nature. In Morris' (2005) study, the jigsaw tasks were associated with a high rate of repair, but such was not the case in the study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017). In this regard, the nature of jigsaw tasks could be a factor. In Morris' (2005) study, a collaborative essay task was involved, while in the study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017), participants engaged in a picture sequencing task. Also important in the present study is that over 50% of the no-repair items involved acknowledgements, a move which also tended to signal the end of a negotiation episode. Although repair provides evidence of noticing, the absence of repair does not necessarily mean

that the correct form has not been noticed (Ellis et al., 2001). This is particularly true of the chat mode, as participants can scroll back to previous utterances. Although corrective feedback may provide comprehensible input, without additional testing (e.g., as in the chat studies by Coyle & Reverte Prieto, 2017; Shekary & Tahririan, 2006), it is impossible to know whether negotiations led to acquisition. Future research needs to continue to address this issue.

Pedagogical Implications

Tasks for the present study, which had children discuss topics of interest to their age group, also resulted in substantial interaction episodes. However, the low rates of repair observed in the present study and those in the study by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017) suggest that teachers should pay closer attention to both the tasks students are asked to carry out during the chat sessions and follow-up reinvestment tasks. As suggested by Morris (2005), online jigsaw tasks that require a collaborative written component may be more conducive to fostering repair (a point which also calls for further research). Although students in the present study were asked to identify corrections and reflect on their experiences, more substantive reinvestment tasks could be devised. Although used for testing purposes, the follow-up picture story writing task used by Coyle and Reverte Prieto (2017) provided evidence of reuse of words negotiated during the chat exchanges as well as of words which had been used by NS partners and picked up by the NNS partners. For the present study, participants could have done a poster or PowerPoint presentation based on the information gathered about their chat partners. Such tasks could provide students with a more meaningful goal and increased the need to negotiate during the chat exchanges. Other tasks could involve Skype to talk with partners or written reports based on information obtained in the exchanges or surveys and shared online. In the present study, students varied in terms of their motivation. Developing a sense of community and belonging might lead to enhanced motivation and a willingness to invest in the exchanges over a longer period of time. With respect to motivation, consideration also needs to be given to the task types (Appel & Gilabert, 2002; El-Hariri, 2016) and the use of a variety of tasks (Coyle & Reverte Prieto, 2017).

Conclusion

To date, studies of tandem language involving young children have been limited to asynchronous exchanges (Thurston et al., 2009; Tolosa et al., 2015; Tolosa et al., 2017). To our knowledge, the present study represents the first reported study of a synchronous tandem chat exchange involving elementary school children. More generally, it contributes to the few text-based chat studies which show that young learners (aged 10–12) are capable of engaging in online negotiation of meaning and form in the context of various tasks (Coyle & Reverte Prieto, 2017; Morris, 2005). In contrast to the study by Morris (2005) involving Grade 5 Spanish L2 learners, children in the present study showed a preference for explicit, rather than implicit, corrective feedback. This preference was attributed to the tandem approach that emphasized training in how to give feedback as well as to differences in the school cultures. To further amplify the benefits of a tandem approach, it is suggested that the activities be better integrated into the classroom culture so as to foster greater links between the students and more meaningful in-class reinvestment tasks. Within classroom settings, especially in elementary and high school, tandem language learning remains a largely peripheral activity, despite research involving intact classes. To explore more fully the potential of this approach for language learning will require a substantive change in terms of how teachers view their roles as language teachers and the value they attach to seeking out partnerships and making such activities central features of their curriculum (Parks & Priego, 2017). Future research will also need to pay closer attention to how tandem language learning activities contribute to acquisition as well as the role of individual differences.

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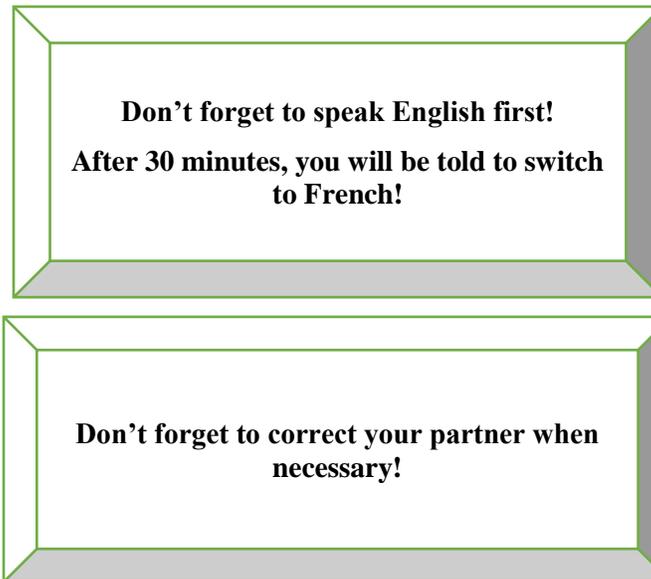
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Appendix A. Example of a Task

Third Contact



Task 3 (In French)

Today you will talk about Halloween!

WHAT YOU SHOULD TRY TO FIND OUT

To start off, greet your partner.

Ask your partner if he or she likes Halloween.

Ask your partner what he or she does on Halloween.

Ask your partner what he or she dressed up as.

If you have time, talk to your partner about another topic.

Say bye to your partner.

Appendix B. Reflection Form

Your name:

Second contact:

How did your chat session go with your partner?

very good good pretty good not so good

If things didn't go so well, explain why.

List a few examples of feedback you got from your partner.

Are there any words/expressions you learned during the chat session? __yes __no

If yes, what?



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