Do peer-to-peer exchanges promote the autonomous development of mental representations in a foreign language?

Do adult learners improve their language competence during peer-to-peer interaction with reciprocal feedback?

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Preliminary considerations

My students want

- to receive instruction
- to actively participate in their learning process.

- They are able to re-elaborate the information that they receive from their teacher AND from their learning environment.

- They learn a language because they want to interact with speakers/writers of their target language.

- Adults prefer a cognitive approach that enhances the possibility of reflecting on the received input (Chini, 2005; 2011, Della Putta & Visigalli, 2010; Matthiae, 2012) and of transforming it into intake.
Theoretical framework:
- The construction of language competence (Van Patten 2010) and its relationship with learner autonomy (Little 1991).
  - The role of Output and Interaction in the development of the language competence (Swain 1985, Long 1996).
  - The role of writing as a means of developing metalinguistic awareness, particularly in the case of adult learners (O’Rourke, 2007, Derakhshan A., 2015).
- The role of tandem learning as a means of improving the construction of language competence through peer-to-peer interaction and reciprocal feedback. (Brammerts, 2001, Cziko, 2004)

Case study:

Conclusions
The **language competence** of a speaker consists of mental representation and skill (VanPatten 2010)

**Mental representation**
- is the abstract, implicit and underlying linguistic system in a speaker’s mind,
- is not a set of prescriptive rules as in a textbook, but a collection of properties from which each speaker/writer derives his/her linguistic behavior,
- is the result of several factors that starting from an input, through analysis / processing mechanisms, activate the Universal Grammar/comparison with L1 and promote the progressive construction of the L2 language system

**skill**
- is the ability to use language fluently (measured by speed and accuracy) and appropriately in both production and comprehension
[...] neither language as mental representation nor language as skill can be directly taught. Teachers and materials cannot directly intervene in the development of either. Instead, both mental representation and skill evolve in learners based on the experiences the latter receive in and out of classrooms (Van Patten 2010, p.16).

Learner autonomy = „capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action (Little 1991, 4)“.

Teachers should design a stimulating learning environment, which can promote the development of language competence.
Which role play output and Interaction in language learning?

Output and Interaction enhance autonomy and promote the construction of language competence.

**OUTPUT HYPOTHESIS:** Second language output may trigger certain cognitive processes necessary for second language learning. Negotiation of meaning is able to help this process because by becoming consciously aware of one’s own production, output can serve the metalinguistic function of helping to internalize linguistic forms. (Swain, 1985: 128).

The corrective feedback that takes place during interactions in the second language, mostly that arising from the negotiation of meaning with native speakers, provides opportunities for language learners to focus on specific linguistic forms and thus may lead to language learning (Long, 1996).
Adults prefer writing to speaking (Derakhshani A., 2015)

[…] it is easier to reflect on language when we are distanced from it, something that is not easily accomplished in speech. This and similar considerations have led Little (1997; 1999a, b) to argue that writing should be central to any autonomy-focused pedagogy, since it acts as a focus for metalinguistic reflection (O’Rourke, 2007: 45).

Writing helps to develop metalinguistic awareness

Written activities have been promoted in form of an e-Tandem exchange between language learners of the university of Naples and of Bochum, in order to foster peer-to-peer interactions, .
Learning tips

Learning from your eTandem partner

4. Learning from your partner’s corrections

You can only learn from your mistakes if you are made aware of them - otherwise the wrong way of saying something becomes ingrained. Therefore, it is very important that you ask your eTandem partner to correct your mistakes.

Please remember in this regard that your eTandem partner is not a language teacher. He will usually not be able to explain grammatical rules to you, just as you might find this difficult to do in your native language.

However, you can both say with a good deal of certainty if a sentence in your language is correct or incorrect and how you would express something yourself.

In eTandem, each learner determines what he wants to learn and how. Regarding corrections, this means:

- It is your responsibility to let your eTandem partner know what and how he should make corrections for you (e.g. by marking spelling mistakes with an *, paying particular attention to verb forms or pronunciation, etc.).
- You should only correct what your partner wants you to correct.

Here are some concrete tips:

- Pay attention to the indirect corrections your partner makes: if he expresses the same thing to you in a different way, you may have used an incorrect or clumsy form.

Written eTandem

(e-mail, letters, instant messaging, etc.)

- If you have a text from your eTandem partner in front of you and can read it as many times as you would like, then it is often tempting to want to correct all of the mistakes. This is, however, not only time consuming for the partner making the corrections, but it can also discourage the partner who is learning.

Oral eTandem

(telephone, video conferencing, etc.)

- With oral tandem, your partner has to pay attention to what you are saying and how you are saying it simultaneously - and this is not always easy. Also, you can easily get used to mistakes and then not hear them.
- Perhaps your partner does not like to interrupt you, thinking it might upset you. Or
E-tandem improves autonomy in building language competence

- **Opportunity for spontaneous linguistic interaction** between learners of different native languages sharing the common objective of learning from each other (Brammerts, 2001).

- Links language learners located in different countries via various forms of electronic communication.

- Has the potential of combining aspects of both natural settings and formal instruction because it provides exposure to the target language as produced by a native speaker within an authentic communication setting and at the same time it supplies corrective feedback, i.e. focus on form (Cziko, 2004)

- **Stresses intensive collaboration and interaction**: learning becomes a collaborative and social activity that promotes the skills of active problem solving and critical thinking.
Naples-Bochum eTandem Start date: 2012
implemented with Jörg Meuter: joerg.meuter@rub.de

Exchanges took place on an especially designed wiki conceived as a virtual learning environment and were based on autonomy and reciprocity. Only participants had access to the wiki.

Contemporary media and communications technologies present opportunities for interactive and meaningful activities and particularly wikis are opening the doors to more student-directed activities (Elola & Oskoz, 2010).

Wikis feature a loosely structured set of pages, linked in multiple ways to each other and to Internet resources and an open-editing system in which anyone can edit any page (by clicking on the "edit this page" button). All changes in the texts are available by clicking on the “page history” button. They serve as documentation both for participants and for tutors.
Naples-Bochum eTandem

- **Participiants**: Italian learners of German and German learners of Italian.
- **eTandem activities are not compulsory**, they are an additional opportunity for those attending regular language courses.

**Participants’ tasks**:  
- selecting topics together  
- creating a page for each topic within the wiki  
- writing their own texts and posting them on the wiki  
- giving feedback to their partners
Vogliamo festeggiare (Giovanna - Maike)

MINDMAP:

die Einladung  eine Party machen  Geburtstag  einen Tag mit den Freunden organisieren
Abendfest

der Feiertag  Freunde treffen  hausgemachten Spezialitäten  die Getränke  Pommes Frites

und Cola  Speisekarte  Samstag Abend  eine Party feiern  Essen mitbringen  feiern  sich
verabreden

mit der Familie feiern  etwas gemeinsam planen  die Kekse  die Kuchen

UNA FESTA DI COMPLEANNO

Domenica scorsa sono andata alla festa di compleanno del mio amico Antonio. Antonio abita a Fuorigrotta e la festa si svolgeva a casa sua; sarebbe dovuta cominciare alle sette di sera, ma si sa come passa presto il pomeriggio di domenica e così la maggior parte degli invitati si è presentata alle otto. Noi, poi - io, mia sorella, Fabiano e Daunia - siamo arrivati alle nove passate, dopo circa un'ora e mezza passata nel traffico della domenica (che è inferiore solo al traffico del sabato sera). Alla festa partecipavano circa venti persone e dopo aver mangiato (il primo era la pizza, poi c'erano patatine e antipasti) abbiamo iniziato a giocare. Alcune persone avevano portato dei giochi di società (Monopoly, Cluedo): abbiamo sgomberato il tavolo e abbiamo iniziato a giocare. Infine, un gioco a Cluedo. Questo è un gioco in cui uno dei personaggi commette un delitto e per tutta la durata del gioco si cerca di indovinare chi sia l'assassino, andando per esclusione. Nonostante la festa fosse molto semplice e per nulla rumorosa o animata - durante la partita era osservato un quasi religioso minuto di silenzio, prima di provare a dare la soluzione del gioco - ci siamo divertiti molto e tutti erano felici e rilassati. Dopo i giochi di società abbiamo giocato a carte: prima a Texas Hold'em (senza puntare soldi veri, ovviamente) e poi al poker classico. Nella prima partita ho vinto io tutte le mani salvo quella finale, nella quale ho perso tutti i soldi (finti) che avevo guadagnato. Nell'intermezzo, tra una partita e l'altra, il festeggiato ha aperto la torta e ognuno di noi ne ha mangiata una fetta.
Vogliamo festeggiare (Giovanna - Maike)

Created by Giovanna 3 years, 5 months ago
Last edited by Maike Prazse 3 years, 4 months ago

Revisions (17)

- No description entered
  December 29, 2014 at 10:26:59 am by Maike Prazse

- ... ein Essen oder eine Mahlzeit kann man nur probieren, bei Kleidung heißt es anprobieren.
  ... es heißt "Mit Karten spielen" nicht mit "die Karten spielen"... ansonsten machst du nur kleine Fehler mit der/die/das und Singular/Plural...
  December 29, 2014 at 10:26:59 am by Maike Prazse

- No description entered
  December 29, 2014 at 10:28:41 am by Maike Prazse

- No description entered
  December 29, 2014 at 11:04:22 pm by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 7:22:27 pm by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 7:21:06 pm by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 7:16:42 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 7:15:05 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 6:55:48 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 4:55:04 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 27, 2014 at 11:40:44 am by Maike Prazse

- No description entered
  December 23, 2014 at 12:37:07 am by Maike Prazse

- No description entered
  December 22, 2014 at 8:08:15 pm by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 22, 2014 at 7:51:18 pm by Maike Prazse

- No description entered
  December 15, 2014 at 1:23:21 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 14, 2014 at 6:00:09 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 14, 2014 at 3:59:28 am by Giovanna

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  December 14, 2014 at 3:58:44 am by Giovanna

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- No description entered
  December 14, 2014 at 3:52:30 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 14, 2014 at 3:51:43 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 14, 2014 at 3:50:52 am by Giovanna

- No description entered
  December 14, 2014 at 3:50:01 am by Giovanna
Research point:

Do peer-to-peer interactions produce new knowledge?

Is it true that language learners switching from receiving to giving feedback are forced to reflect on their 1L and 2L and this will improve their linguistic competence?

RESEARCH METHOD

Aiming to discover if dynamic interactions between learners, lead to improvements in output, the productions of 44 Italian and German learners who worked on 59 topics have been collected in a corpus. 429 revisions/Text versions have been analysed.
Analysis of participant’s production

Participants’ productions have been analysed as follows:

(1) assessment of learners’ interlanguage at the beginning of the exchanges,
(2) analysis of the corrective feedback (CF)
(3) investigation of improvements in written output as marks of the successful transformation of input into intake.
In order to evaluate where learners are positioned in relation to standardized reference points/patterns of acquisition, features of learners’ interlanguage were analysed with reference to Pienemann’s 5 stages scaled implementation of key morphosyntactic features of German (Pienemann & Di Biase 2005) (Table1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Exchange of information</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
<th>Word order</th>
<th>Morphology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sub cl procedure</td>
<td>V-final</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inter-phrasal</td>
<td>S-procedure</td>
<td>INV (Subject verb Inversion after ADV)</td>
<td>SV-agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phrasal</td>
<td>Phrasal procedure</td>
<td>ADV (Adverb fronting, without INV)</td>
<td>Plural agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Lex. categories</td>
<td>SVO (subject verb, object)</td>
<td>Past – te etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘words’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pienemann’s (1995) assumes that although interlanguage develops along predictable stages of acquisition, in the case of writing, given that learners have sufficient time to reflect on their production, it is possible to skip one stage.

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Formal features of learners’ interlanguage (2)

EXAMPLE 1: R. from Italy (I) and K. from Germany (D) a.a. 2013-14:

From 30 November to 9 December I went to Milan to visit my sister and my friends, who live there

During this time, Piazza Duomo is filled with lights, Christmas decorations and Christmas markets

(3) R. (I): In Italien, Weihnachten hat eine starke religiöse Sinn, auch in Deutschland?
In Italy, Christmas has a strong religious meaning, in Germany too?

Learners’ interlanguage shows features of different stages regarding word order and morphology

**Word order:** stage 3/4. In (1) Subject, Verb Inversion (INV), in (2) (3) no INV. In (2) a correct word order is adopted in the case of predicate with two constituents. In (1) correct word order also in subordinate clause.

**Morphology:** stage 4. Generally Subject Verb (SV) agreement is correct. In (3) article and adjective endings do not agree with substantive gender (‘eine’ ‘starke’ ‘religiose’ are feminine, while ‘Sinn’ is masculine).
Formal features of learners’ interlanguage (3)

EXAMPLE 2: D. from Italy (I) and P. from Germany (D) a.a. 2016-17:

(4) D(I): ...in Neapel gibt es wirklich viele Leute
There are really many people in Naples

(5) D(I): Neapel hat viele Hügeln
Naples has many hills

(6) D(I): Padua ist ein "Stadt von Doktors"
Padua is a "city of doctors"

(7) D(I): ....und es gibt Inseln die Mann besuchen darf von das Hafen abfahrend
and there are islands that you can visit leaving from the port

Word order: D(I): stage 4. Correct sentences with subject verb inversion (4) and subject verb agreement (5) in (7) he writes the subordinate clause missing V-Final (‘besuchen darf’ should be positioned at the end of the sentence)

Morphology: stage 3. SV agreement is correct, but he makes mistakes in determining inflection markers in (6).
First remark:

Learners engaged in writing activities make efforts to produce language patterns at a step ahead of their current level of development.

By writing, the active language learner tests his/her own version of the target language and develops his/her mental representation.
Feedback analysis: Grammatical accuracy

Corrective Feedback (CF) classified in: (Sheen 2007)

(a) direct only correction/feedback

partners highlight a wrong expression and write it again in the right way without any comment

(b) direct metalinguistic correction/feedback

partners give comments aiming to explain mistakes
Feedback analysis: Grammatical accuracy (2)

EXAMPLE 1: R. is from Italy (I) and K. comes from Germany (D) a.a. 2013-14: Direct metalinguistic CF. K(D) starts by rewriting the wrong sentence and then writes his comment:


K(D) gives instruction to R (I) about the construction of the future tense and suggests making use of the auxiliary form “will” (11.2) (German “werden”):

(11.1) K. (D): „ging“ ist die Form des Präteritum (Imperfetto) von „gehen“

"Went" is the form of the past tense (Imperfetto) of "to go"

(11.2) K. (D): „ich werde gehen“ ist die Futur Form. I will go is the future form

Finally, she writes the sentence again in the right way (11.3)


By correcting the second production of R(I) (12), K(D) points out that word order is not correct (12.1):

(12) R(I): In Italien, Weihnachten hat eine starke religiöse Sinn, auch in Deutschland?

(12.1) K(D): Die Wortstellung ist hier nicht richtig. Word order is incorrect

and writes again the sentence in its correct form (12.2): (word order)

(12.2) K(D): Besser: In Italien hat Weihnachten einen stark religiösen Sinn, in Deutschland auch?
EXAMPLE 2: D. from Italy (I) and P. from Germany (D) a.a. 2016-17: D(I) direct corrections and metalinguistic explanations in the 'comments' section of the wiki page. P(D) gives direct only CF, without any metalinguistic comments:

P(D):  (13) Bergkamen ha circa **50.000 abitante** ed era una città dove abitavano e lavoravano **molti minatore**. Oggi non ci lavorano minatore

Bergkamen has about 50,000 inhabitants and was a city with a lot of miners

(14) (quando "e" e quando "ed"?) When should I use ‘e’ or ‘ed’

D(I):  (15) Abitanti" per plurale, non "abitante"); inhabitants is the plural of inhabitant

(16) "i minatori" è plurale di "il minatore"); miners is the plural form of miner **(plural form of Italian nouns)**

(17) "ed" precede una parola che inizia con "e"; si può usare anche se segue una parola che inizia con "a, i, o, u" ma è più raro) ‘ed’ before words beginning with ‘e’, but it’s possible **also before words beginning with other vowels. (Use of e/ed before vowel)**

P(D)  (18) Padua ist einwird die "Stadt von Doktors"-genannt, der Doktoren" genannt, sowie von die Studenten-der Studenten

EXAMPLE 1: R. from Italy (I) and K. from Germany (D) a.a. 2013-14

R(I): (19) Ich werde Weihnachten hier in Neapel mit der Familie vereint verbringen. *I will spend Christmas in Naples with my family.*

R(I): (20) Grafisch darstellen Sie die Geschwindigkeit und Dynamik mit einfache geometrische Elemente.

*Graphically represent the speed and dynamics with simple geometric elements*

R(I) writes correct sentences with the future tense (19) and a correct word order with ADV fronting and INV (20).

This shows that he is transforming his interlanguage, but he still makes mistakes because he spells adjective endings incorrectly after prepositions with mandatory dative construction (21):

(21) *mit einfache geometrische Elemente.*

   mit einfachen geometrischen Elemente
EXAMPLE 2: D. from Italy (I) and P. from Germany (D) a.a. 2016-17

In the case of D(I) and P(D), we observe that D(I), who received direct only CF, does not improve the formal features of his interlanguage although we can appreciate that the text is well organized, better than the first one.

Der Vollposten ist ein italienischer Film mit dem Schauspieler Checco Zalone, der einen komischen Typ interpretiert, der verplichtet wird, Italien zu verlassen.

P(D), on the contrary, makes no more mistakes in plural formation (24) (25) (26)

P(D):   (24) Jan incontra i genitori (plural) di Sara per la prima volta.  
        Jan meets Sara’s parents for the first time 
(25) dopo alcuni mesi (plural)  
        after a few months 
(26) i genitori (plural) di Sara e i genitori (plural) di Jan guidano (plural) in Italia. La Jan incontra i parenti (plural) di Sara 
        Sara’s and Jan’s parents drive to Italy. Jan meets Sara’s relatives there.
CONCLUSIONS

Learners who gave and received Direct Corrective Feedback with metalinguistic comments show improvements in their interlanguage. They were forced to reflect on their 1L and 2L and this promoted the development of mental representation.

This evidence confirms Sheen’s assumption that whereas written direct feedback increases noticing, direct metalinguistic feedback increases not only noticing but also encourages awareness-as-understanding (i.e. a deeper level of cognitive processing). (Sheen Y. 2007, p. 270)

Control of theoretical concepts enables learners to operate independently of a specific context as it allows them to transfer the concept to all relevant contexts as needed. (Negueruela & Lantolf 2007, p. 80)
CONCLUSIONS

Peer-to-peer interactions enhance the active engagement of the learner in the process of constructing language competence. S/He has to switch from giving to receiving feedback. This process promotes consciousness and attention, encourages the development of language awareness and stimulates the construction of the mental representation of the target language.

Peer-to-peer exchanges with reciprocal metalinguistic feedback produce new knowledge.

*BY APPLYING COGNITIVE PROCESSES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING, ADULTS IMPROVE THEIR LANGUAGE COMPETENCE.*
Participants’ feedback on Naples-Bochum e-tandem

M (2014): The work done through the project “eTandem” gave me the opportunity to improve my language skills. I learned to express myself in German on topics of everyday life, although using very simple linguistic expressions. (...) The project enable us to relate to peers and this is reassuring. Participation in this project was truly an enriching experience. I hope to continue the exchanges with my partner even after the end of the project.

G (2016) In this way it was easier for me to learn German: it is a difficult language but in-tandem language learning helps to overcome the difficulties.

A (2017): this project was a discovery. As a learning experience it gave me the opportunity to use my target language exchanging with a German speaker and to enrich my personal knowledge of German culture. I would like to suggest to my colleagues they also participate in language learning tandem because it is a complete learning experience.
RETHINKING THE LANGUAGE LEARNER
Paradigmen - Methoden - Disziplinen
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