

**The Role of Awareness in the Development of
LC1 and LC2 Competence in E-tandem
Exchanges between Learners of
Mandarin and English**

(Volume 1 of 2 Volumes)

By

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Abstract

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E-tandem learning happens between two native speakers of different languages in separate locations. They communicate regularly with one another usually using electronic media, with the purpose of learning the target language and culture. Tandem experiences are well established in Europe; however, the approach has grown in popularity beyond Europe and is proving very effective for intercultural language learning. This study is an e-tandem project by e-mail between Irish/American students studying Mandarin as a Foreign Language and Chinese students taking English as a Foreign Language. The project focuses on second language (L2) usage and learners' intercultural and language awareness development through e-tandem exchanges.

The study relies on a task-based approach to promote participants' intercultural and language awareness. Data was obtained from participants' e-mails, online forum entries, learning diaries, focus group interviews and questionnaires, which were analysed by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. 3 case studies were also conducted. In order to see how participants developed their understanding during the exchanges, data was categorised according to different themes of awareness of self and other. Moreover, participants' noticing patterns of L2 usage, partners' L2 errors and newly-learned L2 features were also recorded to gauge their language awareness development. Finally, response patterns emerging from Irish/American participants, on the one hand, and from Chinese participants, on the other, were also identified.

Results indicate that e-tandem provides a means for the elaboration of a third space for the development of *linguaculture* awareness through cognitive processes such as noticing, comparing and understanding. As e-tandem participants developed a strong will to be understood by others in their language and culture, changes in their communication behaviour began to emerge through reflection on their own *linguaculture*. The emotional impact of the exchange on participants became manifest, while perceived cultural differences appeared to become a communication barrier between several tandem partners.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Where references have been made to the work of others, this has been acknowledged in the text and a bibliography is appended. I further state that this work has not been submitted for any degree in Waterford Institute of Technology, or in any other institution.

Signed: _____

Wei Tan

Date: _____

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
to my beloved husband and my precious daughter.

Thank you for all your continuous encouragement and support over the years.

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I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisors, Dr Áine Furlong and Dr Fionnuala Kennedy. Without their constant encouragement and ‘pushing’, helpful supervision and constructive comments, I could hardly have accomplished this thesis. In addition, I appreciated their patience as really warm and helpful proof readers. They read through my dissertation and kindly corrected grammar and spelling, but any mistakes that still remain are my own responsibility. They also recommended research resources related to my research area, including academic associations for intercultural learning and telecollaboration, which are not only helpful for this research but also useful for my professional development in my home university. I also wish to thank both supervisors for their valuable guidance on my presentations, posters, and even my English pronunciation before I attended conferences, allowing me the space to learn and grow.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

C1	native culture
C2	second culture
CALICO	Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CET4	College English Test Band 4 (China)
CN	Chinese
Dy	dyad
EBCL	European Benchmarking Chinese Language
ECML	European Centre for Modern Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
e-tandem	online tandem language learning
EuroCALL	European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning
GM	grammar
GXUST	Guangxi University of Science and Technology
HSK	Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (Chinese Proficiency Test)
IALIC	International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication
IC	intercultural
ICC	intercultural communicative competence
IR	Irish
L1	first/native language
L2	second language
LC1	native <i>linguaculture</i>
LC2	second <i>linguaculture</i>
MOO	Object-Oriented Multi-user Domain
MP	modal particles
N	number
NS	native speaker
QUAL	qualitative
QUAN	quantitative
ReCALL	EuroCALL journal
UCC	University College Cork
UK	The United Kingdom
US	American
USA	The United States
WTC	willingness to communicate

Conference Presentations

	Date	Conference	Poster/Paper	Title
1.	23-24 June, 2017	12th Annual International Conference of the China Association for Intercultural Communication (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China)	paper	An Empirical Study on E-mail Tandem Exchanges between Irish and American Students of Mandarin and Chinese EFL Students
2.	25 May, 2016	The Limerick Postgraduate Research Conference (LPRC) 2016 (UL, Ireland)	paper	The Role of Awareness in the Development of LC1 and LC2 Competence in E-tandem Exchanges between Learners of Chinese Mandarin and English
3.	4 May, 2016	WIT Research Day 2016 (Waterford, Ireland)	poster + 1-minute pitch	Development of Intercultural and Language Awareness in E-tandem Exchanges between Learners of Mandarin and English
4.	27-29 Nov., 2015	15th IALIC Conference: Intercultural Communication in Social Practice (Peking University, China)	paper	The Role of Awareness in the Development of LC1 and LC2 Competence in E-tandem Exchanges between Learners of Chinese and English
5.	23-24 May, 2013	Chinese Students and Teachers Abroad: Myths and Realities (Helsinki, Finland)	paper	Online Tandem Exchanges of Chinese and English between the University students in Ireland and China
6.	9-10 May, 2013	PL-CALL Conference (Warsaw, Poland)	paper	Promoting Language and Intercultural Awareness through E-tandem Exchanges of Chinese and English: An Exploratory Study
7.	9-10 Nov., 2012	the Interdisciplinary Linguistics Conference (ILinC) 2012 (Belfast, Northern Ireland)	paper	Using Task-based Activities to Promote Second Language and Intercultural Learning in E-tandem
8.	31 Aug. -3 Sept., 2011	EUROCALL - Nottingham Conference 2011 (Nottingham, UK)	poster	Exploring Interactive Function of Online Tandem Language Learning of Chinese and English
9.	13 April, 2011	WIT Research Day 2011 (Waterford, Ireland)	poster	E-tandem Language Learning of Chinese and English: Some Challenges and Recommendations
10.	1 Oct., 2010	IRAAL Postgraduate Symposium (Limerick, Ireland)	poster	Exploring Interactive Function of Online Tandem Language Learning of Chinese and English
11.	17 May, 2010	WIT Research Day 2010 (Waterford, Ireland)	poster	Exploring Interactive Function of Online Tandem Language Learning of Chinese and English

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the background for this research project. First, it indicates the motivation of this study which includes the current situation relating to language education in Europe and China as well as the researcher's personal professional background in China. It then justifies this project within existing theoretical frameworks. Finally, the research aim and questions are presented followed by the plan for this dissertation.

1.1 Research Motivation

Online tandem language learning (e-tandem), one of the models of telecollaboration, is widely used in European foreign language education (Cappellini, 2016; Kan *et al.*, 2013; O'Dowd, 2013a; 2007b; 2003; 2000; Wang *et al.*, 2012; Chun, 2011; Dooly, 2011a; Hauck and Youngs, 2008; O'Rourke, 2005; Belz and Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Appel and Gilabert, 2002; Schwienhorst, 2002). Helm (2015) highlights the boom of telecollaboration in Europe, as his survey of telecollaboration in European higher education involves 210 university language teachers in 23 different European countries who have the experience of telecollaboration. Given the close relationship between language and culture and the increasing research on intercultural approaches to language learning, e-tandem provides not only language exchange but also a vehicle for a third space to develop through intercultural exchange between language learners from different cultural backgrounds. In this space, they can negotiate and rebuild their perspectives on their own and the other culture.

To date, most of the languages involved in European e-tandem projects include English, German, Spanish and French. These tandem exchanges are well established between European or Western cultures (Chun, 2011; Lee, 2009; Dooly, 2007; O'Dowd, 2007b; 2003; 2000; O'Rourke, 2005; Belz and Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Appel and Gilabert, 2002). However, apart from a few telecollaborative studies between Taiwan and America (Chen, 2008; Liaw, 2007), tandem exchanges involving Mandarin and English seldom appeared in the literature before 2012, although more and more European schools and universities had begun to set up Chinese language classes and courses at that time. In recent years, several telecollaborative projects between Mandarin Chinese and English

were published (Cappellini, 2016; Kan *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand, English education in China is still a ‘hot potato’ because of the common phenomenon - ‘dumb English’ (which means that most of Chinese university graduates are not able to communicate with English native speakers even though they have studied English for a long time). For instance, in the researcher’s home university in China, students who are not from the Department of Foreign Languages seldom have the opportunity to interact with people from English-speaking countries, a reality that has now become a barrier for them to learn authentic English. Therefore, this study on tandem exchanges between Mandarin and English should be significant in promoting European and Chinese language education while also adding a useful example of tandem exchanges between two distant languages and cultures to the body of research.

Promoting learning mobility is another reason for undertaking this study. Robert O’Dowd, one of the founders of a platform (<http://www.uni-collaboration.eu/>, accessed: 10 May, 2013) to facilitate online collaboration for university classes, emphasises the importance of preparing European students for mobility and of internationalising the university environment (communication during a workshop at the University of Limerick, Ireland, 4 October 2013). According to Sweeney (2013), students often lack the opportunities afforded by intercultural interaction, yet, this kind of interaction is one of the essential means of internationalisation. Thus, online tandem learning which ‘involves virtual intercultural interaction and collaboration projects between classes in geographically distant locations’ (O’Dowd, 2013a, the 4th slide of his ppt presentation) can help to promote students’ mobility and to internationalise universities.

Apart from academic environments, ‘China is forecast to be Ireland’s fourth largest export destination by 2030, overtaking countries such as France and Japan’, as announced by Mr Hugh Kelly, Vice President of the Irish Exporters Association and Chairman of the Asia Trade Forum, on 24 April, 2013. Statistics provided by Mr. Kelly suggest that projected growth rates in Irish exports to China may reach 11% per annum by 2030 indicating increased trade cooperation and exchanges between Ireland and China. These implications for trade and communication are bound to impact on the need to educate Irish and Chinese students interculturally and linguistically.

Considering these developments, the researcher was inspired to establish an e-mail tandem project between Irish and Chinese students, and to examine how it works in practice.

1.2 Justification for the Research

As discussed in Section 1.1, it is appropriate to conduct research on Mandarin-English tandem exchanges in order to enrich current tandem projects in Europe. In an initial review of this present work (academic evaluation of this study at its intermediary stage 2013), O'Rourke and Mannix (2013) point out the significance of exploring Irish-Chinese tandems because most tandem work is between Western or European cultures and Irish-Chinese tandem exchanges are likely to address interesting challenges.

To illustrate the statement above, the literature review on telecollaborative projects from 2000 to 2011 indicates that four Western countries are most frequently involved in current e-tandem projects. They are Germany, Ireland, Spain and the USA (Appel and Gilabert, 2002; Bretag, 2006; Chun, 2011; Dooly, 2007; Liaw and Bunn-Le Master, 2010; Lee, 2009; O'Rourke, 2005; O'Dowd and Eberbach, 2004; Belz and Müller-Hartmann, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003; 2000; Ushioda, 2000). E-tandem exchanges from Asia, such as Taiwan (Liaw and Bunn-Le Master, 2010; Chen, 2008) and Hongkong (Itakura, 2004) are also reported on but are less frequently. However, it is exciting to see that more telecollaborative exchanges between China and Japan, America and European countries appear after 2010 (Angelova and Zhao, 2016; Cappellini, 2016; Kan *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2012), indicating that telecollaboration spreads beyond Europe as China becomes an active participant of the global economy. Participants and communication tools in the above studies are shown in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2.

Table 1.1: Overview of European telecollaborative projects (2000-2011)

Researchers & year	Participants	Tools
O'Dowd (2000)	Spain + the USA	videoconferencing
Ushioda (2000)	Germany + Ireland	e-mail
Appel and Gilabert (2002)	Spain + Ireland	e-mail
O'Dowd (2003)	Spain + Germany	e-mail
Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003)	Germany + the USA	e-mail
O'Dowd and Eberbach (2004)	Germany + Ireland	message board
O'Rourke (2005)	Germany + Ireland	MOO
Bretag (2006)	Australia + International	e-mail
Dooly (2007)	Spain + the USA + Turkey	online forum + e-mail
Darhower (2008)	Spain + the USA	chat room
Lee (2009)	Spain + the USA	blogs + podcasting
Chun (2011)	Germany + the USA	online forum

Table 1.1 presents several European telecollaboration projects from 2000 to 2011. Ushioda's (2000), O'Dowd's and Eberbach's (2004) and O'Rourke's (2005) projects were carried out between Irish and German students. Students were paired via e-mail in Ushioda's (2000) study. O'Dowd's and Eberbach's (2004) study reports on a message board exchange and O'Rourke's (2005) online tandem learning, is based in a MOO (Object-Oriented Multi-user Domain) which is a text-based virtual reality system. Telecollaboration projects involving American students have been conducted by Chun (2011), Lee (2009), Darhower (2008), Dooly (2007), Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) and O'Dowd (2000). 4 projects carried out by Lee (2009), Darhower (2008), Dooly (2007) and O'Dowd (2000) are exchanges between Spain and the USA. The intercultural communicative tool used in O'Dowd's study is videoconferencing, while Lee used blogs and podcasting to promote intercultural exchanges. Chat rooms were used in Darhower's study and Dooly used online forum and e-mail to facilitate the telecollaborative project. Chun's (2011) project involves German and American participants, using online forums. Participants in Belz's and Müller-Hartmann's (2003) study are German and American, and were involved in e-mail exchanges and synchronous exchanges as well. 3 projects (Appel and Gilabert, 2002; O'Dowd, 2003 and Bretag, 2006) are telecollaborations via e-mail. The former two projects paired Spanish with Irish and German participants respectively. Participants in the latter were Australian and international. The telecollaborative exchanges between Chinese and other languages are listed in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2: Overview of Chinese telecollaborative projects (2004-now)

Researchers & year	Participants	Tools
Itakura (2004)	Hongkong + Japan	e-mail
Chen (2008)	Taiwan + the USA	e-mail
Liaw and Bunn-Le Master (2010)	Taiwan + the USA	online forum
Yamauchi and Jones (2012)	China (mainland) + Japan	Moodle + forum
Wang <i>et al.</i> (2012)	China (mainland) + France	Moodle + Skype
Kan <i>et al.</i> (2013)	China (mainland) + the UK	e-mail + Skype
Zhang (2014)	China (mainland) + the USA	web conferencing
Cappellini (2016)	China (mainland) + France	desktop videoconferencing
Angelova and Zhao (2016)	China (mainland) + the USA	e-mail + discussion board + Skype

Table 1.2 indicates that telecollaboration between mainland China and different countries has become popular since 2012. The telecollaborative project carried out by Liaw and Bunn-Le Master (2010) has participants from Taiwan and the USA. It used online forum to explore how intercultural learning becomes manifest in telecollaboration. Asian participants from Hongkong and Japan were also represented in Itakura's (2004) telecollaboration focusing on participants' changing cultural stereotypes through e-mail exchanges.

In this context, O'Dowd and Eberbach (2004) emphasise the importance of raising students' intercultural awareness and findings emanating from Lee's (2009) study indicate that a task-based approach can create a dynamic space to develop participants' intercultural awareness in telecollaboration. Similarly, O'Dowd's (2000) telecollaborative exchanges stimulate participants to become more aware of their views on their own and the target cultures. O'Rourke (2005) concludes that tandem exchange can promote learners' awareness of language forms through text-based negotiation in meaningful communication. Findings from Angelova and Zhao (2016) also indicate that cultural awareness can develop through grammar correction and discussion of cultural topics. For example, American students learned that Chinese does not mark verbs for tenses but uses adverbials and other lexical items to refer to the past – an understanding of time as uninterrupted as opposed to a phenomenon segmented into past, present and future tenses. In this way, the participants understand grammatical differences between the two languages and develop a new understanding of the perception of time in grammars, which promotes their *linguacultural* awareness. Learners in Kan's *et al.* (2013) e-tandem

project also reported growth in cultural understanding. These examples show that telecollaboration's role in promoting intercultural learning is well established. Such telecollaboration between Europe and Asia opens new opportunities to reflect on the process between distant cultures and distant languages. Furthermore, a greater mutual understanding and the possibility of establishing new relationships between people can only increase our knowledge of one another and develop the necessary skills and attitudes to communicate interculturally.

From an Asian perspective, the contribution of this research is that it investigates an approach that encourages much needed authentic intercultural communication between Asian language-learners and their European counterparts. This type of communication can further encourage Asian students to visit European countries under student mobility programmes. Telecollaboration also enables learners to have a different language and culture learning experience than they do through textbooks and classroom-based instruction. This type of exchange is in itself a first-hand experience (Fuchs *et al.*, 2012, p. 89) which is the basis for the sound development of intercultural competence. The research also adds useful insights for the benefit of current Asian telecollaborative projects between China and Ireland.

1.3 Research Aim

Taking the background of this research and its justification into consideration, the overall aim of this study is to explore the impact of online tandem language learning on the development of *linguaculture 1* (LC1) and *linguaculture 2* (LC2) competence. This will focus on participants' development of intercultural and language awareness through e-tandem exchanges in Mandarin and English. The study is guided by the following questions:

1. How can telecollaboration create and/or develop intercultural awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?
2. Do L1-L2 specific exchanges contribute to the development of language awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?

3. In e-tandem partnerships, is awareness more likely to emerge from informal exchanges or task-based discussions?
4. What are the challenges that may arise during the e-tandem exchanges and how do the participants meet them?

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into 2 volumes and 6 chapters. Due to the large set of data, it was decided to create a separate volume (Volume 2) for Appendices containing the qualitative data and results to facilitate the reading process. Volume 1 contains the introduction (Chapter 1), the literature review (Chapter 2), the methodology (Chapter 3), the quantitative data and results (Chapter 4), the discussion of results (Chapter 5) and the conclusion (Chapter 6). The dissertation is structured in the following way:

Chapter one introduces the research study, positions the research motivation within the European, American and Chinese contexts, and offers a justification for the research that the tandem experience is not just a European interest but that it is also a way of facilitating Chinese students' intercultural language learning. Lastly, 4 research questions in the study are introduced and the structure of the dissertation is outlined in greater detail.

Chapter two is the literature review which provides a background and theoretical basis for this online tandem exchange. It considers the trends in language education, systematically introducing telecollaboration as a means of promoting learners' intercultural and language awareness. In addition, task-based learning in telecollaboration is reviewed as an approach and is adapted for the purpose of this study.

Chapter three presents the methodology where the multiple instruments used in this study are justified. They include the use of tasks, learning diaries, focus group interviews, questionnaires and case studies in addition to the content of e-mails and online discussion forums as data sources. Thus, this mixed methods approach serves to triangulate the findings associated with this study. The tasks and the questionnaire were piloted in advance of their administration. 7 categories emerging from the proposed definition of intercultural awareness and categories used by Chun (2011) and O'Dowd (2003) were used to analyse participants' task discussion through e-mails and online forums. A

thematic analysis focusing on themes of awareness of self and other (Furlong and Kennedy, 2011) was also conducted to analyse participants' learning diaries and free e-mail exchanges and gauge the development of their awareness in e-tandem. Analysis of participants' language awareness focused on error analysis and their reflection on L2 gains. Issues related to ethical clearance were addressed. Finally, the limitations of the study are presented to guide future work.

Chapter four presents quantitative findings from the study, including respondents' self-reflection on their e-tandem experience based on questionnaires; participants' e-mail output, task completion and error noticing; participants' perceived L2 gains and L2 features reported in their learning diaries, followed by quantitative findings from focus group interview also feature.

Chapter five brings together the theoretical and empirical findings of previous chapters, examining the findings related to the 4 foci of the study: telecollaboration and intercultural (IC) awareness development, language awareness development in telecollaboration, comparison of task discussion and informal exchanges in telecollaboration; specific challenges faced by Chinese and Irish/American participants. Results from 3 case studies are compared to highlight some of the factors characterising successful or not so successful e-tandem interactions in telecollaboration. Finally, participants' different response patterns are discussed suggesting underlying differences in communication expectations between Chinese and Irish/American participants.

Chapter six, the concluding chapter, highlights the key findings of this study, exploring the role of awareness in enabling e-tandem partners' LC1/LC2 competence development. In particular, it presents the contributions to the methodology, theory and practice in e-tandem exchanges between Eastern and Western learners. The chapter also sets out a number of recommendations and outlines plans for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to serve as a background and theoretical basis for this online tandem exchange study between L2 learners of English in China and L2 learners of Mandarin in Ireland and in the USA (The American learners, also speakers of English as an L1, provided an additional cohort of participants and were included to obtain additional evidence of LC1 and LC2 awareness development). Analysis and synthesis of the literature relating to the components of basic competence, especially the component of awareness associated with *linguaculture 1* (LC1) and *linguaculture 2* (LC2) will be presented. By LC1 and LC2 we mean the combination of culture and language dimensions. The review also aims to provide a solid basis within which to frame the research questions and justify the research methodology at a later stage. With this in mind, the chapter is divided into three main sections.

The first section provides a pedagogical context for this e-tandem project and explores contemporary developments in language education. Because language and culture are seen by many as inseparable, language learning approaches are now integrating an intercultural dimension and have progressed to the development of an intercultural language learning approach. These developments require reflection on the terminology used to characterise both the culture and language dimensions; for example, what is the difference between '*languaculture*' or '*linguaculture*'? Which of these terms best reflects the approach used in this e-tandem study? Moreover, the use of technology and telecollaboration for this study, prompts additional reflection on the impact of technology on language learning and teaching with particular attention paid to learner autonomy - the ability to take responsibility for one's learning (see more on page 20), motivation and the role of the teacher. In addition, challenges associated with telecollaboration and the tools used for such exchanges are reviewed to justify the technological choices made for the present study.

The second section focuses on the role of awareness in LC1 and LC2 competence. A general review of language learners' competence will highlight the important role of awareness in the competence construct. Further to this, the dimensions of intercultural (IC) awareness, second language (L2) awareness and intercultural communicative

competence (ICC) will be examined, thus weaving the concept of awareness as the common thread within this study.

The last section focuses on telecollaborative mutual interaction, and more specifically on the space created by this technological tool for the development of awareness in LC1/LC2 competence. In this regard, empirical studies proposing telecollaboration as provider of a third space for IC awareness development are reviewed. More empirical evidence of the development of L2 awareness through telecollaboration is also provided. Interestingly, these studies emphasise the role of tasks in eliciting evidence of IC and L2 awareness development, suggesting that didacticised materials may also have a role in fostering awareness. Thus, tasks used for telecollaborative exchanges are reviewed and summarised. Liddicoat's model of intercultural competence for language learning is useful for this purpose, and is adapted for the development of LC1 and LC2 tasks with an emphasis on awareness.

Finally, the multiple understandings of the role of awareness in language learning, (e.g., 'noticing' and L2 metalinguistic knowledge), in intercultural learning and in the use of relevant telecollaborative tasks will inform the conception of a model; this model depicts the role of awareness in the development of LC1 and LC2 competence in e-tandem exchanges.

2.2 Contemporary Developments in Language Education

Current language education developments provide the background for this study. In the twentieth century, development of foreign language education moved from a 'grammar-translation method' and 'communicative language teaching' to the inclusion of a cultural/intercultural approach. The development in recent years of the intercultural dimension has coincided with advances in technology. This has facilitated the inclusion of telecollaboration as a way of developing language use and LC2 competence in learners.

2.2.1 Language, Culture and Intercultural Learning

According to current developments in language education, the three dimensions, language, culture and intercultural learning, are closely connected. The relationship between the dimensions and the study of intercultural language learning are the foundations of this study.

There is a vast number of definitions of ‘culture’ for a range of disciplines. An early review of definitions (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952) synthesised what was understood by the term into one complete definition:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (Baldwin, Faulkner and Hecht 2005, p. 8)

Kramsch (1996) provides two main definitions of ‘culture’, which are not dissimilar to Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s 1952 definition above. Kramsch’s first definition focuses on ‘the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions, or artefacts of everyday life’ (p. 2). The second definition sees culture as ‘the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community’ (ibid). What is different is the focus on understanding achieved through communication as part of L2 learning.

Definitions of culture, particularly in the area of language and intercultural communication, are more dynamic than the definitions synthesised by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, as they include an intrinsic link between language, communication and culture. Communication is not only within culture, but between cultures, i.e. intercultural. Understanding of the cultural component of language teaching and learning has changed from one where the teaching of culture as part of foreign language learning was traditionally limited to the ‘transmission of information about the people of the target country and about their general attitudes and beliefs’ (Kramsch 1993, p. 205), as if culture were a fixed, static notion.

In the late 1980’s Byram reflected on the relationship between language and culture:

[Foreign language teaching] is profoundly linguistic because as individuals and as social beings learners are linguistic animals. It is equally fundamentally ‘cultural’, because language is inseparable from ‘culture’. Thus as learners learn *about* language they learn *about* culture and as they learn to use a new language they learn to communicate with other individuals from a new culture. (Byram 1989, p. 22).

Kramsch (1998) also explores the relationship between language and culture by looking at this in a communication context. As she points out, ‘language expresses cultural reality’ (p. 3), because people can communicate facts or ideas by sharing knowledge about the

world, and their words can also reflect their attitudes, beliefs and points of view. In traditional interactions, people use verbal and non-verbal language, for example, the speakers' voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions, to create meanings which can be understood by others, so that 'language embodies cultural reality' (ibid.). Kramsch also states, in a more general sense, that 'language symbolises cultural reality' (ibid.), because language is a system of signs with cultural values and language users can identify their own or others' social identity through language. This suggests that language and culture cannot be separated when people are involved in communication whether face-to-face or in online interactions. Witte (2011) also states that language and culture learning should be combined 'in order to avoid, for the students, the impression that they can be disconnected' (p. 103). Interaction is central to intercultural communication: 'intercultural communication involves, by definition, at least two expressive systems in interaction that are placed in cross-cultural perspective' (Martin, Nakayama and Carbaugh 2012, p. 26).

Kramsch (1996) reflects on a new focus emerging from teaching of language and culture which aimed to 'establish a sphere of interculturality' a dynamic process in which intercultural understanding develops through a process of social interaction and reflection on 'both the target and on the native culture'. This shift from static to dynamic has been brought about by 'more recognition of the complexity and sociopolitical nature of life away from a product-oriented view of culture as static and unitary' (Jackson 2014, p. 193).

Moreover, Byram (2008) points to one of the benefits of foreign language education as taking learners into the experience of 'other cultural beliefs, values, and behaviours' (p. 29) and beyond their own society. Learners should be equipped with 'the means to access, analyse, compare and evaluate whatever cultural artefacts, practices, values, beliefs, or meanings they might encounter' (O'Dowd 2007, p. 131). Intercultural language learning also promotes understanding or 'critical cultural awareness' (Byram, 1997) of one's own culture. This view is echoed in Liddicoat *et al.* (2003) who additionally see intercultural language learning as creating a dialogue between languages and cultures:

It involves developing with learners an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated and accepted. (Liddicoat *et al* 2003, p. 46)

In an earlier study, Buttjes (1991, p. 8) points out that intercultural studies reunite both a 'pragmatic' motive (refers to contextualised communication and interaction with the people from other cultures) and an 'educational' motive (refers to the acquisition of a wider world-view).

The *Cultura* project is a good example of communication that integrates culture and an intercultural dimension into language education. It is a web-based, cross-cultural project designed by Gilberte Furstenberg, Sabine Levet and Shoggy Waryn in 1997 whose aims are to: 'help students develop understanding of the values, attitudes, beliefs and concepts inherent in another culture; to understand how people in the other culture interact, look at the world and frame their thoughts and ideas' (from the *Cultura* website: <http://cultura.mit.edu/what-is-cultura>, sub-section 'Goals').

There are three questionnaire-filling tasks in *Cultura*: word associations, sentence completions and reactions to situations, all designed to elicit cultural similarities and differences. For example, in the word association task, students need to write the first two or three words that come to mind when they see a list of words, such as 'police', 'family', 'work'. Students can write down the words they associate with these concepts. This allows them to express and share their perspectives, because, as previously mentioned, 'language expresses cultural reality' (Kramsch, 1998). After completing this questionnaire, teachers guide the students to find out differences and similarities between the responses of the two groups and to further analyse their answers. This makes students look at their internal perspectives compared to others' and think about the extent to which their cultural context shapes who they are and what they believe. The process may also lead to a reflection on their feelings of, as a result of interacting, being with other group members. In this way, they can become aware of how their social identities are constructed in particular cultural and social contexts. For example, in Furstenberg's *et al* (2001) report on the *Cultura* project conducted with students in France and America, the word 'school' generated one reference to 'Jules Ferry' on the French side (Ferry is an important French figure who defined the French secular education system). Through communication and language, this instance highlights the cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998) particular to the French students.

The significance of intercultural language learning is also reflected in the establishment of associated academic organisations or research groups, for example, ‘The International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication’ (IALIC), the UK forum of Internationalisation and Intercultural Education, ‘CultNet’- an intercultural network for people who are interested in intercultural language teaching and learning established by Michael Byram, ‘The Intercultural Communication Special Interest Group’ under the British Association for Applied Linguistics, or more recently, the establishment of the www.unicollaboration.eu platform. Furthermore, the availability of intercultural language learning resources also reflects the trend towards intercultural education as part of language learning. ‘The European Centre for Modern Languages’ (ECML), an institution of the Council of Europe, is a centre promoting innovation and reform in language teaching and learning. Many projects of the ECML from 2000 to 2015 are related to research on intercultural language learning. While the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed before intercultural competence had acquired a strong place in language teaching and learning, it has become the basis of many courses and textbooks across Europe. It includes intercultural competences among the objectives of language teaching and learning and lists the competences a language learner should possess. These include sociocultural knowledge, intercultural awareness, and intercultural skills (Council of Europe 2001, p. 103-104). However, we should note that the CEFR is concerned with the learning and teaching of modern European languages and does not include Mandarin Chinese which is being introduced as a subject in more and more schools and universities in Europe, including Ireland. With these considerations in mind, the present study proposes to make intercultural learning explicit in the language learning experience of both the European and Chinese participants.

Clearly, as intercultural language learning is gaining greater significance in current language education, more investigation on the subject is required.

2.2.2 Languaculture or Linguaculture?

In order to emphasise the cultural and intercultural dimension of language, terms that adequately reflect the research purpose need to be considered. Here, the origin and

concept of the two terms *languaculture* and *linguaculture* are briefly introduced and the choice of the term used in this study is justified.

The term '*linguaculture*' originates from Friedrich's (1989) article. Friedrich (1989) defines *linguaculture* as 'a domain of experience that fuses and intermingles the vocabulary, many semantic aspects of grammar and the verbal aspects of culture' (p. 306). According to him, this new terminology can overcome the long-lasting confusion about the balance between language and culture, for example how much of language and culture is contained in the relationship of one person to another; is 'language in culture' or 'culture in language'? Moreover, Friedrich (1989) points out that this term identifies a 'common ground' between these confusing questions. Agar (1994) expands on Friedrich's concept but uses the term *languaculture* instead of *linguaculture*. He justifies this modification to create a more direct link with the term 'language' (p. 265). According to Agar (1994), 'the *lingua* in languaculture is about discourse, not just about words and sentences (as implied by the prefix *lingua*). And the *culture* in languaculture is about meanings...' (p. 96). Agar uses *languaculture* to indicate the inseparability of language and culture: 'Languaculture is a reminder, I hope, of the necessary connection between its two parts' (Agar 1994, p. 60).

Fantini (1995) uses the term *linguaculture* but adds another component, namely the notion of first and second language and by extension first and second culture; this translates as '*native linguaculture* (LC1)' and '*second linguaculture* (LC2)' to replace native language (L1) and second language (L2) when discussing the cultural and intercultural dimensions of language. According to Fantini, many concepts of language and language use were developed from linguistics. Furthermore, linguistics is also closely related to culture, because 'much of what is gleaned from a linguistic perspective about languages informs our understanding of culture' (Fantini 1995, p. 5).

Risager, who used the term '*languaculture*', states that she prefers '*linguaculture*' in her recent writing considering it is a 'more straightforward term for linguists' (Risager 2014, p. 90). More specifically, Risager explains her preference for the term '*linguaculture*' over *languaculture* as:

I use it as a concept that may offer us the opportunity of highlighting the culturality of language while at the same time maintaining the conception (metaphor) of linguistic flows across cultural contexts in the world. (Risager 2010, p. 7)

According to Risager (2014), the use of a specific language (oral or written) can be seen as flows in groups of people. She gives an example of these linguistic flows across cultures. For example, Danish-speaking people move around the world as settlers, tourists, students, soldiers, etc. People carry their Danish-language (linguistic) resources with them into new cultural contexts and put them to use. According to Risager (2010), ‘there are dimensions of culture that are bound to a specific language, namely *linguaculture*, and there are dimensions that are not, for instance musical traditions or architectural styles’ (p. 7). Thus, it seems that the term ‘*linguaculture*’ is more specific and closer to the research analysis of the linguistic aspect of language learning. By focusing on L2 words as carrier of cultural values through the word association exercise reviewed in the last sub-section, we have a good illustration of LC1 and LC2 at work.

To sum up, Agar’s use of the term ‘*linguaculture*’ stresses the relationship between language and culture seeing them as inseparable because meaning emerges from this inseparability. As for Friedrich, Fantini and Risager, their choice of *linguaculture* over *languaculture* is related to viewing language from a linguistic perspective through which certain culture specific dimensions will emerge. Considering current thinking on *languaculture* and *linguaculture*, the term ‘*linguaculture*’ is chosen here as it best reflects the learning situation analysed in the present study. The participants in this study, while creating discursive exchanges, are also asked to pay specific attention to their partners’ L2 productions, thereby focusing on linguistic as well as intercultural dimensions that may arise as a result of the exchange. For example, during the discussion on the words associated with ‘Individualism’, participants in this study notice different interpretations as a result of their different cultural backgrounds. In the words of one of the Chinese participants: ‘[I see that] even for the same word we can have different explanations to its meaning, due to our different languages and countries’. Consequently, this study refers to LC1 and LC2 to mean *linguaculture 1* and *linguaculture 2*.

Having provided the theoretical framework underpinning the rationale of this study, we must now turn our attention to telecollaboration, as a means of enabling interaction between learners from distant cultures and distant languages.

2.2.3 The Emergence of Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Learning

In this 21st century, more and more studies are being carried out using networked technologies to enhance learners' intercultural and L2 learning. Many organisations promoting and researching language learning technology have been set up, such as the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO), the European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (EuroCALL) and the recently active platform: 'UNCollaboration'. There are also many international journals dedicated to research and discussion on technology and language learning, for example, *CALICO Journal*, *ReCALL* (the EuroCALL journal), and *Language Learning and Technology*.

Technology not only facilitates language learning, but is also a key to collaborative intercultural learning, also known as 'online intercultural exchange'. According to O'Dowd (2007a), this means:

The activity of engaging language learners in interaction and collaborative project work with partners from other cultures through the use of online communication tools such as e-mail, videoconferencing and discussion forums. (O'Dowd 2007a, p. 4)

This activity is also referred to as 'telecollaboration'. According to O'Dowd and Ritter (2006), telecollaboration refers to 'the use of online communication tools to bring together language learners in different countries for the development of collaborative project work and intercultural exchange' (p. 623). E-tandem exchanges and the *Cultura* project are two models of telecollaboration. E-tandem has many strengths. According to O'Rourke (2007), 'openness' is one of them as tandem learners can enjoy control over their own learning. A successful partnership in e-tandem can be 'enjoyable and intellectually stimulating' (p. 59) and lead to friendships. In addition, O'Dowd (2007b) proves that virtual intercultural contact can contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence because the cultural materials students learn from their tandem partner are subjective and personalised. This is helpful for 'making students aware of how aspects of the target culture are perceived within the culture itself' (p. 147). The most popular communication tools involved in telecollaborative exchange include e-mail, videoconferencing, discussion forum, MOOs and blogs (see Section 1.2 of Chapter 1). Given the nature of the present study - e-mail for LC1 and LC2 tandem exchange, this section first reviews the principles of e-tandem and the issues of autonomy, motivation

and the role of teachers, and then explores the challenges in telecollaboration including a brief discussion of the communication tools used in this study.

2.2.3.1 E-tandem Principles and Motivation

Online tandem language learning, called e-tandem, is an arrangement whereby two native speakers of different languages in separate locations learn each other's language and culture, communicating regularly with one another using electronic media (O'Rourke, 2005).

Principles of e-tandem

There are three principles of e-tandem: reciprocity, autonomy (O'Rourke, 2007; Appel, 1999; Little *et al.*, 1999) and bilingualism (Schwienhorst, 2003; 1997). The principle of bilingualism implies that each student should use the same amount of L1 and L2 in each message; this principle has become the norm in e-tandem. The principle of reciprocity means that both tandem partners should benefit equally from each other (Stickler and Lewis, 2008; Appel, 1999; Little *et al.*, 1999; Schwienhorst, 1997). More specifically, Penman (2002) indicates that both tandem partners should 'not only contribute equally to their language interactions in quantitative terms and in terms of reciprocity of respective L1/L2 input, but also in terms of commitment.' (Penman 2002, Section 2: Principles and types of tandem learning). In other words, this principle requires that partners commit to their own learning and to supporting their partner's learning (Little *et al.*, 1999). This is consistent with the definition of learner autonomy which is defined by Stickler and Lewis (2008) in the context of tandem learning as 'partners [who] are encouraged to take responsibility - individually and collectively - for their learning' (p. 239). This means that each learner depends on and is responsible for her/his ability to sustain the learning experience. According to Hafner and Miller (2011), one aspect of learner autonomy means independent out-of-class learning where learners are intrinsically motivated. However, they also point out that learner autonomy can be achieved through support from teachers in a classroom-based pedagogical approach which provides a 'social context'. This confirms Dam's (1995) definition of learner autonomy:

characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person (Dam 1995, p.1)

Whether two tandem participants can profit equally from each other actually depends on the principle of learner autonomy. According to Little (1991), ‘autonomy is a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action’ (p. 4). In Littlewood’s (1996) diagram of the components of autonomy, motivation is listed as the first factor to influence learner autonomy. Considering this, the role of motivation in e-tandem is examined.

Motivation and telecollaboration

Motivation in L2 learning has been the subject of considerable research. L2 learning as opposed to other subjects, in addition to the formal teaching and learning of grammatical and lexical items, is a socially and culturally bound phenomenon (Dörnyei 2003, Gardner 1979). The type of motivation associated with the social and cultural dimension of language learning is described as *integrative* according to its main proponent, Gardner (1985, 2001). The concept implies a desire to identify with the L2 culture and its speakers. Even in the absence of an L2 community when the subject is confined to the classroom, there may be ‘a powerful integrative motive among, for example, Chinese learners of English in mainland China’ who may not be in contact with native speakers of English (Dörnyei 2003, p.6). However, this type of motivation does not necessarily lead to integration into the L2 community as originally contended by Gardner (1985). More in line with the situation described above, Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) suggest that this type of motivation might simply be an identification process; the process comes from work in social psychology which considers the individual’s *self-concept* with the subsets of *possible* and *ideal selves*, i.e. what someone aspires or fears to become. Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) suggest that the *ideal-self* concept and Gardner’s *integrativeness* are closely related because of the shared aspirations that may be expressed by L2 learners. In a more situated approach to L2 motivation highlighting the central role of the learning context, *willingness to communicate (WTC)*, is defined as ‘a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2’ (Macintyre *et al*, 1998: p. 547 in Dörnyei 2003: p. 13). WTC is interesting because it is not equated to communicative competence. One may be a competent L2 learner with no desire to communicate; conversely, one may not be a proficient L2 user yet one might actively seek communicative situations. Tandem language learning, because of its situatedness provides an opportunity for WTC to emerge as a L2 motivation construct. Moreover,

increased situatedness through engagement in tasks during the learning experience is reported to shape learners' interest and enthusiasm, thereby opening the door to another field of research, namely task motivation (2003, p.14). The following review of four tandem language learning studies illustrates the point.

According to Little (1999), positive motivation plays an important role in a successful tandem partnership. Ushioda (2000) examined learners' attitude and motivation in tandem language learning via e-mail. Irish students were paired with German students. Students in her research were asked to reflect on their tandem experience through a self-evaluation questionnaire with open-ended items including evaluating their tandem experience, comparing tandem learning with other language learning experiences, and analysing the benefits of this experience. Results reveal that participants' motivational perceptions which may influence a successful tandem partnership include: 'interest and enjoyment of personal interaction with a native speaker; access to informal everyday German; focus on own needs and interests; the mutual partnership factor; speed and convenience of e-mail communication' (ibid., p. 125). The study also concluded that motivation promotes the practices of autonomy and reciprocity in tandem learning.

In addition, learner motivation also comes partly from the learning process itself (Little *et al*, 1999). As Dörnyei (2003) states, L2 motivation is related to three aspects: the willingness to communicate, task motivation and the relationship between motivation and the use of learning strategies use. Appel and Gilabert (2002) conducted a study on task-based e-mail tandems to investigate the effects of motivation on task performance. A group of Irish students were paired with a group of Spanish students to complete four tasks via e-mail. Through the analysis of the students' feedback on each task and the levels of participation, nine factors affecting motivation and task performance were proposed as a result of their research: interest in the meaning to be exchanged; personal dimension; involvement in the decision-making process; expertise in the topic; intellectual challenge; the media and materials used; visibility/diffusion of outcomes; competition/collaboration; evaluation.

Develotte, Mangenot and Zourou (2005) conducted a task-based collaborative learning project with 16 French students who were future language teachers. These students were asked to create multimedia activities based on their culture for students in Australia. The

relationship between the situated context in the task and personal motivation was qualitatively analysed through semi-structured interviews. Students were asked to compare the project with previous experience in creating multimedia activities without a target group and gave reasons for their motivation. It was found that the French students were highly motivated due to the well-defined target group and contextualised outcome, suggesting an interest in the meaning to be exchanged as identified in the Appel and Gilabert study (2002) described above. Furthermore, their high motivation led the students to ask for more support and tutoring. Thus, it shows that tasks can provide a precise context which helps to stimulate students' motivation.

Role of students and teachers in e-tandem

In distance education, student, content and teacher are three key components (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Moore, 1993) which influence each other and thus should be considered as part of this e-tandem project. *Cultura*, an approach for online intercultural language learning through online discussion forums, is now a well-established subject of study. The roles of the student and the teacher in *Cultura* are similar to the roles of participants in other e-tandem exchanges. Students have a central role in conducting all their activities and teachers are also crucial in facilitating students' effective intercultural communication.

The teachers, for their part, are with the students through all the stages to prevent certain 'pitfalls' (Furstenberg *et al.*, 2001, p. 84), such as literal interpretation, hasty and superficial comparison, focusing only on parts of details. However, one of the rules of *Cultura* is that teachers should never interfere in the forums, therefore, in this context, it is not clear how the teachers ensure the prevention of those 'pitfalls' during online forum exchanges. In this present e-tandem study, there are no opportunities for students to participate in classroom discussion in order to analyse their own answers. Thus, in this study, the teachers' appropriate participation in online forums seems necessary, because teachers' comments can act as a model for extracting the cultural connections and contradictions, which, in turn, can stimulate students to exchange more. In this way the teacher takes on the role of a 'guide and facilitator' (García and Crapotta 2007, p. 71) who encourages and helps students' cultural understanding. According to O'Dowd

(2007b), the teacher's role in telecollaboration is also an 'organiser', an 'intercultural partner', a 'model and coach', and a 'source and resource'.

Meanwhile, the teacher's role in helping language learners to become autonomous has been emphasised by many researchers (Little, 2003, 1999, 1995; Sercu, 2002). Sercu (2002) indicates that autonomous learning does not mean less teacher direction or preparation. Little (2003) also points out that the language teacher's function is to provide the learners with autonomous learning opportunities and to support them to become more autonomous. In this context, developing learner autonomy is a gradual process under the guidance of teachers (Little, 1999). Thus, the teacher in tandem learning needs to monitor the exchange closely in its early stage where autonomy is still underdeveloped. On the other hand, according to Sercu (2002), the teacher should provide guidance at a later stage of learning, that is, when learners encounter difficulties in language use, in solving intercultural problems and also when feedback is required (Sercu 2002, p. 66). These teacher/learner exchanges may occur during any stages of learning.

Scarino (2009) indicates that students in tandem learning have 'dual roles: participant users and learners/analysers of target language' (p. 69). In the first role, students use language to convey meaning between languages and cultures. In their second role, students need to reflect critically on their exchanges from their own and others' perspectives. However, in order to fill these roles effectively, students should have some training in skills which are important for successful online intercultural exchange. According to O'Dowd (2001), students need to be trained in how to use communication technologies effectively and appropriately. Besides, students also need support in developing an ethnographic definition of culture and need to develop various skills of online interaction and investigation (O'Dowd, 2007b). In this e-mail tandem project, all the students are capable of using e-mails for distant communication. As to how to prepare students for an ethnographic definition of culture, O'Dowd (2007b) points out that the teacher should take responsibility for its development by helping students to discover more about the meanings which members of the target culture attribute to the cultural facts (O'Dowd 2007b, p. 149). With regard to this, it does not mean that students need to find areas where both cultures agree, but students need to find out more about others' perspective, beliefs and values underlying their cultures.

In summary, a model is proposed showing the close connection between reciprocity, bilingualism, autonomy and motivation, as well as the relationship between teacher, students and tasks (Figure 2.1).

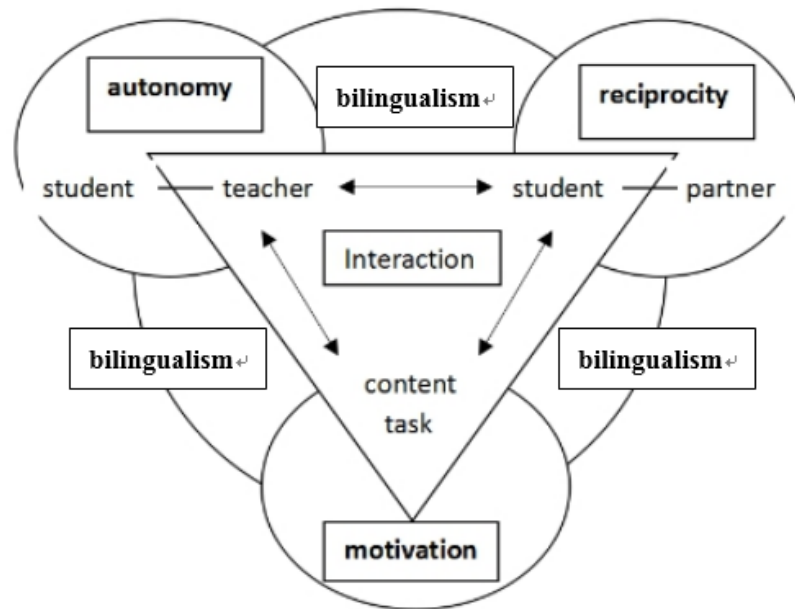


Figure 2.1: Components to be considered in e-tandem learning

Figure 2.1 presents the six components in e-tandem: teacher, student, tasks, reciprocity, bilingualism, autonomy and motivation. It first illustrates that in e-tandem learning, teacher, student and tasks, as the basic elements, interact with each other, while the other three factors - autonomy, reciprocity and motivation also are fundamental principles of e-tandem learning, which once explained to participants, become attitudinal and impact on the students' learning performance. Schwienhorst (2006) has added 'balanced bilingualism' as one of the key components of e-tandem learning. In the model proposed here, bilingualism is part of the interaction which takes place in two languages, where 'each partner at different times takes the role of learner and of expert, so that both sides of the learning process are constantly in focus' (O'Rourke 2007, p. 46).

2.2.3.2 Challenges in Telecollaboration

This section first explores advantages and disadvantages of the tools used in this study as well as challenges during telecollaboration, especially in e-tandems.

E-mail

As an asynchronous form of communication, using e-mail for exchanges has its advantages and disadvantages. According to Little *et al.* (1999), e-mail can solve the interaction problem of the large number of students who are not in the same geographic location. However, they also point out additional problems and advantages associated with e-mail exchange by summarising the differences between face-to-face and one-to-one language learning via e-mail. First, if the method changes from face-to-face to e-mail, learners produce their messages without the interactive support from their learning partners (Little *et al.*, 1999, p. 3). The corrective feedback from partners also becomes conscious and deliberate and loses the voluntary feedback from native speakers (*ibid.*, p. 3). However, O'Rourke (2007) declares that it is in e-mails that learners can produce 'broad, deep and detailed' feedback to their partners (p. 53). Another positive aspect is that, in contrast to face-to-face communication, e-mail writing is more helpful as learners can refer back to what they wrote and to their corrected errors (*ibid.*, p. 4).

Appel (1999) adds another characteristic associated with e-mail exchange. It is the time delay between sending and receiving emails (p. 2). However, this disadvantage is also one of the advantages proposed by O'Rourke (2007) as learners can take their time to respond to their partner and to understand the messages from their partner without too much pressure (p. 53). E-mail and face-to-face are not a case of one or the other, because each develops different skills. For example, students' writing and thinking skills can be developed through e-mail exchange. According to Lightfoot (2006), students put more thought into e-mail communication than they do into face-to-face communication. On the other hand, face-to-face communication has the advantage of developing students' oral skills and communicative competence. Although e-mail exchanges appear to have limitations, many studies have proved that e-mail is still an effective method for language learning, especially for tandem and intercultural exchange. These studies will be reviewed in more detail in the later Section 2.4.1 of this chapter.

Online discussion forums

Like e-mail, online discussion forums are also a kind of asynchronous mode of communication. An asynchronous discussion forum is also called a bulletin/message board or a conference room, which allows one-to-one and one-to-many communication

(Chen 2005, p. 3). According to Chen (2005), the benefit of using this technology is ‘to have learners’ reflective practice take place in a more interactive language learning environment and shared by multiple participants’ (p. 2). Specifically, in a discussion forum students have time and a place to write messages independently or to interact with other learners. Their written messages are helpful because they reflect linguistic behaviour and multiple points of view from other participants. For example, to examine the effectiveness of a web-based learning environment, Liaw’s (2007) study used online discussion boards/forum for students’ intercultural language learning. In her study, she created a web-based environment containing four instructional units for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Taiwan. In each unit, students were asked to read an article on their own culture with the help of two e-referencing tools. They also had the opportunity to discuss their responses to the articles with e-pals through intercultural forums. Analysis of their forum entries showed evidence of students’ growth in linguistic competence and intercultural awareness.

Additional challenges in telecollaboration

O’Dowd and Ritter (2006) point out three levels for the challenges based on their study on failed communication in telecollaboration: the individual level, the classroom level, and the institutional level. The individual level refers to e-tandem partners’ different levels of ICC, motivation or expectation. At the classroom level, teacher-teacher relationship, task design, and learner-matching procedures may influence the exchange. In O’Dowd’s (2003) study, he pointed out the clash between the needs of student and teacher in task design. In the end-of-term feedback in his study, it was found that all the negative comments made by the Spanish group in reference to the project were in some way related to aspects of task design. ‘One student complained that the topics chosen by the two teachers had hindered the development of the online relationships between the German and Spanish students: *“I know that talking about culture could be useful for increasing our knowledge of the world, but neither Germans or Spanish ones will be totally close to one another if we don’t talk about hobbies and personal interests”*’ (O’Dowd and Ritter 2006, p. 631). As for the issue of learner-matching, O’Rourke (2007) also states one of the difficulties in e-tandem could be mismatch in proficiency, which may influence the achievement of reciprocity. However, without leaning toward a specific suggestion, O’Rourke declares that to match learners randomly may be the best.

In the Kan, Sticker and Xu study (2013), participants included Chinese beginners at The Open University (UK) and postgraduate students and staff from the Distance Education School of Beijing Jiaotong University. Although these participants appeared to be very diverse in terms of age (48-76 years old), educational background, and level of the target language (1-year Chinese study and 8-20 years English learning), the overall evaluation of the project proved to be extremely positive as a result of the pre-project preparation and continuous support from two institutions (p. 5). With regard to the age gap between participants, Wang, Berger and Szilas (2012) also found the same result in their pilot study of an e-tandem Chinese-French writing course. They found that the age gap between the tandem partners did not affect their learning motivation, because ‘they enjoyed learning with those "adult" learners, and that they had discovered a lot of new knowledge from them’ (p. 403).

The last level relates to the organisation of students’ course of study. According to O’Dowd and Ritter (2006, p. 633), institutional affordances and constraints that can affect e-tandem partnerships include the misalignment of academic calendars and student contact hours; these were also identified by Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003). The integration of e-tandem into ‘classroom work’ is also recommended by O’Rourke (2007) to achieve a more successful exchange. O’Dowd (2013b) reports on the findings from a study on telecollaborative activity in European higher education in order to identify the barriers when organising online intercultural exchanges. One of his suggestions for the integration of telecollaboration in language learning is to ‘achieve credit or recognition for the students’ telecollaborative work’; this is also highlighted from the staff’s perspective as suggested by the following comment: ‘To be honest, unless it becomes a credit-bearing module, staff will have to do it above their day-to-day workload, which could become unfeasible (and it did exactly that for me, which is why - partly - I wanted to get formal recognition for them)’ (p. 6). Thus, all these challenges indicate that the preparation of a tandem project should not only focus on student and teacher’s skills, but also needs to consider the appropriate pairing of learners, negotiations between partner teachers, and task design.

In summary, any technological tool has its own merits and shortcomings. Whatever technology is used in language learning, the first thing to consider is its availability and

practicality in the educational institution. With this in mind, e-mail and online discussion forum emerged as the most suitable and practical means of communication for this study, given the temporal, financial and geographical constraints defining the project. Empirical evidence of the suitability of these tools will be reviewed in Section 2.4; however, central to the nature of the project itself is the focus on the development of LC1 and LC2 awareness through intercultural language learning. The following section provides a rationale for choosing awareness as a key component of intercultural learning and ultimately of intercultural competence.

2.3 The Role of Awareness in LC1 and LC2 Competence

Given the growing research on intercultural communicative competence in current language education, this section begins with a review of concepts of competence and language learners' competences as defined by the CEFR. Particular attention is paid to the awareness component of intercultural learning. Then, the components of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural competence are reviewed, with further exploration of the definition and the role of intercultural awareness in the IC competence construct. Finally, a review of the relationship between language awareness and L2 competence development concludes this section.

2.3.1 Awareness and Competence

Competence is not an easy term to define, because it may have different definitions according to the context within which it is applied. Delamare and Winterton (2005) propose a holistic model of competence, which they state, is suitable for both educational and work-based contexts. In this holistic model, competence has three dimensions: cognitive, functional and social competences, which are consistent with Bloom's (1956) KSA model (knowledge, skills and attitudes). Forehand (2005) describes the three domains identified by Bloom as cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude) and psychomotor (skills). Mudler, Weigel and Collins (2006) state that competence should be a multi-dimensional concept and define competence as 'the capability to perform; to use knowledge, skills and attitudes that are integrated in the professional repertoire of the individual' (p. 23). Klieme, Hartig and Rauch (2008) discuss three main concepts of competence. The first concept of competence is that it is 'a technical term in order to describe the cognitive system underlying linguistic abilities' (p. 4). This concept stresses

cognitive competence. For the second concept, competence is viewed as individual abilities, including not only a cognitive dimension, but also a comprehensive ability to perform. For the third concept, competence is defined as ‘context-specific dispositions for achievement that can be acquired through learning’ (p. 8). These definitions emphasise that competence can be achieved through learning. Finally, Klieme, Hartig and Rauch (2008) propose a working definition of competence as a ‘learnable, contextualised, and cognitive disposition’ (p. 9). Sampson and Fytros (2008) also explore the common elements in competence and propose a generic definition of competence as follows:

A competence can be defined as a set of personal characteristics (e.g. skills, knowledge, attitudes) that an individual possesses or needs to acquire, in order to perform an activity within a specific context. Performance may range from the basic level of proficiency to the highest levels of excellence. (Sampson & Fytros 2008, p. 13)

In the table below (Table 2.1), the generic concepts of competence reviewed above are presented, in an effort to illustrate the principal and most widely used components of competence. From this comparative table of the different definitions for competence, three components appear to be common to all definitions: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In addition, it is also found that competence and performance are closely related and cannot be separated.

Table 2.1: Examples of generic definitions of competence

Author	Definition
Delamare and Winterton (2005)	Cognitive, functional and social competences, which are consistent with the KSA model (knowledge, skills and attitudes).
Mudler, Weigel and Collins (2006)	The capability to perform ; to use knowledge, skills and attitudes that are integrated in the professional repertoire of the individual.
Klieme, Hartig and Rauch (2008)	the cognitive system underlying linguistic abilities; a comprehensive ability to perform ; context-specific dispositions for achievement that can be acquired through learning (functional competence); learnable, contextualised, and cognitive disposition.
Sampson and Fytros (2008)	A set of personal characteristics (e.g. skills, knowledge, attitudes) that an individual possesses or needs to acquire, in order to perform an activity within a specific context. Performance may range from the basic level of proficiency to the highest levels of excellence.

Considering the research topic of this study, this sub-section explores the components of language learners' competence and points to an additional component, namely awareness, which has grown in importance in recent years.

With regard to language learners/users specifically, the CEFR presents the general competences (see Table 2.2) which are necessary in communicative situations.

Table 2.2: Language learner's general competences
(summarised from the CEFR, p. 101-108)

General competences			
1. <i>Declarative knowledge</i> (<i>savoir</i>)	Knowledge of the world	2. <i>'Existential' competence</i> (<i>savoir être</i>)	Attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, etc.
	Sociocultural knowledge		
	Intercultural awareness		
3. <i>Skills and know-how</i> (<i>savoir-faire</i>)	Practical skills and know-how	4. <i>Ability to learn</i> (<i>savoir apprendre</i>)	Language and communication awareness
	Intercultural skills and know-how		General phonetic awareness and skills
			Study skills
			Heuristic skills

In Table 2.2, there are four domains of language learners' general competences comprising the four components of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness; however, within the framework, awareness is mentioned three times: intercultural awareness, language and communication awareness, as well as general phonetic awareness. This suggests that awareness is central to the general competence category and can be the common thread required for the successful development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In addition, this table also indicates the inclusion of intercultural competence in the CEFR (such as intercultural awareness and intercultural skills in sections 1 and 2). However, no full description of intercultural competence is included in this framework. This table also shows that awareness is developed in the *declarative knowledge* and the *ability to learn* sections; this suggests that awareness is manifest both in an informal context along with knowledge of the world and sociocultural knowledge, but it is also the result of more formal instruction as learning occurs.

With regard to awareness, Schmidt (1994) categorises it as one of the four dimensions of consciousness (the other three dimensions are intention, attention and control). A

definition of awareness is proposed by Al-Hejin (2004) as ‘the learner’s knowledge or subjective experience that he/she is detecting a stimulus’ which is associated with explicit and implicit learning (p. 2). One notes here the role of subjectivity in the learning process which will be re-visited when considering the learner’s third space. In addition, more reviews of language awareness are presented in section 2.3.3.1.

The present study, in the form of semi-structured e-tandem language learning, is a clear illustration of the learning environment created for the learner, that is, it is both formal through focus on language and tasks, and informal through the choices and decisions made by the learners themselves. Interestingly, the competences described by the CEFR are based on the *savoirs* proposed by Byram (1997) in the context of discussions about intercultural communicative competence. Thus, in the following sub-section, intercultural communicative competence is reviewed in order to further confirm the role of awareness.

2.3.2 Intercultural Awareness as a New Component of Intercultural Competence

Second language learning is not just aimed at developing learners’ linguistic competence, but also aims to promote their intercultural communicative competence. However, different terms have been used to describe the required competences in intercultural communication and interaction, for example, ‘intercultural effectiveness’ (Hammer *et al.*, 1978), ‘cross-cultural adaptation’ (Ruben and Kealey, 1979), and ‘intercultural sensitivity’ (Chen, 1997). In an international business environment, global competencies and global leadership competencies are used to express this necessary competence (Jokinen, 2005; Bird and Osland, 2004). In the field of language education, scholars use very similar terms and refer to intercultural communication competence (Spitzberg, 2000; Chen, 1990), intercultural communicative competence (Fantini, 2005; 2000; Sercu, 2002; Byram, 1997), and intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2004; Byram, 1997). Certain scholars use ‘intercultural communicative competence’ or ‘intercultural competence’ interchangeably (for example, Fantini, 2000). However, other scholars point to differences between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence (Deardorff, 2004; Sercu, 2002; Byram, 1997). According to these authors, the terms intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence should be clearly distinguished in order to emphasise the roles of both language and culture in language learning.

Byram (1997) proposes a model (Figure 2.2) which specifies the dimensions of intercultural communicative competence.

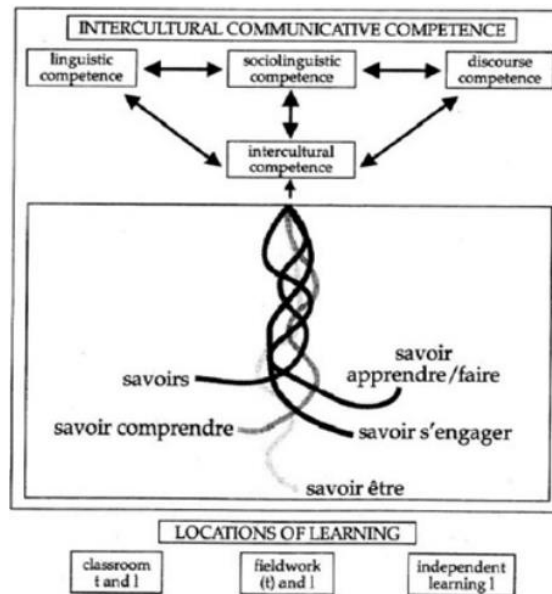


Figure 2.2: Byram's 1997 model of ICC
(Byram 1997, p. 73)

In this model, Byram builds on van Ek's (1986) model of communicative ability, and proposes that ICC should include linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. Thus, intercultural competence is included as one component of ICC. Byram's (1997) use of the term 'intercultural communicative competence' expands on the development of 'communicative competence' in L2 teaching:

FLT is therefore concerned with communication, but this has to be understood as more than the exchange of information and sending of information which has dominated 'communicative language teaching' in recent years. Successful communication is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships (Byram 1997, p. 3)

Communicative competence, based on Linguist Dell Hymes' notion (1972), refers to 'the ability to use language meaningfully in specific real-life situations shifted the paradigm for language teaching' (Piccardo 2014, p. 10), which emphasises using language in real context. The CEFR splits communicative language competence into linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (p. 13). Linguistic competence relates to the aspects of a language system, such as lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills. Sociolinguistic competence focuses on social conventions when using language,

such as rules, norms, etc., and pragmatic competence is relevant to the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts). In Byram's (1997) model, a total of five *savoirs* make up intercultural competence. The first *savoir*, *savoirs*, refers to the knowledge of one's own and others' social groups and cultures and of the process of interaction between these groups (p. 35). *Savoir être* is the attitudes of curiosity and openness to look at one's own culture while valuing other cultures (p. 34). Both *savoir comprendre* and *savoir apprendre/faire* refer to the skills component of intercultural competence. The former is the skill of interpreting another culture and relating it to one's own (p. 98). The latter is the skill of discovering new knowledge of a culture and of interacting with native speakers (p. 99). *Savoir s'engager* refers to critical cultural awareness, the ability to evaluate one's own and others' culture critically (p. 101). As Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) state, the foundation of intercultural competence is in the attitudes (*savoir être*) component, while knowledge (*savoirs*) and skills (*savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/faire*) are crucial components.

Sercu (2002) proposes addition of a sixth *savoir* (*savoir communiquer* - communicative competence) to Byram's model. She emphasises the importance of both communicative competence and intercultural competence. She (ibid., p. 63) restates that ICC involves not only the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language, but also the acquisition of particular skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and ways of looking at the world. Sercu uses Byram's model and definition of the intercultural speaker as someone who is an interculturally competent user of the foreign language. To be specific, an intercultural speaker is 'to understand, to gain an inside view of the other person's culture, and at the same time to contribute to the other person's understanding of his or her own culture from an insider's point of view' (ibid). Therefore, in her understanding of both communicative and intercultural competence, responsibility is placed on the learner to become actively engaged and personally invested in intercultural communication in order to make the exchange genuinely reciprocal.

In a more recent development, Byram (2009, p. 323) proposes a revised model of ICC based on the 1997 model, in which critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) is placed centrally within his model of intercultural competence (see Figure 2.3).

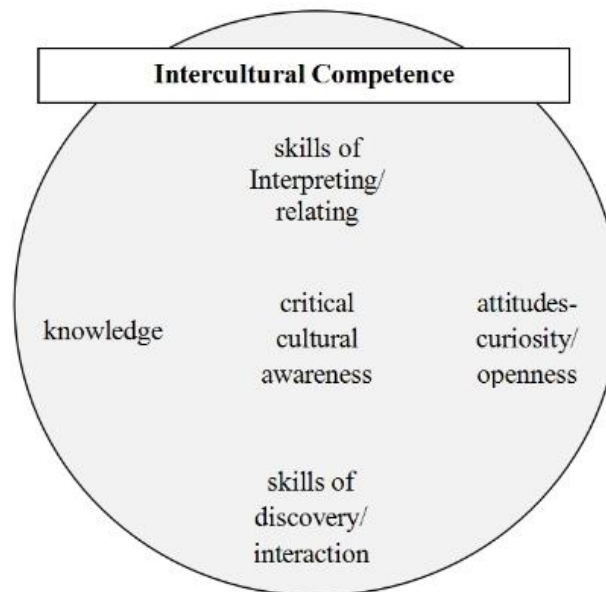


Figure 2.3: Byram's revised model of intercultural competence (Byram 2009, p. 323)

This model is in contrast to his 1997 model of intercultural competence which does not emphasise any special role for critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). Interestingly, Byram uses English instead of French definitions in this newer model' although he uses both languages in his discussion. When discussing the revised model, Byram places critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) at the centre of the model, thus symbolising the special significance of awareness in the construct (p. 325). Furthermore, he states directly that *savoir s'engager*, *i.e.*, the ability to evaluate one's own and others' culture critically, is the crucial educational dimension of intercultural competence (p. 326). The present study, through its particular choice of tasks developed by the *Cultura* project, places this dimension at its heart. The *Cultura* project offers evidence of *savoir s'engager* through the multiple entries proposed by participants to the project since 1997 - see *Cultura's* archives for examples of emerging *savoirs* in the course of these exchanges.

According to Chen (1990), intercultural communication competence is 'the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviours to elicit a desired response in a specific environment' (p. 13). He also identifies four major components of ICC as personality strength, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness. Here cultural awareness means the understanding of differences within the host culture that affect people's thought and behaviour (Chen 1990, p. 28) and its role is

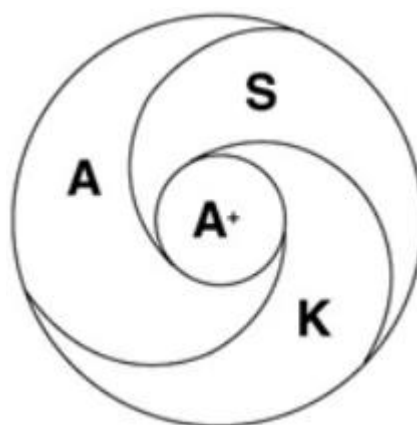
indicated as the prerequisite factor in effective intercultural interaction. From Chen's definition of ICC, awareness has been indicated as a component of ICC. But in the definition of cultural awareness, Chen (1990) just focuses on the awareness of the knowledge of the host culture and its thought patterns, which does not include the awareness of one's own culture, as highlighted by Byram (1997).

However, in a later publication, Chen (1997) revised his views and pointed out three major elements of ICC. They are intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence, which form the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of intercultural communication (p. 8). The cognitive aspect refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how people think and behave (p. 8). Here Chen uses the term 'intercultural awareness' to replace the 1990 'cultural awareness' (Chen, 1990) and further emphasises that the ability for intercultural awareness can be enhanced by learning about the similarities and differences of each other's culture. Here the word 'similarities' is added to his 1990 definition of cultural awareness. This indicates that intercultural awareness should be the awareness of both one's own culture and the host culture. In addition, he also points out the prerequisite role of intercultural awareness in intercultural interactions. Intercultural sensitivity is conceptualised by Chen (1997) as the ability to develop a positive emotional attitude to understand, appreciate, and accept different cultures, and to produce a positive outcome. This is similar to Byram's (2009) dimension 'attitudes of curiosity and openness'. The behavioural aspect of intercultural communication is intercultural competence and refers to effective and appropriate behaviour in intercultural interaction (Chen 1997, p. 9). Here Chen categorises intercultural competence as one of the elements of ICC, which is the same as Byram's (1997) model (Figure 2.2).

Fantini (2005) states that ICC represents the mixed abilities which enable one to perform 'effectively' and 'appropriately' when interacting with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Here Fantini relates 'effective' to one's own performance in the second language-culture (LC2) and relates 'appropriate' to how it is viewed by members of one's own culture and one's host culture. Compared with Chen's 1990 concept of ICC above, Fantini uses the word 'abilities' instead of 'ability'. This is more suitable because it indicates that ICC is a 'complex phenomenon' and will include many

different components. Both Chen and Fantini indicate that ICC not only includes knowledge, but that it is also about performance/behaviour. This implies that besides knowledge, those aspects that relate to performance or behaviour should be included in the ICC components. These cover a variety of traits and characteristics, communication skills and proficiency in the host language (Fantini, 2005). L2 proficiency is clearly proposed as one component of ICC, which suggests that the development of ICC should relate to L2 learning. Finally, four dimensions of ICC are highlighted by Fantini: knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness, which confirms Byram's (2009) model; however, in Fantini's model, awareness features as a dimension in its own right, making it more transparent.

For Fantini, awareness is critical to development of ICC. He puts forward the view that awareness is about oneself and others and can be improved through comparison of one's native *linguaculture* (LC1) and that of the host culture (Fantini, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, awareness of one's own culture and the host culture should be included as a central component of ICC. In this respect, Fantini's definition of cultural awareness differs from that of Chen (1990) who does not include others' culture. But it is in line with Byram's critical cultural awareness (*Savoir s'engager*), because it refers to the ability to evaluate one's own and others' culture critically. Fantini (2000) explores the four components (awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge) more specifically and uses an 'A+ASK' quartet (see Figure 2.4) to represent these. In this quartet, awareness (A+) is shown at the centre, which indicates the role of awareness as the most powerful dimension of ICC, also echoed in Byram's (2009) model.



**Figure 2.4: Dimensions of ICC
(Fantini 2000, p. 28)**

To sum up, ICC is a complex competence which relates to linguistic competence, communicative competence, and intercultural competence. With regard to intercultural competence, four dimensions - knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness are included in the most recent definitions. Among them awareness is the cognitive aspect of intercultural competence, which plays a crucial role according to Byram (2009), Fantini (2000), (2005) and Chen (1990). Based on the above review, intercultural awareness means the ability to understand and evaluate one's own and others' culture critically through comparison of the similarities and differences of LC1 and LC2. The central role of awareness suggests that developing learner's awareness should be a focus for this research. Moreover, Witte (2011) states that development of intercultural competence relies on 'learning a foreign language and its sociocultural context' (p. 90), thus this awareness is rooted in both intercultural and language awareness. Hence, the next section will move on to discussing linguistic competence.

2.3.3 Language Awareness and L2 Competence Development

O'Dowd's (2004) PhD dissertation indicates that 'it is important to point out that the aims of intercultural learning are intended to complement and expand on the linguistic aims of the language classroom and not to replace them (p. 31)'. Thus, the focus could be on both IC competence and L2 competence during students' intercultural language learning. Given the role of awareness in competence as reviewed in Section 2.3.1, this section explores the definition of language awareness and its relationship with L2 competence development.

2.3.3.1 Definition of Language Awareness

Language awareness is an abstract term, so it is necessary to define it. According to The Association for Language Awareness (2010), language awareness is 'explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use' (para.1, <http://www.languageawareness.org/web.ala/web/about/tout.php>). This definition, places equal emphasis on learning, teaching and language use, a process activated by the synergy of explicit knowledge and conscious perception.

Metalinguistic knowledge/explicit knowledge

Language awareness can be understood as metalinguistic knowledge or explicit knowledge. Elder *et al.* (1999) regard metalinguistic knowledge as knowledge about language in general, or language awareness. More specifically, Hu (2002, p. 348) posits that one component of metalinguistic knowledge is the production of ‘explicit and verbalizable knowledge about L2 grammar’ and she also indicates that metalinguistic knowledge can be activated in L2 performance. As Ellis (2004, p. 229) points out, explicit knowledge is ‘the conscious awareness of what a language or language in general consists of and/or of the roles that it plays in human life’. Moreover, Roehr (2006) relates metalinguistic knowledge to L2 learning, as the operation of metalinguistic knowledge should include not only learners’ ability to correct, describe, and explain L2 errors, but also learners’ language-analytic ability (for example, the ability to identify the grammatical role of parts of speech in L2 sentences). Language-analytic ability is also defined by Skehan (1998, p. 204) as a learner’s ‘capacity to infer rules of language and make linguistic generalizations or extrapolations’. In order to activate this ability, and for L2 input to become cognitively meaningful to the learner, the role of consciousness and ‘noticing’ in particular needs to be explored, first theoretically and then empirically.

Consciousness/noticing: theoretical review

Awareness is also considered as consciousness and includes noticing as one of its most important elements. Schmidt (1990) defines consciousness as awareness, intention, and knowledge. Consciousness as awareness includes noticing and Schmidt states that ‘noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input to intake (p. 129)’ or ‘intake is that part of the input that the learner notices (p. 139)’. This is the ‘noticing hypothesis’. In other words, the noticing hypothesis highlights the crucial role of awareness in language learning (Schmidt, 1992).

However, certain factors influencing noticing in the input cannot be overstated and these include: instruction, frequency, skill level, task demands and comparison (Schmidt, 1990). According to Skehan (1998), instruction provides structured, differentiated input that assists noticing by focusing attention on and enhancing awareness of language features. What’s more, when a language feature appears more frequently in the input, as Schmidt (1990) points out, an item will be more likely noticed and integrated into an existing

interlanguage system i.e., a system between the L1 and L2 prior to achieving target language proficiency). However, learners' abilities in L2 processing also affect the extent of their noticing of L2 features.

Selinker (1972) defines the interlanguage system as '...a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL [target language] norm. The linguistic system we will call 'interlanguage' IL' (p.214). Today, the system is understood to comprise subsets characterized by new or novel forms created by learners that are neither completely akin to the L1 nor the L2 and the range of which is as yet unknown (Selinker 2014). Some forty years later, Selinker notes new and multiple types of intersystems, thanks to emerging subsets such as interlanguages, interdialects, interliteracies and intercultures as well as Kramsch's third place or third culture (1998) (ibid., p. 230).

'Task demands' refers to the way in which an instructional task causes learners to notice particular features (Schmidt, 1990), thereby acknowledging the role of the teacher and/or task-designer in the noticing process. Schmidt declares that noticing also requires learners to make comparisons between their input and output. This echoes Skehan's view (2003, p. 398) that noticing-in-output should also be considered; and this noticing-in-output needs appropriate support, such as feedback from the teacher or other learners. In this regard, Lai and Zhao (2006) studied noticing in the context of online text-based chat. They found that text-based online chat promotes noticing more than face-to-face conversations in terms of learners' noticing of their own linguistic mistakes through the feedback on 'problematic linguistic forms provided by their interlocutors' (p. 104).

Identifying awareness in L2 learning

As awareness has been understood as explicit knowledge and noticing, its operation in L2 learning can be specified. According to Simard and Wong (2004, p. 98), the observable product of awareness is called metalinguistic reflection, such as the act of reflection on a linguistic feature of, for example, the English language (i.e., word order). Al-Hejin (2004) points out that awareness is an individual's subjective experience of a stimulus or cognitive content. With regard to the learners' experience, Al-Hejin further identifies three observable consequences as follows:

- ‘First, the person must show a behavioural or cognitive change as a result of the experience. For example, a learner might begin using -ed endings as a result of having been exposed to input that targets the past tense’ (2004, p. 3).
- ‘Second, the person must report that she/he was aware of the experience at the time it took place. For example, the learner might report having been aware of -ed endings in the verbs at the time of exposure’ (ibid., p. 3).
- ‘Finally, the person must be able to describe the experience. For example, the learner must be able to articulate the morphological rule underlying the regular past tense’ (ibid., p. 3).

Svalberg (2007) points out that ‘awareness causes a change in behaviour or cognitive state and the person is able to report that they became aware and what they became aware of’ (p. 289). Al-Hejin’s observations above clearly illustrate this point and also present useful guidelines which can be used for the assessment of students’ development of language awareness in this telecollaborative study. However, an empirical review of these theoretical considerations needs to be presented in order to grasp the nature of awareness and its impact on L2 learner behaviour.

2.3.3.2 Awareness in L2 Learner Behaviour: Empirical Evidence

As suggested by the above overview of the definitions of language awareness, the term appears to be closely related to metalinguistic/explicit knowledge, noticing, and consciousness. Accordingly, in order to establish the role of awareness in L2 learning, this section looks at four empirical studies because these studies investigate the connection between the terms metalinguistic/explicit knowledge, noticing, consciousness and second language learning.

In a study-abroad context, Stewart (2010) used e-journals to examine eight American Spanish learners’ language awareness and L2 use. Every two weeks, learners wrote entries about noticing and understanding characteristics of Spanish and also about their perceptions of using Spanish. The entries show that some learners were more likely than others to notice characteristics of Spanish from input and interaction as well as to seek out ‘opportunities for extended discourse’ (p. 153). The explanation given for this result is that ‘the more frequent interactions with the target language community appeared to provide increased opportunities for noticing language features, whereas a limited social

network seemed to correlate with students reporting fewer incidences of noticing' (p. 154). The researcher argues that the use of e-journals may be a fruitful approach to examine the development of learners' language awareness.

Interestingly, study-abroad experiences alone do not appear to yield significant results with regard to the development of L2 awareness. In this regard, Dekeyser (2010) investigated 16 intermediate-level US learners of Spanish in a six-week study-abroad programme, using questionnaires, interviews, observations, and stimulated recalls. He found that learners did not seem to be aware of some fundamental aspects of Spanish syntax, even at the end of their 6-week stay. The learners had difficulties in using input to learn about Spanish and several learners avoided interactions with native speakers. Dekeyser recommends that in order to enable the development of language awareness that at least instruction in declarative knowledge of L2 grammar be offered to learners. Although this study does not investigate L2 awareness *per se*, it shows that lack of L2 awareness will slow learners down in their progress.

Mackey (2006) offers a different perspective in the context of a university level intensive ESL (English as a Second Language) programme. She explored feedback provided to participants on the noticing of L2 forms (questions, plurals, and past tense forms) during classroom interactions. Multiple methods (on-line learning journals, introspective comments, questionnaire responses, a controlled pre-test and post-test) were used to measure noticing. In this case, learners reported more noticing of L2 forms when 'interactional feedback' was given in class, and learners who noticed more, developed more.

In addition, Wali and Blin (2009) conducted a study of Arabic students' English writing through computer-mediated peer-feedback. 26 students in their study were required to conduct activities which included writing a wiki, posting comments to forums, essay writing and peer-reviewing over a semester. Both the researcher and lecturer corrected the essays and encoded the errors in 7 different grammatical categories: articles, personal pronouns, verbs and tenses, spelling, prepositions, relative pronouns and direct translation from Arabic to English. The number of errors in the above categories was compared. One of the results was that, overall, the decreasing number of students' errors suggested the development of accuracy in writing. The other finding in this study was that students'

awareness and knowledge of correct L2 forms increased, because the students generally noticed more errors at the end of the year than they did at the beginning and the difference between the number of errors noticed by lecturer and the number of errors noticed by the student reviewer decreased.

So far, the four studies reviewed indicate that lack of L2 awareness is associated with limited learner interaction in the L2; conversely, more awareness appears to be linked to more interaction in the L2 (Stewart 2010); the absence of learners' declarative knowledge of L2 grammatical features appears to play a role in learners' lack of progress in L2 awareness and proficiency, even in a study-abroad programme (Dekeyser 2010). However, feedback such as correcting mistakes was shown to be an effective way of promoting the development of awareness and noticing in L2 learning (Wali and Blin 2009; Mackey 2006). Given the role of awareness in the development of learner's competence in L2 learning and the growing use of telecollaboration in L2 learning, we will now investigate whether telecollaboration itself can help to promote learners' language as well as their intercultural awareness. The aim is to establish the extent of LC1/LC2 competence development in telecollaborative exchanges.

2.4 Telecollaboration, Awareness and LC1/LC2 Competence

This section focuses on the relationship between telecollaboration and awareness through the exploration of a 'third space' in telecollaborative communication. Empirical studies on telecollaborative projects aiming to promote students' intercultural language learning suggest that telecollaborative tasks and the emergence of awareness appear to play an important role in promoting LC1/LC2 competence.

2.4.1 The Third Space for the Development of IC Awareness

Telecollaboration connects learners from different cultures and provides a virtual platform for them to communicate their viewpoints and for a third space to emerge within their own subjectivity. This section examines the origin and the function of this space.

2.4.1.1 Understanding of 'Third Space'

The term 'third space' was first proposed by Bhabha (1994) in cultural studies where he defined a 'third space' as a place 'where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences' (p. 218). English (2002) further

discusses the concept and highlights it as a space where negotiation takes place and identity is constructed and re-constructed through interaction. Kramsch (2009) uses the term ‘thirdness’ in language education to elaborate the third space, in which ‘the thirdness of dialogue’, ‘the third culture/place of foreign language learner’ are proposed. She chooses the term ‘third culture/place’ as a space outside or between the first or second cultural ‘space’:

The concept of *third culture* was proposed as a metaphor for eschewing other dualities on which language education is based: first language (L1)/second language (L2), C1/C2, Us vs. Them, Self vs. Other. Third culture does not propose to eliminate these dichotomies, but suggests focusing on the relation itself and on the heteroglossia within each of the poles. (Kramsch 2009, p. 238)

In this regard, it is in this kind of space that culture is located because this is where it is constructed through communication, negotiation, and even conflict. If culture is located in this third space, then it is there that the individual’s experience of dialogue and interaction will lead to the development of a new worldview and new awareness. On this basis, Helm, Guth and Farrah (2012) define a third space as ‘a dialogic space which is constantly constructed and reconstructed by participants who actively engage in dialogue and negotiate identities, not only through self-expression but also through mindful listening and the co-construction of meanings’ (p. 107). According to them, people in such a third space should respect the differences of ‘the other’ and make use of the possibilities to transform self-awareness in each individual. Thus, three indicators of the development of a third space were identified: ‘1) the third space as a dialogic space (i.e., reports of active engagement in dialogue where different viewpoints are acknowledged and respected); 2) the third space as a site of struggle (i.e., reports of difficulties, disagreements and conflicts); and 3) the third space as a fluid, constantly evolving space (i.e., reports of change)’ (p. 109).

Different from the concept of Helm *et al* (2012) which focuses on learner’s behaviours during intercultural communication, Witte (2011) proposes the characteristics of the third space as ‘highly subjective, porous and dynamic’ (p. 98) and he especially emphasises the subjective feature because in the third space, learners have to deal with their ‘personal experience, memories, emotions and desires’ (2015, p. 25). Witte (2015) also names this third space as an intercultural blended place, because there are different layers of IC competence - knowledge, attitudes and skills. More specifically, *knowledge* can include

cultural self-awareness, culture-specific knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness, while *attitudes* imply respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery, and *skills* are manifest through observation, listening, evaluating, analysing, interpreting, and relating (p. 29). This is similar to Byram's (1997) *savoirs*. However, it is noted here that the awareness component is subsumed in the knowledge aspect as opposed to appearing as a separate and yet equally important component of ICC in Byram's model. In addition, 'mental spaces between languages and cultures' are also proposed by Witte (2015, p. 21), where the third space is perceived from a mental and cognitive level. He (ibid.) also points out the importance of reflection on the learning process in language learning as this can promote learner's awareness of developing such a third space. At the same time, the third space also facilitates 'an understanding of the foreign linguistic and cultural constructs from a truly *inter-cultural* perspective' (Witte 2011, p. 98). In the context of Bretag's (2006) research (see section 2.4.2.1), 'third space' refers to 'the potential opportunity afforded by the use of email communication for a re-imagining of the teacher-student relationship, which is composed of two very distinct 'cultural identities' predicated on unequal power relations within academia' (p. 982). She further states the importance of a commitment from both groups of learners to grasping the opportunity. The influence of technology on enabling the development of a third space in learners' minds is also emphasized by Jordan (2001, p. 101 in Wilkinson 2012, p. 301) where, in the context of global mobility and communication technology, 'sites of otherness are in the path of everyday self', calling for intercultural competence.

According to the definition and understanding of the third space, learner's mutual engagement during e-tandem exchanges is implicit and needs to be investigated. According to Mills (2011), participants in telecollaborative communication develop their identities and membership through mutual engagement and this shared engagement usually happens in discussion, negotiation and exchange, such as problem solving, requests for information and assistance, and collaboration (p. 364). In addition, Mills states that in this interaction, conflict, disagreement, and challenge are also typical forms of engagement. In this process, understanding other languages and cultures can be achieved through negotiation of meaning. Lai and Zhao (2006) proposed the working definition of negotiation of meaning as 'episodes in which the interlocutors indicated their non-understanding or misunderstanding by using "what (is)..." or "uh??", or by partially

or completely repeating the expressions or words in rising intonation or with question marks' (p. 108). Kötter (2003) analyses students' discourse in negotiation of meaning in an online tandem project from their self-reports about their engagement in negotiation of meaning, which include categories under two situations: what did the students do when they did not understand their partner? (6 categories: (a) ask for repetition of the utterance, (b) ask for a paraphrase, (c) ask for a translation, (d) try to guess the meaning of the utterance, (e) ignore the utterance, (f) change the subject); what did the students do when they could not express their ideas in the target language? (6 categories: (a) try to paraphrase it, (b) borrow a word from the L1, (c) use the L1 for the whole sentence, (d) ask for a translation of the unknown word, (e) ask for a translation of the whole sentence). These two situations are investigated in the present study to reveal e-tandem participants' negotiation of meaning in exchanges. It is also noted that Chinese participants belong to a culture which is quite different from European or Western culture. According to Chen (2011), Chinese communication aims to reach a harmonious state of human relationship, indicating 'an indirect, subtle, adaptive, consensual, and agreeable style of interaction' (p. 3). Hence, when the two cultures meet in a third space, and from a Chinese perspective, the establishment of good relationships between participants is also likely to become a priority for successful intercultural communication.

According to O'Dowd (2012) critical cultural awareness can emerge during telecollaborative exchanges when learners are in a position to discuss 'cultural 'rich points' and elicit meanings of cultural behaviour from 'real' informants in the target culture'. However, for this kind of awareness to happen, a clear comparison of the two cultures must take place in order to trigger the expression of direct opinions and reactions (O'Dowd, 2012, p. 358).

2.4.1.2 IC Awareness Development in a Third Space

The increasing awareness of a need for intercultural learning as an integral part of language learning has led to the emergence of the notion of a 'third space' (Kramsch, 2009; Bhabha, 1994) which can help to develop the intercultural dimension. On the one hand, Kramsch (2009) proposes that one of the applications of a third space in language education is intercultural language learning; on the other hand, she also states that intercultural language learning can help students construct this third place/space. The

empirical studies outlined below support Kramsch's statements and also provide evidence for telecollaboration as a means of promoting the third space in order to develop learners' awareness of their own as well as the other's perspective.

Bretag's study (2006) investigated the potential of e-mail to facilitate communication in a 'third space'. She analysed 279 e-mails from 10 international ESL students and their lecturers. Using computer-mediated communication discourse analysis, she coded e-mails into four main categories: claiming common ground, conveying cooperation, fulfilling others' wants, and sharing intimate information. Their frequency was then recorded. Bretag (2006) concluded that e-mail did facilitate 'third space' communication through the claiming of common ground and sharing of intimate information. Furthermore, she found a steady increase over time in the number of times that both communication claiming common ground and sharing of intimate information occurred, which indicates that the movement towards a third space was an upward trend. In the context of Bretag's research, the concept of third space refers to the possibility of imagining (and inhabiting) a new space, where the traditionally hierarchical relationship of ESL student and their lecturers could be 'rewritten' (p. 998). For example, the development of intimacy is a potential indicator of communicators moving towards a third space as this intimacy seems to reconstruct the 'identity' of the students where they become their lecturers' friends. To illustrate the phenomenon, one of participants in Bretag's study, Lena, claimed common ground with her lecturer 26 times during the e-mail exchange, 85% of which occurred in weeks 9-12 (Lena's e-mail communication were written over the course of 12 weeks). A similar pattern is evident when sharing intimate information: Lena did so on 28 occasions, 55% of which occurred in weeks 9-12. Another important finding pointed out by Bretag (2006) was the necessary role of individual motivation and mutual movement in moving towards the third space.

O'Dowd's (2003) study of a Spanish-English e-mail exchange aimed to develop students' intercultural communicative competence through the completion of 10 tasks. It was a year-long e-mail exchange between two classes of language students in Spain and Britain and five members of each class were paired together for the exchange. The data collected were from e-mails, questionnaires, interview, researcher's reflective journal, and peer-group feedback. The word association exercise adapted from the *Cultura* project

(Furstenberg *et al.*, 2001) was also used in his study. Evidence of students' ICC development especially IC awareness was found. Take the first partnership (Mary and Anna) for example, where Anna states in an interview, 'I always imagined them [the English] very serious and reserved. But after doing this I've changed my mind. She is nice', revealed that she developed a growing awareness of the inaccuracies of national stereotyping (O'Dowd 2003, p. 128). In the discussion of word associations on 'bull-fighting', there was a clash of opinion between them. Mary associated 'Spain, blood, cruelty, and festivals' with 'bull-fighting', while Anna responded with the much more positive associations 'tradition, olé, bull-fighters'. In their discussion on these associations, Anna let her partner know that she could understand that other people were against bull-fighting, but she also tried to make her partner understand that bull-fighting was a natural part of life in Spain just as people kill and sell farm animals. Through this evidence, Anna's awareness of other people's perspective on her own culture and the understanding of her own culture were also developed.

Chun (2011) conducted a study to explore how online exchanges can develop L2 learners' L2 and intercultural competence. In this study, 23 German learners of English from an American university and 23 American learners of German from a German university had a 10-week online exchange (answering online questionnaires, joining online forums, and synchronous chat). The online questionnaire used was a word association questionnaire modelled on the *Cultura* project (Furstenberg *et al.*, 2001). Chun chose 4 language-related words (language, dialect, slang, Denglish) and 8 words or phrases of interest to the university students (alcohol, homeland, order, work, quitting time, night life in city, recycling, and climate change). After writing down 3-5 words or phrases associated with these words, students participated in online forums which were based on these word associations. The synchronous text chat was also scheduled as a follow-up discussion on what students had posted in the online forum. Evidence of the students' emerging ICC was found in their opinion/reflection on their own culture ([L]C1)/the other's culture ([L]C2), interest in and comparison of [L]C1 and [L]C2, speculation about [L]C1 and [L]C2, interest in the differences and similarities of [L]C1 and [L]C2. Chun found examples of students' reflection on their own culture and change in their attitudes, 'I [used to think] that Americans...but maybe we are more similar to the Germans [after all]' (Chun 2011, p. 417).

Aiming at constructing a virtual ‘third space’ to support students’ development of English linguistically and interculturally, Liaw (2007) constructed a web-based learning environment for students of EFL in Taiwan (Taiwan students N=144; U.S. students N=227). In her project, she required students to read articles about their own culture using online computer-based support tools. Following the reading task, an online forum was provided for the students to engage in intercultural discussions with students from a US university who also completed the same reading task. The data from questionnaires and informal interviews revealed students’ positive reactions and their likes and dislikes. In addition, Liaw (2007) analysed their intercultural awareness by using Byram’s (2000) guidelines for assessment of intercultural competence. The assessment criteria included: a) interest in other people’s daily life experiences, b) ability to change perspective, c) ability to cope with living in a different culture, d) knowledge about another country and culture, and e) knowledge about intercultural communication. These were used to analyse the Taiwanese forum entries (N=165) only and the following emerged: most of the entries (N=121) demonstrated ‘knowledge about another country and culture’; They also showed ‘interest in other people’s way of life’ (N=30); The number of entries suggesting an ‘ability to change perspectives’ (N=2) and displaying ‘knowledge about intercultural communication’ (N=4) were far fewer (p. 236). In spite of the small numbers in the last two categories, Liaw suggests that such an e-learning environment was a third space which could support the development of linguistic and intercultural competence of EFL students. In this virtual ‘third space’, language and culture are even more tightly intertwined since the EFL learners are informants of their own culture as well as learners of the other culture (p. 238).

More recently, Angelova and Zhao (2016) also investigated the role of telecollaboration in learner’s development of language skills and cultural awareness. In their study, 23 American students who are future ESL teachers were paired up with 26 Chinese first-year English majors. The American students tutored their Chinese partners on grammar structures and communicated through discussion board and e-mail as well as Skype. Findings from content analysis of students’ postings, essays, and interviews include: the development cross-cultural awareness and improvement of English language skills (p. 175). Evidence of participants’ development of intercultural awareness lies in the following categories: students’ comparison of American and Chinese culture; students’

enthusiasm to learn about the target culture; students' change of views and correction of stereotypes; students' critical thinking and increasing awareness of their own culture. This echoes the definition of intercultural awareness which is proposed in Section 2.3.2: the ability to understand and evaluate one's own and others' culture critically through comparison of the similarities and differences of LC1 and LC2. In this study, students' improvement in language skills is also due to focusing the students' attention on particular grammar points and providing corrective feedback. One piece of evidence indicates that by comparing the number of errors in the introductory essays and the essays written at the end of the semester, the number of errors relating to the use of articles, relative clauses, gerunds, modal verbs, and conjunctions had decreased. However, the limitation of this approach is also pointed out. For example, if the students use fewer relative clauses in the later stage, then the number of errors in this case will inevitably be reduced.

The review of what a third space is about and associated empirical studies points to the potential of the virtual space through telecollaboration as a tangible third space for intercultural communication. In this space, learner's IC awareness develops and appears to be located. Learning through dialogue in this third space promotes learners' construction of her/his identity (Bretag, 2006) and transforms their worldview leading to new awareness (Angelova and Zhao, 2016; Liaw, 2007; O'Dowd, 2003), although in Liaw's 2007 findings the number of entries that show the 'ability to change perspectives' is very small (N=2). In this light, telecollaborative exchanges need further study to establish this virtual space as a valid third space for students' awareness of LC1 and LC2 learning. The following sub-section now turns to the potential of telecollaboration for L2 awareness development.

2.4.2 Development of L2 Awareness through Telecollaboration

Since this study looks at not only IC awareness but also L2 awareness, the following empirical studies focus on findings that reveal L2 awareness development.

Chen (2008) investigated the effect of e-mail exchange between Taiwanese and American students on English academic writing. This project was conducted in a regular writing class for 12 weeks. However, all participants were volunteers, a similar feature of the present study. Data mainly collected from e-mail entries and post-survey questionnaires were qualitatively analysed. Both participants' reading and writing skills benefited from

this online communication with native speakers. In addition, ‘they appeared to obtain additional advantages in oral practice by the means of the “chatting-like” nature of e-mail correspondence’ (p. 151). With regard to motivation, on the one hand, it was reported that learners became more involved as they enjoyed writing and their self-confidence improved; on the other hand, participants were also frustrated by a delay of several weeks in receiving their partner’s e-mail or infrequent responses. Chen also looked at the topics which helped to increase learner’s motivation and found that the most popular topics among Taiwanese students were: visiting Taiwan, Chinese food, movies, hobbies, pets, and music (p. 165). However, there is no report on the topics American students were interested in. One interesting finding related to feedback from partners was that American students paid more attention to message content while Taiwanese students expected to get more feedback from American students on sentence structure or correction of grammatical errors.

Darhower (2008) studied the role of linguistic affordances in telecollaborative chat. Linguistic affordances in the context of Darhower’s study refers to the ability to ‘check comprehension, clarify non comprehension, provide confirmation, provide translation, provide word meaning, reformulate explicitly, reformulate implicitly, request confirmation of meaning and use learner’s L1’ (p. 53-54). In this telecollaborative exchange between English and Spanish, there were about 80 participants from US and Spain. According to Darhower (2008), there is a great potential for activation of language awareness via linguistic affordances in telecollaborative chat rooms (p. 51). One of the findings lies in the calculation of responses to native speaker (NS) affordances where 5 participants were able to repeat the affordances; Darhower states that repeating a structure or word that is provided demonstrates that they noticed the structure or word and will have a better chance of remembering it than if they do not repeat it (p. 60). Another piece of evidence of learners’ L2 awareness development is from the post-chat questionnaire which was analysed using the Likert scale. In this questionnaire, there are 4 items with respect to noticing (*‘I noticed my errors when I saw the native speakers model structures or words correctly’*; *‘I noticed my own errors when I saw them on the screen’*; *‘I noticed new grammatical structures in the native speakers’ utterances’* and *‘I noticed new words in the native speakers’ utterances’*) (p. 61). Most of the participants reported frequently noticing the correct way to say things in their L2 when they saw it in NS discourse and

both groups noticed new words in the L2 more frequently than they noticed grammatical structures (p. 62).

Belz and Vyatkina (2005) report on a corpus-based, networked intercultural language study for the teaching of German modal particles (MP). This experiment is part of a telecollaborative course and the fifth data-collection cycle of a five-year project (2000-2004) aiming to investigate the influence of telecollaborative activity on classroom learning and teaching of German. Among the extensive data collected from this study, two findings related to L2 awareness development emerged from the analysis of students' portfolios. One is that Carolyn, one of the learners, demonstrated high awareness of the relationship between MP use and communicative modality. To illustrate the point, she provided a rationale explaining why she did not use MPs. The other finding emerged from learners' reports of increased explicit knowledge about MPs: *'After we looked at them in class, I realized that they really play an important role in softening the language and they make the writing more personal ...'* (p. 36). In this instance, we recognize Roehr's (2006) definition of metalinguistic knowledge as an operation which includes not only learners' ability to correct, describe, and explain L2 errors, but also learners' language-analytic ability, ultimately leading to language awareness (see Section 2.3.3.1).

In addition, Dooly (2007) found that computer-supported collaborative learning can promote learner's awareness of the target language and the learning process. In her project, collaboration took place between 61 students from three higher education institutions in Spain, USA and Turkey. The three objectives of this project involving awareness were to 'raise students' awareness of their existing knowledge of the target language', to 'raise students' awareness of how they can build on that knowledge and how they can use it appropriately and effectively to communicate', and to 'raise students' awareness of their own language learning strategies and how these were most effective for each individual' (Dooly, 2007, p. 59). The data included online forum contributions, copies of all e-mails between the students, and the journals from the Spanish students. Evidence of students' development of language awareness was found as, for example, one student mentioned *'how she [had] become more aware of the language features she already knew because she now found them to be useful'* (Dooly, 2007, p. 65). Another example is the students' explicit comments on their problems with the target language, such as verb tenses. This

was done by giving each other feedback on their language use and analysing their own language production (ibid.). It is interesting to note that Dooly's (2007) study also chose a journal as a means of recording learners' language awareness.

To conclude this section, a review of empirical studies provided evidence of the function of telecollaboration in the development of L2 awareness as technology enables mutual feedback, shared learning through forum contributions visible to all involved and authentic use of language. In this context, tasks/activities appear to provide a suitable terrain for both IC and L2 awareness development; in this light, the following sub-section reviews the design of tasks for the development of LC1 and LC2 awareness through telecollaboration in order to inform the choice of tasks for this present study.

2.4.3 Tasks for Development of Awareness in Telecollaboration

The previous empirical studies reviewed so far indicate that tasks play an important part in promoting participants' IC and L2 learning. E-tandem tasks in this study were designed with this purpose in mind, with particular attention paid to the development of IC and L2 awareness. On this basis, a review of tasks used in telecollaboration projects follows. Liddicoat's model for developing intercultural competence is then introduced. Finally, the factors contributing to the achievement of the goal of this research are identified and inform a possible model for designing e-tandem tasks, especially for IC and L2 awareness development.

2.4.3.1 Tasks in the *Cultura* Project

Cultura is web-based and 'integrates culture into the language classroom by facilitating the direct communication between two groups of learners from different cultures and the comparison of those cultures' (García and Crapotta, 2007, p. 64). García and Crapotta (2007) point out that language learning is still a part of it because content from intercultural partners written in their native language is a rich source of authentic vocabulary, grammar and discourse. As an effective instrument for the development of LC1 and LC2 competence, *Cultura*, especially through its word association task, has been widely used by several telecollaborative projects (e.g., Chun, 2011; O'Dowd, 2007b; 2003; Belz and Reinhardt, 2004).

The tasks of *Cultura* include three types of questionnaires: word associations, sentence completions and reactions to situation, all designed to elicit cultural differences. Through word associations, students write the first two or three words that come to mind when they see a list of words, such as police, family, work. In the second task, students complete sentences of the type ‘A good student is someone who...’. For the last task, students write down their first response to several assumed situations, for example, ‘A mother slaps her child in the supermarket’. The topics in the questionnaires are related to daily life, social behaviour, power structures, and so forth, which are ‘perceived representative elements of each culture’ (García and Crapotta, 2007, p. 65). All the questionnaires are completed in students’ native languages. The teacher’s role is to guide the students in class to find out differences and similarities between the responses of the two groups and further analyse their answers in terms of ‘positive and negative signs of approval or disapproval, contradictions, categories that receive fewer or more responses and indications of basic underlying cultural assumptions’ (García and Crapotta, 2007, p. 66). This work is completed in students’ target language. Following analysis in the classroom, students join online forums on the *Cultura* website to share their findings, questions and views. As Furstenberg *et al.* (2001) point out, these forums have led the students to:

- ‘ask for clarification about specific meanings of some words’ (p. 67)
- ‘check their own hypotheses’ (p. 68)
- ‘explain to each other differences in their understandings of concepts’ (p. 69)

This kind of online forum brings students into group discussions which can stimulate a deeper understanding of the target culture, especially for those who are not active in exchanging their opinions with partners in an e-mail. In such forums, students write in their native language and the teacher never interferes in the forums (Bauer *et al.*, 2006). Writing in students’ native language allows students to express their ideas in detail and naturally. With regard to the teacher’s non-interference, while it is suitable for *Cultura*, it may not be feasible for all forms of telecollaboration, especially in this e-mail study where the participants did not have the opportunity to discuss and analyse their answers to the questionnaires in class before joining the online forum discussion.

The founders of *Cultura* claim that the most obvious characteristics of *Cultura* are web-based juxtaposition, ongoing dynamic processes, and a comparative approach (Furstenberg *et al.*, 2001). First of all, *Cultura* requires students from two cultures to do all the tasks on the web apart from additional discussions in the classroom. All the answers from students are juxtaposed in two columns and can be viewed side-by-side. According to Furstenberg *et al.* (2001), this side-by-side viewing helps participants to observe and notice the similarities and differences between two cultures more easily. Although e-tandem collaboration is via e-mail and not web-based, this strategy can be applied to tasks, when students are required to complete a form divided into two juxtaposed columns before further discussion. Secondly, *Cultura* divides students' exchanges into five stages to develop their cross-cultural analysis dynamically and gradually. According to García and Crapotta (2007, p. 65-67), these stages are as follow:

- 'completing online questionnaires'
- 'analysis of questionnaires in the classroom and at home'
- 'further exchanges through online forums'
- 'analysis of the forums and further discussion in the classroom'
- 'exploration of broader online materials and analysis online and in the classroom'

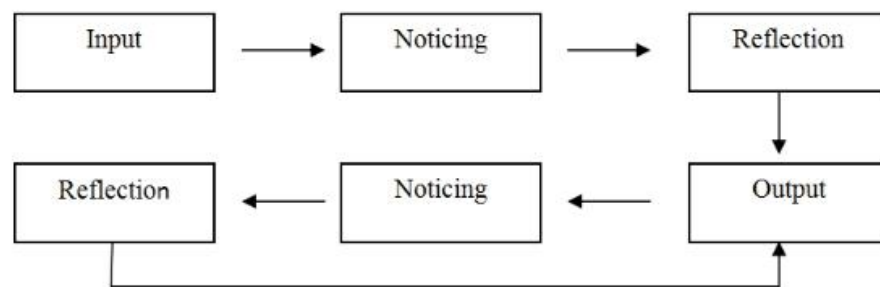
Embedded in the stages is the most important characteristic of *Cultura*: comparison, enabling analysis and discussion of their observations.

To sum up, it appears that *Cultura* is a useful instrument in helping students to develop their LC1 and LC2 communication, in particular through the effective combination of: (a) word association task related to real-life situations that trigger culture-specific connotations in participants' responses; and (b) the visual juxtaposition of participants' responses in order to promote LC1 and LC2 'noticing'.

2.4.3.2 A Possible Model for Task Design in This Study

The inseparability of language and culture implies that language and culture learning should be integrated in the same process of intercultural language learning. Liddicoat (2002) proposes a pathway for developing intercultural competence emphasising the role of 'noticing' (Figure 2.5). This is what he states as the first stage of developing intercultural competence - awareness-raising: 'it is important for the learner who has

noticed a difference in the input to reflect on the nature of the difference and to decide how to respond to that difference’ (Liddicoat 2002, p. 11). In addition, participative tasks can be designed to introduce the new input. These tasks are designed to encourage comparison of the new culture and their own practices (Liddicoat, 2005). Therefore, in order to develop IC awareness, the students can start by expressing their own views on the topic in question, listening to the perspective of the other, and noticing differences and similarities within the different perspectives.



**Figure 2.5: A Pathway for Developing IC Awareness
(Liddicoat 2002, p.11)**

Based on Liddicoat’s pathway for developing IC awareness, Ho (2009) conducted a study into the development of cultural content in English language classes in Vietnam to help students’ intercultural language learning. The process of developing the cultural component is divided into 5 stages: exploring self, noticing/observation, cultural exploration, comparisons and reflections, and mediation between cultures, which aim to ‘raise learners’ cultural awareness and engage them cognitively, behaviourally and affectively in culture learning’ (p. 63). At the first ‘*exploring self*’ stage, Ho proposed to develop learners’ cultural awareness through cultural connotations of vocabulary, similar to the word association task previously mentioned; During the second ‘*noticing/observation*’ stage, creating an authentic environment by videos/photos about the target culture was suggested to ‘arouse learners’ interest, motivation and curiosity for culture learning’ (p. 69). To further develop learners’ awareness, in the stage of ‘*cultural exploration*’, according to Ho, learners engaged in tasks, such as dealing with cultural stereotypes. The ‘*comparisons and reflections*’ stage, involving learners’ discussion and reflections on cultural similarities and differences, was the penultimate step in the process. Finally, to facilitate ‘mediation between cultures’, problem-solving activities were suggested by Ho ‘These problem-solving activities involved cultural dilemmas that can

increase learners' awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences and encourage them to participate in discussions about the potential outcomes of their suggested solutions. For example, students can discuss dilemmas about parents' decision on career choice or eating norms' (Ho 2009, p. 71). This varied and rich approach to awareness development suggests a constant movement between noticing and reflecting as promoted by Liddicoat.

Based on the review of the different tasks to promote the development of *linguaculture* competence in e-tandem exchanges, tasks in this research bear the characteristics of information exchange, comparison and analysis, and collaboration. The negotiation of meaning and ideas ought to happen concurrently. Furthermore, Liddicoat's 2002 model emphasises the importance of awareness-raising. With regard to L2 learning, consciousness-raising tasks, in which learners engage in talking meaningfully about linguistic features in order to understand how they work should be considered (Ellis, 2003).

The combination of different tasks promoting the development of *linguaculture* competence in e-tandem exchanges with Liddicoat's theoretical pathway for developing IC awareness suggests the following model for the development of LC1 and LC2 awareness between Mandarin and English-speaking participants. This construct incorporates the additional dimension of L1 and L2 awareness (Figure 2.6).

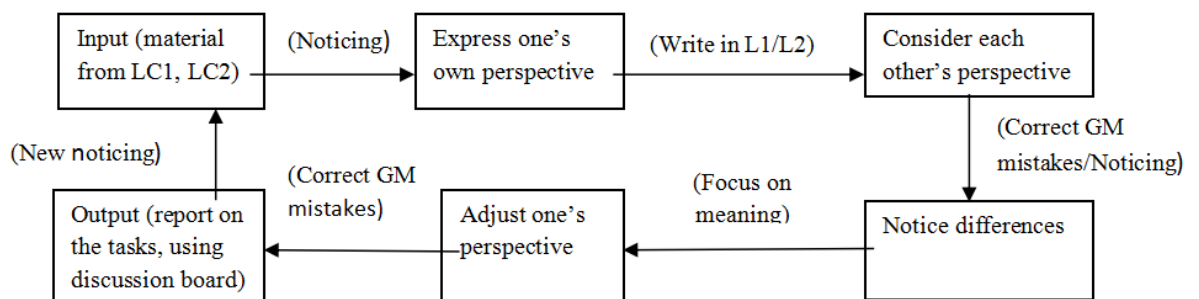


Figure 2.6: A Model for Designing Tasks in This Study

In the initial stage, LC1 and LC2 as input take the form of information exchange, comparison and analysis, and collaboration. The negotiation of meaning, ideas and L2 features including grammar (GM) correction and writing in L1/L2 happen concurrently. The output is expressed in the form of a report on the experience. Students can use the

online discussion board to further exchange their perspectives with the wider group. The output can also lead them to new noticing in respect of the original input.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter first justified the background of this study on the basis of the increasing popularity and effectiveness of telecollaboration in intercultural language learning. E-tandem, as one of the model of telecollaboration, should be designed according to the principles of reciprocity, autonomy and motivation which depend on another three components of teacher, student and tasks in a telecollaborative project. In addition, bilingualism, i.e. the dual use of the L1 and the L2 for the purpose of communicating with a partner is also a component of e-tandem since it enables and facilitates the process. E-mail and online forums are the most common tools used in most of telecollaborative projects; these tools are designed to facilitate communication between participants; however, they also help to build a third space for learners to develop new awareness of the self and others while gaining a new understanding of each other's language and culture. In this regard, the term *linguaculture* (LC1 and LC2) was chosen to illustrate the learning situation of this study since it is about language learning through culture-focused tasks. A focus on the development of LC1 and LC2 competence in e-tandem led to a review of the components of language learners' general competences. In this regard, the central role of awareness through *noticing* in IC and L2 competence was identified. Thus, awareness-raising tasks were considered as a valid approach to facilitate the development of intercultural and language competence. The literature suggests that tasks are the terrain out of which LC1/LC2 awareness emerges, in particular when *noticing* is activated through comparison of similarities and differences between LC1/LC2. Moreover, as well as providing opportunities to compare and contrast, tasks also encourage reflection on the self, the other and the learning experience itself.

To conclude, the following diagram is proposed as a conceptual framework for the study and synthesises the principal components of this literature review (Figure 2.7).

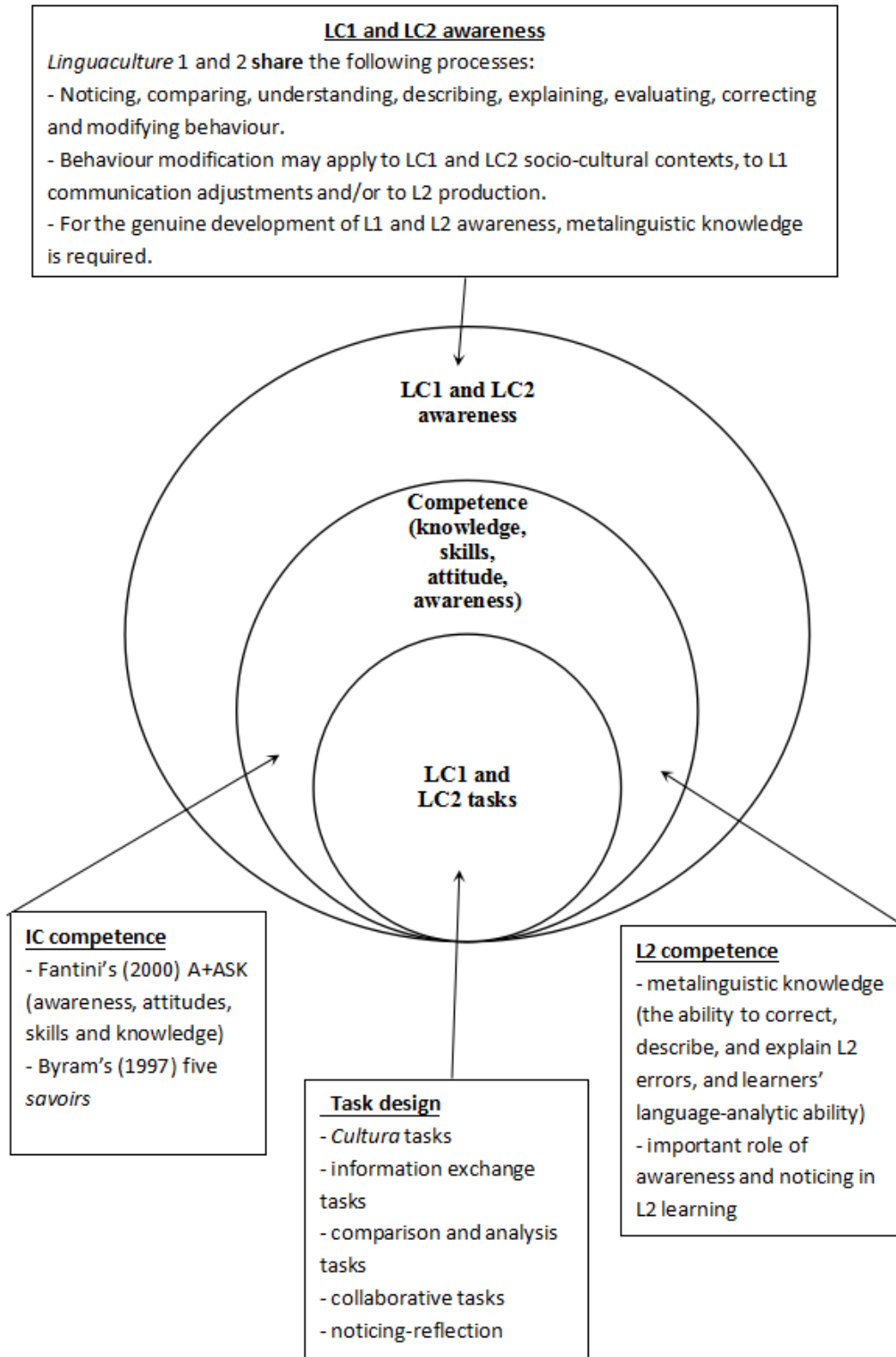


Figure 2.7: A synthesis of the role of awareness/noticing in the development of LC1 and LC2 competence in e-tandem exchanges

The figure is constructed from the learner's perspective as it places the tasks they engage with at the heart of the experience. These tasks, as conceived by the *Cultura* project, are designed to promote information exchange, comparison/analysis and collaboration. Byram's (1997) model of *savoirs* and Fantini's (2000) statement of A+ASK point out that developing intercultural competence needs to consider 4 aspects - knowledge, skills, attitude and awareness -, in which awareness plays a crucial role. L2 competence focuses on participants' metalinguistic knowledge, that is the ability to correct, describe, and explain L2 errors or language-analytic ability. While the merging of culture and language is reflected in the choice of tasks, the actual processing of the cultural and linguistic information also relies on shared cognitive processes, including:

- noticing,
- comparing,
- understanding,
- describing,
- explaining,
- evaluating critically,
- correcting,

and ultimately,

- modifying behaviour

However, we recognise that, unlike (inter)cultural awareness, language awareness is dependent on metalinguistic knowledge which learners require in advance of engaging with the processes described above. Nevertheless, implicit in the synthesis proposed above is a duplicity of the processes involved in awareness-raising which may further reinforce the inseparability of language and culture in the mind of the learners.

The following chapter of this study presents a more detailed explanation of the methodology adopted for this study.

Chapter 3: The Study: Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

Following a discussion of the relevant literature in the areas relating to this research it is now necessary to discuss the methodology which provides an overview of how the current study was conducted and the methods used to answer the research questions.

This chapter commences with an outline of the research aim and questions which primarily focus on the important role of awareness in the development of LC1 and LC2 competence. The research approach in this study is defined by the use of a mixed research methodology comprising quantitative and qualitative methods, because ‘a mixed methods inquiry offers a potentially more comprehensive means of legitimizing findings than do either QUAL or QUAN methods alone by allowing investigators to assess information from both data types’ (Dörnyei 2007, p. 62). Here, ‘QUAL/QUAN methods’ refer to qualitative/quantitative methods. This combination of methods also enables triangulation. The section starts with an analysis of quantitative and qualitative methods including their advantages and disadvantages. Triangulation is then introduced. Following this, a case study is also proposed to complement the research design and to provide a more in-depth understanding of online LC1 and LC2 tandem exchanges.

Details of participants and the specific tasks designed for this e-tandem exchange are presented. Among these, are *Cultura* tasks which were already reviewed in Chapter 2. Additional tasks also aiming to promote students’ LC1 and LC2 awareness in this e-tandem exchange are also included in the methodology. Different possible instruments and methods for data collection and analysis in intercultural and L2 learning are explored in order to justify the instruments used in this study for the reliability and validity of the study. This study ensured triangulation by adopting qualitative and quantitative methods including learning diaries, focus group interviews, and a questionnaire survey. Piloting of these instruments for the further improvement of the research design, is also reported.

A thematic analysis was also used to process the data. Finally, data from all these methods were triangulated to investigate the role of awareness in the development of LC1 and LC2. Last, the ethical issues and limitations of this study are also discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Research Aim and Questions

Prior to the establishment of an appropriate research methodology it is important to narrow the purpose of the study into specific questions to address the phenomenon under investigation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the current study aims to explore the impact of online tandem language learning on the development of LC1 and LC2 competence, focusing on the development of intercultural and language awareness through e-tandem exchanges in Mandarin and English.

In order to achieve the aim, the following research questions were addressed:

- How can telecollaboration create and/or develop intercultural awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?
- Do L1-L2 specific exchanges contribute to the development of language awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?
- In e-tandem partnerships, is awareness more likely to emerge from informal exchanges or task-based discussions?
- What are the challenges that may arise during the e-tandem exchanges and how do the participants meet them?

3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research

The terms quantitative and qualitative research are widely used within the domain of social research. Dörnyei (2007) states that ‘quantitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods’ (p. 24). The most common instruments for collecting quantitative data in language learning are language tests and questionnaires. Qualitative research refers to ‘a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’ (Bryman 2004, p. 266). There are five main research methods associated with qualitative research: participant observation, qualitative interviewing, focus groups, language-based approaches (such as discourse and

conversation analysis), and the collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents. In order to better understand these two types of research, a comparative analysis follows.

Bryman (2004) summarises the main differences between quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) research (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Common contrasts between quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman 2004, p. 287)

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Points of view of Participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalization	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

First, in Table 3.1 we note that QUAN research deals with numbers, while QUAL research deals with words. The second difference is that it is the researcher who controls the investigation in QUAN research, while, in QUAL research, the perspective of participants is the key point. Moreover, in QUAN research, researchers have no contact with their subjects, while in QUAL research, researchers seek close involvement with participants. In addition, theory comes before data collection in QUAN research, whereas theory emerges from the collection of data in QUAL research. As for the ‘static vs. process’ contrast, QUAN research usually presents ‘a static image of social reality with its emphasis on relationships between variables; change and connections between events over time tend not to surface’ (p. 287). QUAL research, however, focuses on a developmental process of events over time and the interconnections between the actions of participants of social settings. QUAN research is highly structured in order to test theory and concepts, whereas QUAL research is unstructured to allow the theory to emerge from data collection. QUAN researchers tend to generalise their findings and QUAL researchers try to understand their data based on a specific context. Data from QUAN research is ‘hard’ (unambiguous) owing to its precise measurement; by contrast, data from QUAL research is ‘rich’ due to its contextual approach. ‘Macro vs. micro’

refers to the large scale and small-scale foci in QUAN and QUAL research respectively. QUAN research mainly deals with people's behaviour and QUAL research deals with the meaning of action. The last contrast between QUAN and QUAL research is that the former is conducted in a planned context, while the latter takes place in a natural environment.

These differences between QUAN and QUAL research help to understand their strengths and weaknesses. According to Dörnyei (2007), the strengths of QUAN research can be summarised as follow:

- 'Precise measurement and producing reliable and replicable data that is generalizable to other contexts' (ibid., p. 34).
- 'The statistical analysis helps readers to decide on the validity of quantitative findings' (ibid., p. 34).
- 'The research process is relatively quick and offers good value for money' (ibid., p. 34).

On the other hand, criticisms of QUAN research also exist, for example, 'the analysis of relationships between variables creates a static view of social life that is independent of people's lives' (Bryman 2004, p. 79), which questions the extent to which the findings from QUAN research connect to everyday contexts.

As for QUAL research, its traits according to Dörnyei (2007) are summarised as follow:

- It is an effective way of exploring a new, unknown area (ibid., p. 39).
- It is useful for making sense of highly complex situations (ibid., p. 39).
- Its flexible, emergent nature allows researchers to conduct further research and reach a fuller understanding (ibid., p. 40).
- Its rich data can widen the scope of our understanding and add data-driven depth to the event analysis (ibid., p. 40).
- It can satisfy the need for longitudinal investigation in the area of applied linguistics (ibid., p. 40).

Although Dörnyei seems to appreciate the usefulness of QUAL research, he also clearly points out the weaknesses of QUAL research in five issues: sample size and generalisability, researcher role, lack of methodological rigour, too complex or too narrow theories, time consuming and labour-intensive. First, Dörnyei (2007, p. 41) points out that although QUAL research doesn't require large samples, the small participant samples may lead to 'over-reading' the individual stories (Yates 2003: 224 in Dörnyei 2007). Second, since the researcher is close to participants, results from QUAL research can be influenced by the researcher's personal biases. As for the lack of methodological rigour, it is the absence of 'standardised instruments and procedures and statistical analytical techniques' (ibid., p. 41) that makes QUAL research appear 'unprincipled' (ibid.). Dörnyei (2007, p. 42) also adds that the intensive use of rich data can produce an overly complex theory and the individual cases studied may result in building theories that are too narrow. The final point is that the processing of QUAL data is more time-consuming than QUAN research.

On reviewing the differences between both research approaches, it is certain that none of the research methods provides 100 percent accurate and reliable information and that they should be viewed as complementary. Thus, mixed methods research which combines QUAN and QUAL research is increasingly used. This is also called methodological triangulation. In order to justify the choice of this mixed method in this study, it is necessary to look at the definition of triangulation, its advantages and disadvantages in the following sub-section.

3.3.2 Triangulation

Olsen (2004) defines triangulation in social science as 'the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic' (p. 3). Here, Olsen refers to data triangulation and method triangulation. However, according to Seale (2004), there are four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Of the many forms of triangulation, this study focuses on methodological triangulation, because it is 'the most widely understood and applied approach' (Seale, 2004, p. 78). According to Seale (2004), triangulation of methods means 'combining two or more methods in addressing a research question in order to crosscheck results for consistency and to offset any bias of a single research

method' (p. 297). In addition, Dörnyei (2007) adds that triangulation can also happen at the stage of data analysis due to the data transformation (qualitative data is converted into quantitative statistics). For example, some researchers code the data from interviews in a manner that allows them to be statistically analysed.

From Seale's (2004) definition, the main purpose of using triangulation seems to be to validate research data. According to Flick (2006, p. 38), triangulation also allows the researcher to enrich the research data and to be thorough in addressing a research topic. Seale (2004) also states that 'the aim is to enhance confidence in the overall conclusions drawn from a study' (p. 297). Since each single method has its strengths and weaknesses, using mixed methods is not only to give each method individual strength, but also to compensate for the limitations and faults of a single method, as Denscombe (2003, p. 132) states:

The possibility of employing more than one method stems from the fact that the various methods contain their own set of assumptions about the nature of the social world and the kind of data that can be produced to increase knowledge about the world. Theoretical debate about the relative merits of their underlying premises has failed to establish any single method as the universally accepted 'best' for all situations. ...for those engaged in practical research, particularly the small-scale project researcher, none of the possible methods for data collection can be regarded as perfect and none can be regarded as rubbish.

Moreover, Olsen (2004) argues that triangulation 'is not aimed merely at validation but at deepening and widening one's understanding' (p. 1). Specifically, Greene, Kreider and Mayer (2005, p. 275) state that the use of mixed methods in social research and evaluation allows a researcher to understand more comprehensively through the use of multiple perspectives.

Many studies support the use of mixed methods. In this study, the use of triangulation can provide a great deal of flexibility in how the research is conducted and also allow for comprehensive data to be generated. However, Dörnyei (2007, p. 46) points out three concerns about using mixed methods. One is that using mixed methods is not necessarily appropriate for obtaining sharp conceptual thinking and insightful analyses (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006 in Dörnyei, 2007). The second concern is that many researchers lack the necessary methodological skills to handle both QUAN and QUAL data. Finally, Dörnyei

raises the question of whether there is really a principled approach to guide the variety of combinations instead of blind or excessive use of mixed methods. This question is valid; however, in order to gain useful insights into this study's participants' experience, multiple perspectives are required, including a case-study approach to provide more in-depth understandings of these LC1 and LC2 exchanges. As e-tandem exchanges often take place over limited periods of time (typically, one or two academic semesters) and do not allow for a longitudinal overview of the development of awareness, an attempt to overcome this time issue is proposed by collecting multiple data sets on the same participants' experience, thus capturing multiple snapshots of participants' development.

3.3.3 Case Study

Case study, as a research approach, has been variously defined. For example, Hamel, Dufor and Fortin (1993) define a case study as 'an in-depth study of the cases under consideration, ..., this depth has become another feature of the case study approach' (p. 1). An alternative definition is presented by Hakim (2000), who argues that case studies, at their most basic, provide accounts of descriptive nature of one or more cases - 'Case studies take as their subject one or more selected examples of a social entity - such as communities, social groups, organisations, events, life histories, families, work teams, roles or relationships - which are studied using a variety of techniques' (p. 59). Finally, Stark and Torrance (2005) see the case study as 'a report of the complexity of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them.' (p. 33).

From the above definitions, it is obvious that case study can be used to achieve the purpose of exploring the nature of one subject, involving depth rather than breadth. First, it has the potential to allow for intensive research, which may achieve depth, and in doing so, enable the development of a rich description of events to illuminate understanding (Robson, 2002; Stark and Torrance, 2005). Second, they acknowledge context, complexity, and ambiguity (Gummesson, 2007). Third, Bryman (2004) suggests that it offers the opportunity to study phenomena in a longitudinal manner and to capture any changes or developments that may arise in their natural surroundings. Fourth, case study has the potential to provide further refinement and additional insight to existing studies (Bauer, Falshaw and Oakland, 2005). Finally, Yin (2003) argues that case study offers

the opportunity to answer research questions. In relation to this e-tandem project, case study was chosen to illuminate and provide descriptive examples of participants' experience over the life of the project.

On the other hand, case study also has its weaknesses. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrision (2007, p. 256), the most obvious weaknesses of case study are the lack of generalisability, and difficulties in cross-checking for subjectivity and bias despite reflexivity. Yin (2003, p. 10) also contends that in using a case study approach, '[the] goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies'. However, Stake (2005, p. 454) argues that the emphasis lies in the attention drawn to an understanding of the specific case through experiential descriptions and assertions, as in what can be learned from the particular case, as opposed to a generalisation beyond it. It gains credibility through triangulation of descriptions and interpretations (p. 433).

The cases chosen for this study include a focus on the e-mail and forum exchanges of 3 dyads as well as their diary entries containing their reflection on the tasks and the exchange. The selection of the dyads was based on levels of engagement - high, moderate and low. The reporting approach is essentially descriptive and aims to illuminate the findings of this study and provide further triangulation.

Following this review of research methodology and to summarise, the research methodology adopted for this study includes quantitative methods (questionnaires) and qualitative methods (focus group interviews, language-based approaches, case study). The methods will be triangulated.

3.4 Research Design and Data Collection

This section illustrates the specific design of this research, which includes the detailed background of participants in these Mandarin-English e-tandem exchanges and justification for the choices of tasks used in this study. Finally, instruments used for collecting data are explored taking their strengths and weaknesses into consideration. Following this, the piloting of the instruments is also reported on.

3.4.1 Participants

This e-tandem project was carried out in the context of university level EFL classes in Guangxi University of Science and Technology (GXUST), China between 2011 and 2013. There are three partner classes from China, Ireland and USA (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Participants in e-tandem of Mandarin and English

Cohort number	Partnerships	Numbers	Exchange duration
1	University College Cork, Ireland + GXUST	10+10	Mar 2011 - Feb 2012
2	Shanghai University, China + GXUST	14+14	Oct 2012 - June 2013
3	Trident Technical College, USA + GXUST	8+8	Mar 2013 - July 2013

All the participants in the study are volunteers. In Cohort 1, 10 Irish participants were from the Irish Institute of Chinese Studies of University College Cork (UCC), Ireland where they studied Mandarin as a foreign language. The experience spanned two academic semesters from March 2011 to February 2012. As for Cohort 2, 14 Irish or American university participants were residing at Shanghai University, China at the time of the exchange. Among them, 2 were American and 12 were Irish, all learning Mandarin during this exchange. The exchange started in October 2012 and ended in June 2013. Cohort 3 included 8 students from Trident Technical College, South California, USA. Exchanges between participants in Cohort 3 lasted one academic semester from March 2013 to July 2013.

Each Chinese participant of GXUST was paired with a student from the partner classes in UCC, Shanghai University and Trident Technical College. None of the Chinese participants was an English major student, but an English course was compulsory during their first and second academic years (four academic semesters). Thus, when the project began, these participants had studied English for at least seven years since primary school. Each pair of participants was expected to exchange messages four times a month and to record their experience in a learning diary once a month. In addition to e-mail exchanges on topics of their choice, they were also asked to complete a number of tasks by a specified deadline. These tasks aimed to elicit the development of their LC1 and LC2 awareness.

3.4.2 Tasks for the Study

The aim of this study focuses on developing students' awareness of LC1 and LC2. According to the suggested model for task design in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.6) which emphasises the role of noticing and comparison of LC1 and LC2, the tasks designed for this e-tandem project mainly focused on students' experience of comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the NS culture and the L2 culture in the form of opinion exchanges during their e-tandem 'dialogues'.

Among proposed tasks O'Dowd (2004b, p. 148) suggests the 'Comparative investigation into a cultural product (e.g., a film or book) or a theme common to both cultures (e.g., racism, pollution)' for intercultural e-mail exchange -. This type of tasks involves more interaction between the e-tandem partners, because they need to discuss and compare opinions on the topic. Comparison is just a positive way to increase learners' intercultural awareness. In order to make students more aware of their own and the target cultures, O'Dowd (2000) used cultural questionnaires, home-made videos, and discussion of a film from their country. Each task was carried out by all the students who then compared and discussed their results and opinions in face-to-face video-conferences. In Liaw's (2007) study (reviewed in Section 2.4.1.2, Chapter 3), discussion boards were used for students to share their responses to articles and discuss their opinions. The forum entries indicated students' growth in intercultural awareness.

The content of a task also needs to be considered. Liaw (2006, p. 53) states that in order to develop ICC, instructional materials and activities may involve local and international contexts that are familiar and relevant to language learners' lives, so the reading materials for e-tandem tasks may be articles about the learners' own and the target culture. According to Liaw (2006, p. 60), the selection of reading materials affects students' use or development of different types of ICC, so when selecting the articles, the typical target culture should be reflected in order to raise the learner's awareness. It is obvious that a task will involve ICC dimensions if its topics are about some aspects of the target culture and one's own culture. Since students in e-tandem are from different cultures, task topics should also consider their backgrounds. In Appel and Gilabert's (2002) study, 20 students from Spain and 20 students from Ireland engaged in e-mail tandem exchange. They used four tasks in this project. The tasks, from the most to the least popular, were 'A night out

in Barcelona/Dublin', 'Stereotypes in TV advertising', 'News that matters' and 'Film review'. The first task about a night out was popular with Irish and Spanish students. However, in the context of Chinese university students, nights out are not a feature of university life. There are students who may never experience a nightclub. Thus, considering students' cultural backgrounds is important because it influences the suitability of the tasks for the students in question.

According to O'Dowd and Waire (2009), tasks in telecollaboration are categorised under three themes: information exchange tasks, comparison and analysis tasks, and collaborative tasks. The first type of tasks involves learners' exchange of personal information acting as an introductory activity for two groups of learners who are not yet familiar with each other (*ibid.*, p. 175). In the second type of tasks, learners need to make some comparisons and display critical analysis of cultural products from both cultures, like books, surveys, films, newspaper articles (*ibid.*, p. 175). These tasks require learners to provide partners with explanations of the linguistic meaning or the cultural significance of the object and then to engage in the discussion of the similarities or differences between the two cultures (*ibid.*, p. 178). Based on the first two types, the third type of tasks further requires learners to work together to produce a joint product which can be in the form of an essay or presentation, or a linguistic translation or cultural adaptation (*ibid.*, p. 178). However, O'Dowd and Waire (2009, p. 178) also suggest using a combination of task types, because it can not only expose learners to different aspects of intercultural communication like cultural self-awareness, cultural comparison and intercultural negotiation, but it can also increase learners' language awareness of genre, pragmatics, grammar and lexis.

As this e-tandem project spans two semesters, the tasks for the second semester need to be more focused on keeping student's interest and motivation. As Morley and Truscott (2003) suggest, a research-oriented task could be designed for second semester tandem learners to allow them to become more active and exploratory. Four tasks were used by Morley and Truscott: a spoken discourse analysis project, a study of meanings in the target culture, a newspaper study, and a translation project (*ibid.*, p. 54). According to their findings, the translation task is more popular among students due to its manageability. The newspaper study is the second most popular task. Given that the

Chinese students practise translation on a regular basis in their English classes, this study, in the interest of preserving students' motivation to engage in new forms of activities, does not use translation as an e-tandem task. A newspaper study task was adapted for this study in order to capture students' interest. According to Morley and Truscott (2003, p. 55), the newspaper study task can make the students 'gain an understanding of the role of newspapers within their respective target cultures and learn to use appropriate terminology for analysing the language and content of the press'.

Based on the above review, Table 3.3 summarises the types of task, the IC dimension for each type of task and the variety of activities linked to these tasks.

Table 3.3: Summary of E-tandem tasks

Types	Description	Examples
Information exchange tasks	personal relationship building: learners exchange their personal information, as an introductory activity for two groups of learners who are not yet familiar with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introductory letter: students introduce themselves and tell partner what may be different if they visited the other's home town (O'Dowd, 2003) • tourist shop: students visit a local tourist shop and report back to their partner, telling them what they saw and how accurately this image represents their home culture (O'Dowd, 2003)
Comparison and analysis of tasks	the exploration of linguistic and cultural rich points: learners need to make comparisons and display critical analysis of cultural products from both cultures, like books, surveys, films, newspaper articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word associations, sentence completions and reactions to situations (<i>Cultura</i>, Furstenberg <i>et.al.</i>, 2001) • cultural surveys which usually consist of two versions (one in L1 and one in L2) (O'Dowd and Waire, 2009) • the reading and electronic discussion of parallel texts, linguistically different renditions of the same theme or topic (O'Dowd and Waire, 2009) • comparative investigation into a cultural product (e.g., a film or book) or a theme common to both cultures (e.g., racism, pollution) (O'Dowd, 2004) • Students complete a list of comparative phrases (e.g., "as good as ... as black as...") in their native language. They then explain the possible origins and cultural significance of these phrases (O'Dowd, 2003). • Students explain in the target language the meanings of various idioms from their own language. They also look at the idioms' origins and significance (O'Dowd, 2003).
Collaborative tasks	product-orientated intercultural collaboration: learners work together to produce a joint product which can be in the form of an essay or presentation, or a linguistic translation or cultural adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a spoken discourse analysis project: to work with their partner to collect, transcribe and analyse two pieces of naturally occurring spoken discourse (Morley and Truscott, 2003) • a study of meanings in the target culture: to carry out a modest survey of the meanings of certain key concepts in the target culture (Morley and Truscott, 2003) • a newspaper study: to work on a contrastive analysis of two well-known newspapers in their partner's country, and compare similar or equivalent publications in their own culture (Morley and Truscott, 2003) • a translation project: each pair of students to produce two translations, one in each language (Morley and Truscott, 2003)

However, it is important to note that the present study aims to develop participants' LC1 and LC2 awareness; hence, the word association task of the *Cultura* project can also encourage students to develop their language skills; for example, when students write their comments on the forum in their L1, these L1 productions are accurate models of the

target language for their partners, enabling them to respond more accurately in the L2. The cultural surveys of two versions (one in L1 and the other in L2) suggested by O'Dowd and Waire (2009) can also help students to be more aware of their L[C]1 and L[C]2. As Morley and Truscott (2003, p. 114) point out, language exploration activities can develop students' metalinguistic awareness and encourage students to find out the similarities and differences between the native and target languages.

Thus, one pre-activity and seven tasks were designed for this exchange (see Table 3.4). The pre-activity aims to help learners to get to know each other's personality by completing incomplete statements. The other seven tasks are word associations (the words chosen for this tasks are based on the *Cultura* project and are closely related to the students' daily life: fun, money, individualism, alcohol, family, home, Ireland, China, freedom, responsibility, recycling, crowd), the analysis of a piece of news, sentence completions and reactions to situations, explanations of idioms, the completion of intercultural autobiographies, a collaborative translation study and a collaborative newspaper study. Section 3.4.3.5 reports on the pilot research of these tasks and it is on this basis that the final decision on the tasks used for this project was made.

Table 3.4: E-tandem tasks for this study

Task	Title	Description	Objective	Task type
Pre-activity	Getting to know each other	Students exchange their personal information and complete a personality questionnaire, comparing additional answers from other participants on an online forum.	To establish a good relationship with their partner and to learn how to conduct an e-tandem exchange by e-mail	<u>Information exchange</u>
1	Word associations	Students write words that come to mind when seeing a list of words and compare their answers with partners, giving comment in the forum (Furstenberg <i>et al.</i> , 2001).	To develop awareness of language and culture and the link between them	<u>LC1 and LC2 awareness-raising exercises through comparison and critical analysis</u>
2	Analysing a piece of news	Students read this piece of news (<i>‘Teachers Told to Say No to Gifts’</i>). They then analyse and discuss this issue.	To develop a critical understanding of the target culture and become aware of aspects of one’s own culture	
3	Sentence completions/ reactions to situations	Students complete the sentences and express reactions to certain situations and compare their answers with partners, providing comments in the forum (Furstenberg <i>et al.</i> , 2001).	To develop awareness of one’s own and the target culture	
4	Explaining idioms	Students explain the meanings of various idioms from their own language and look at the idioms’ origins and significance (O’Dowd, 2003).	To examine the link between idioms and cultural values in both cultures	
5	Writing intercultural auto-biographies	Students complete the autobiography based on their experience of e-tandem exchange with their partner.	To reflect on one’s intercultural experience	
6	Collaborative translation study	Students watch a video entitled <i>China faces shortage of women</i> , then work together to produce a 100-word summary in both a Chinese and an English version. They discuss this video further.	To work together to produce a translation and become aware of the L2 and cultural issues in question	<u>Collaboration/ research and product creation</u>
7	Collaborative newspaper study	Students compare two newspapers from their own cultures using the given framework of analysis. They further compare and write a report (Morley and Truscott, 2003).	To study the press in two cultures and develop language awareness and cultural awareness	

3.4.3 Instruments for Data Collection in This Study

Due to the nature of online tandem language exchanges, the basic tools for students' exchanges are e-mail and online forums, which represent the two primary sources of data: text-based communication (students write their e-mails and exchange ideas by words through online forum). Thus, this study primarily uses qualitative approaches. There are also four additional instruments and methods for collecting primary data in this study: learning diaries, focus group interviews, a questionnaire survey and case study.

3.4.3.1 Learning Diary

According to Moon (2006), a learning diary is a common tool for collecting qualitative data in language research. Bailey (1990) defines the diary study as 'a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events' (p. 215). However, given the issue of privacy, participants should be informed in advance that their diaries would have to be submitted for research purpose. In the current study, the subject matter of the diaries is restricted to the record of students' language learning experience. Thus, structured diaries with the provision of a diary template for the students are included in this study.

The advantages of using learning diaries in language learning have been identified by many researchers. Nunan (1992, p. 120) states that learning diaries promote autonomous learning, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and also allowing students to express the problems they encounter during learning and therefore enabling them to get help. Given that autonomous learning is an important principle of e-tandem learning, the use of diaries should be an appropriate method both for the enhancement of the learner's experience as well as a useful instrument for data collection for this study. Dörnyei (2007, p. 157-158) adds that diaries allow the researcher:

- to get access to the area of people's lives more naturally with little obtrusion;
- to collect insider accounts which elicit the participants' own descriptions and interpretations of events and behaviours;
- to look at time-related process;
- to get ongoing background information related to the research;

- to gather more accurate information, because the participants write down recent rather than distant events (Eerde *et al.*, 2005 in Dörnyei, 2007).

Therefore, diaries can provide rich information and a genuine insight into learners' experience.

On the other hand, diary studies have their weaknesses. According to Dörnyei (2007, p. 158), a diary study depends as much on the informant's understanding of the rules, participant commitment and dedication (Bolger *et al.*, 2003 in Dörnyei, 2007). Thus, participants may fail to provide accurate and real-time information. He then suggests that researchers be in regular touch with the informants (p. 159). With this in mind, the present study includes individual and regular feedback on diary submissions via e-mail. Even if there are some gaps in the diary entries, Dörnyei adds that these can be bridged by follow-up interviews (p. 159). Interviews are included in the data collection of this study.

In this study, each tandem learner was asked to write in a learning diary every four weeks. In order to generate the data required, a template for the diary was given to the learners to guide them when reporting on their experience (see Appendix A). The first aspect to be reported on in the diary was the general details of their exchange, such as duration of this exchange, the number of written e-mails, topics covered, and content of the activity. Second, students wrote about aspects of the target language learned from their tandem partner, including grammar, vocabulary, new expressions, and useful sentence structures. The third aspect to be reported is related to the (inter)cultural information and observations. Finally, the participants wrote about any difficulties which arose and the way they dealt with these difficulties during the exchange. On this basis, the diaries become the learners' reflections and introspection process over time, which should provide evidence of their experience, feelings and the development of their LC1 and LC2 awareness through the analysis of the qualitative data from the diaries. In order to bridge the gaps in the learner diaries, focus group interviews were conducted as an additional method used for the collection of data in this study.

3.4.3.2 Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews represent another method for primary data collection. According to Robson (2002, p. 284-285), a focus group (sometimes referred to as a focus group

interview) is ‘an open-ended group discussion on a specific topic guided by the researcher, typically extending over at least an hour, possibly two or more’. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2007) states ‘The focus group format...is about, participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to the emerging issues and points’ (p. 144). Thus, focus group interviews require more interaction between participants and the researcher, and the investigator needs to have more control than with individual interviews. This raises one of the limitations of focus group interviews where ‘the researcher probably has less control over proceedings’ (Bryman 2004, p. 359). Robson (2002) supports Bryman’s view. He states that facilitating the group process requires considerable expertise. With regard to the weaknesses associated with focus group interviews, Dörnyei (2007, p. 146) mentions four: the amount of preparation to set up the event, the simultaneous functions carried out by the interviewer, the limited number of questions covered, and the technical issue of transcribing such interviews.

In order to overcome the negatives, an audio-taping instrument to record the group interview was used (Dörnyei, 2007; Robson, 2002). Robson (2002) also suggests having a second researcher or other person involved in the focus group interview who can help making notes on who the speaker is and give feedback on the interviewer’s performance. Thus, the teacher from the partner class of Cohort 2 was invited to participate in the focus group interviews of Group 3 and 4 and she helped to keep notes.

Although focus groups interviews bear these limitations, advantages of focus group interviews have also been stated by many academics who support their inclusion in social research. In particular, Dörnyei (2007, p. 146) attests ‘because of the flexible and information-rich data nature of the method, focus groups are often used in mixed methods research’. He notes that it is because of the interactive environment which results in a deep and insightful discussion that this method can collect high-quality data. More strengths associated with focus groups pointed out by Robson (2002, p. 284) can be summarised as:

- It is a highly efficient technique for QUAL data collection by collecting from several people at the same time.
- Group dynamics help in focusing on the most important topics.

- Others' thoughts and comments in the group can stimulate participants to make comments in their own words.
- It can encourage those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own or feel they have nothing to say.

On this basis, the use of focus group interviews in this study not only supplements the findings from the learning diaries, but also helps to find out more about learners' problems during e-tandem and their deeper reflection on the e-tandem experience and their e-tandem partners through debate, discussion and synchronous exchange. Thus, the data collected from interviews are qualitative. Details of focus groups for each cohort are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Focus groups in the study

	Cohort	Group	Numbers
	Cohort 1	Group 1 (CN)	5
		Group 2 (CN)	4
	Cohort 2	Group 3 (IR/US)	3
		Group 4 (IR)	2
		Group 5 (CN)	6
		Group 6 (CN)	5
	Cohort 3	Group 7 (CN)	4
Total	3	7	29

In Table 3.5, the focus groups in this study include the following 7 groups and 29 participants: 2 Chinese groups in Cohort 1 (Group 1- 5 participants; Group 2- 4 participants); In Cohort 2, there are 2 Chinese groups and 2 Irish/American groups (Group 3- 3 Irish/American participants; Group 4- 2 Irish participants; Group 5- 6 Chinese participants; Group 6- 5 Chinese participants); and finally, only 1 Chinese group of 4 participants in Cohort 3. The uneven number of participants (3 or 2 participants in Group 3 and 4) in the Irish/American groups is due to the unexpected absence of the Irish students during interviews for personal reasons; one should note that they had already accepted the interview before the researcher arrived. Consequently, the comparison of the responses between Chinese and the Irish/American groups is imbalanced. However, focus groups tend to provide abundant data as evidenced in this study.

All the Chinese focus groups interviews were conducted in the researcher's home university (GXUST) by herself and the other two interviews among Irish and American

participants happened in Shanghai University. For the Irish/American participants, the interviews were conducted in English while for the Chinese participants, Mandarin was used. All the conversations between the researcher and the interviewees were recorded by two voice recorders at the same time. After the interviews, all the transcriptions were done by the researcher herself.

3.4.3.3 Questionnaire Survey

Survey studies aim to describe ‘the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group’ (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101). One of the popular data collection methods in surveys is the use of questionnaires from which quantitative data are collected. Dörnyei’s (2007) definition of a questionnaire is the one used in this study: ‘any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers’ (p. 102).

Questionnaire surveys have some distinct advantages but also some disadvantages. According to Dörnyei (2007), questionnaires allow the researcher to save time, effort and finance. Moreover, there are a number of benefits to using questionnaires as compared to other research methods:

- Firstly, questionnaires offer less opportunity for bias or errors caused by the presence or attitudes of the researcher (Sarantakos, 2005).
- Secondly, questionnaires are especially useful for carrying out research with geographically dispersed population (Seale, 2004).
- Thirdly, questionnaire surveys provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives (Robson, 2002).

Given the merits of questionnaires and considering the geographical distribution of the participants in this study, using questionnaires is appropriate, because a sufficient quantity of data may be gathered in a short period of time.

However, the limitations of questionnaires also need to be noted. For example, there is no opportunity to probe or clarify misunderstandings (Seale, 2004; Robson, 2002). In order to overcome this deficiency, piloting of the questionnaire is conducted to reduce the possible misunderstandings of the questionnaire items. Dörnyei (2007) points out one

major limitation of questionnaires where unreliable and invalid data may be gathered if the questionnaire is ill-constructed. He points out that its main items should be carefully selected. There are three kinds of questions in a questionnaire as summarised by Dörnyei (2007, p. 102): factual questions (e.g., demographic characteristics), behavioural questions (e.g., personal history), and attitudinal questions (e.g., respondents' attitudes).

In this study, end-of-project questionnaires are used. The questions devised focus on general information relating to the e-tandem experience, reflections on the development of language awareness and intercultural awareness in the course of the exchange, and further comments on the actual e-tandem experience of participants, retrospectively - note that the questionnaire items address the participants directly through the use of personal pronouns such as 'does e-tandem help *you* to develop your ability to correct L2 errors', '*my* partner', thereby rooting and contextualising the questions within the experience itself as opposed to eliciting general comments (see Appendix B). Moreover, the questionnaire data represent a follow-up of participants' reflections in diaries and focus group discussions which are transcribed in Volume 2. References to L2 in the questionnaire refer to the partner's use of the L2 which participants had to correct. The data collected from this instrument will yield quantitative results, and as the questionnaire contains the participants' spontaneous reflections on their learning experience, it is expected to provide supporting evidence of the students' development of awareness.

3.4.3.4 Piloting of the Instruments

A pilot study here refers to 'the pre-testing or 'trying-out' of a particular research instrument' (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001, p. 1) before the final administration of the instrument. Dörnyei (2007) notes that the piloting of a research instrument aims to improve its internal reliability and validity. According to many academics (Dörnyei, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005; Robson, 2002; Nunan, 1992), focus group interviews and questionnaires should be pre-tested. Robson (2002) suggests having the first draft questionnaire pre-tested, and then according to the feedback from a piloting study, a final draft of this questionnaire should be developed. Nunan (1992) also indicates that interview questions should be piloted before being used, because this allows the researcher to 'find out if the questions are yielding the kind of data required and to

eliminate any question which may be ambiguous or confusing to the interviewees' (p. 151).

One instrument used to elicit participants' LC1 and LC2 development was the careful selection of tasks for participants to engage with. As well as providing a clear focus for participants' exchanges, the interactive nature of these tasks also becomes a rich source of data. The collaborative, compare-and-contrast and product-oriented approach were likely to provide useful insights into participants' development of LC1 and LC2 awareness. Hence, the tasks used for this study were piloted. Three students from each group (3 Irish students and 3 Chinese students) agreed to pilot the tasks used in this e-tandem exchange. They were asked to read the designed tasks (Appendix C) thoroughly and then were required to fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix D) with their comments on these tasks. Their responses are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire on piloting tasks

Question	Answer	Numbers
1. Do you think these tasks will encourage you to communicate with your learning partner?	Yes	6
	no	0
2. Given the number of weeks (about 30) involved in the exchange, do you think the number of the tasks is appropriate?	too many	2
	not enough	1
	appropriate	3
3. Do you find any of the tasks difficult? If so, which task(s)?	task 1	0
	task 2	0
	task 3	0
	task 4	1
	task 5	2
	task 6	2
	task 7	1

From the analysis of the feedback from these 6 students in Table 3.6, all of the six students agreed that these tasks would be helpful for their communication with e-tandem partners. With regard to the number of tasks, half of them believed that 7 tasks would be appropriate for the two semesters' exchange, while two students stated that there were too many tasks and one indicated that the number of tasks was insufficient. As to the difficulty of these tasks, tasks 5 and 6 were considered the most challenging, because task 5 required too much detail and the students indicated that tasks 5 and 6 were really time-consuming. Most of the six students had no comment on these tasks, except one who suggested that the pre-activity should be a little bit easier and more relaxed, and another

student commented on task 6: *‘this type of task is boring, because we do translation tasks almost every day’* (translated from one Chinese student). In addition, from the time taken to complete the pre-activity and students’ exchange frequency in the first cohort, it was decided that two tasks for each semester and four tasks in total for two semesters would be more feasible. Based on the feedback, tasks 5 and 6 were removed and tasks 1, 2, 3 and 7 were finally chosen for the two semesters exchanges (see the details of these 4 tasks in Appendix C).

Another instrument - the questionnaire - used to collect participants’ biological information, reflection on the development of IC and language awareness, further comments on the e-tandem exchanges, was also piloted. 4 students (2 Chinese and 2 Irish) who did not participate in this exchange answered the end-of-project questionnaire and filled out a questionnaire (see Appendix E) with their comments on the questionnaire questions. Their responses are presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Responses to the piloting of the end-of-project questionnaire

Answers	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
yes	4	4	2	3	1
no	0	0	1	0	2
total	4	4	3	3	3

Responses to Question 1 are not presented in Table 3.7 because it is an open question about the time to complete this project questionnaire. 4 respondents gave different answers as: 15 minutes, 22 minutes, 24 minutes and ‘too long’. Thus, 3 out of 4 respondents accounting for 75% finished the questionnaire in 30 minutes, which indicates that the length of this questionnaire is suitable. With regard to Question 2 (relevance of the questionnaire questions and the e-tandem exchange) and Question 3 (clarity of the words and questions in the questionnaire), all the respondents gave positive responses. However, not all the respondents responded to Questions 4-6. Question 4 is about the range of response choices. 2 respondents agreed that they were specific while 1 mentioned they were repetitive. All the responses to Question 5 were positive and indicate that the questionnaire questions can motivate respondents to respond. In respect of Question 6, 2 respondents had no suggestion for additional questions. 1 respondent chose ‘yes’, but

she/he did not write down the questions. Considering these findings from the pilot study, the researcher decided not to make changes to the questionnaire.

To conclude, the tools used for data collection in this study include the content of e-mails, online forums, and responses to tasks. Other instruments used to gather further data are learning diaries, focus group interviews, a questionnaire survey and case study. Each tool requires a different process. The combination of these processes should make the emergence of awareness clearer, because the use of each data collection tool in this study helps to establish triangulation (see Figure 3.1).

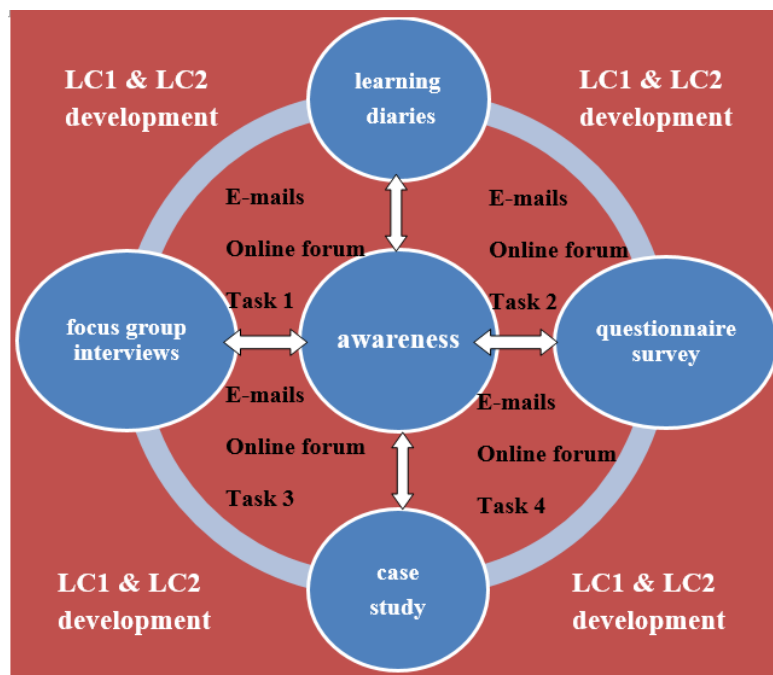


Figure 3.1: The triangulation of data collection instruments and methods

In this figure, the students exchange e-mails and interact in forums while completing 4 tasks, which helps to obtain the raw data from the exchanges. Furthermore, this asynchronous exchange complemented by 4 additional instruments - learning diaries, focus group interviews, questionnaire survey and case study - provides evidence of the emergence of awareness. In this way, data from different collection methods are complementary, and facilitate the exploration of the learners' LC1 and LC2 competence development.

As for the diaries, a reflection process, students' awareness is likely to emerge over time. Focus group interviews are also part of a reflection process to further explore the students'

awareness through their synchronous discussion and exchanges. Questionnaires are students' spontaneous reflection on their awareness development. Finally, 3 essentially descriptive case studies provide an additional focus on participants' awareness development.

3.5 Data Analysis

Based on the data collection instruments and methods chosen for this study, quantitative data collected by questionnaires was analysed using Excel software. Other qualitative data from e-mail texts, forum entries, learning diaries was analysed through thematic analysis. In this regard, the emergence and interpretation of what constitutes a thematic category will be guided by similar empirical studies on LC1 and LC2 awareness development.

3.5.1 Categories as an Instrument for the Analysis of Intercultural Awareness

According to the review of the definition of intercultural awareness in Section 2.3.2 of Chapter 2, intercultural awareness means the ability to understand and evaluate one's own and others' culture critically through comparison of the similarities and differences between LC1 and LC2. In addition, Chun's (2011) and O'Dowd's (2003) studies in Section 2.4.1.2 of the Literature Review Chapter also provide types of categories that are likely to emerge from participants' contributions (examples see Table 3.7). Based on the proposed definition of IC awareness and the categories used by Chun (2011) and O'Dowd (2003), the categories relevant to this study are listed below:

1. understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 (from this researcher's analysis);
2. evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 (from this researcher's analysis);
3. comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2 (from Chun, 2011);
4. comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2 (from Chun, 2011);
5. speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2 (from Chun, 2011);
6. interest in [L]C1/[L]C2 (from this researcher's analysis);
7. discussion on a clash of opinions (from O'Dowd, 2003).

The table below gives an indication of how Chun devised the categories:

Table 3.8: Evidence of students' ICC development in Chun's study (2011)

Statements from students	Speech acts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American University students see their work as something negative. I think ... 'work' in the American culture is mostly seen as more of a burden. The students of the German University think... Almost all of the students at the American University see climate as a threat. 	opinion/ reflection on [L]C1 and [L]C2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is certainly interesting that the students of the German University..., while the students of the American University differentiate work... What most the German University students describe is the future, where work can and should also be fun, the American University students are also waiting for that when their studies are done. Both the American University and the German University think of Al Gore when they read this word 'climate change'. 	(interest in) comparison (the differences and similarities) of [L]C1 and [L]C2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maybe all people love and need money equally. 	speculation about [L]C1 and [L]C2

The advantage of using tried and tested categories similar to Chun's investigation (2011) serves to confirm previous findings. However, the present study also generated new categories which are discussed in Chapter 5: dealing with disagreement, finding commonalities and dealing with misunderstanding.

Data are also analysed based on different themes. For example, Furlong and Kennedy (2011) used a thematic analysis of students' reports on a tandem exchange experience to see their development of awareness in intercultural communicative competence. 23 students taking an intercultural communication module were required to submit final reports on their experience. 4 main themes (a. the place and role of language in the exchange; b. when the scientific concept meets the everyday concept: contextualising formal knowledge; c. valuing diversity; d. awareness of self and other) emerged from the reports and there were more sub-themes under each main theme. Table 3.9 details the theme of *awareness of self and other*. As the format of the report in Furlong and Kennedy's study is similar to the template of the learning diary used in this study, especially in the two entries: new language and critical analysis of (inter)cultural information and general observations, a thematic analysis was also used to analyse the data collected from the learning diaries in this study.

Table 3.9: Thematic analysis in Furlong and Kennedy’s study (2011)

Theme	Sub-themes
awareness of self and other	a. change of world view - development of a less simplistic viewpoint b. culture as a relative construct c. discussion of personal and difficult issues d. self-awareness - discovering differences in behaviour e. willingness to modify behaviour f. culture as a dynamic force g. developing awareness - differences in values

To summarise, with regard to the analysis of [L]C1 and [L]C2 awareness, the following methods of analysis were used: Excel Software for the questionnaire, the categorisation of participants’ online forum and e-mail contributions related to task completion based on previously established empirical studies as well as a thematic approach for the diary entries and the content of free e-mail exchanges. Methods used to analyse the development of L[C]1 and L[C]2 are outlined below.

3.5.2 Methods for Analysing Language Awareness

Given the additional focus of this study on the development of participants’ language awareness, this section reviews the methods used to analyse the development of participants’ language awareness from two aspects: coding L2 corrections and errors and categorising tandem partners’ conversations.

The Wali and Blin’s (2009) study, reviewed in Section 2.3.3.2 of the Literature Review Chapter, identifies 7 different categories: articles, personal pronouns, verbs and tenses, spelling, prepositions, relative pronouns and direct translation from Arabic to English. The variation over time in the number of errors in the above categories was compared.

Simard, French and Fortier (2007) studied the link between metalinguistic reflection and L2 learning. In their study, comprising 29 French-speaking students in an ESL class, *Simard, French and Fortier* used journal-writing to elicit French students’ metalinguistic reflection on English language. Data was collected at the beginning and at the end of a 3-month period. One of the questions in the journal was ‘What do you think you have learned in class today?’. Students were encouraged to write keywords like pronunciation,

vocabulary, sentences, expressions, and content. The journal entries were grouped into 7 categories based on the language aspects and features: (1) phonetic/phonological (pronunciation of specific sounds or sound sequences), (2) lexical, (3) morphological (derivational morphology, such as a morpheme in the form of an affix - e.g., *ness*), (4) morphosyntactic (inflectional morphology, such as plurals), (5) syntactic (verb tense, word order, question formation), (6) semantic (idiomatic expressions), and (7) pragmatic (register, cultural difference, politeness). The number of occurrences per category was subsequently calculated. It is found that the participants significantly improved both their grammar and their vocabulary.

Heydari and Bagheri (2012) review many studies on error analysis in L2 learning and summarise the most frequent errors committed by EFL learners. They state that L2 learners' errors can be generally divided into interlingual errors (caused by the native language) and intralingual errors (caused by the target language). According to Heydari and Bagheri (2012), most common errors for EFL learners are usually: (1) articles, (2) word order, (3) voice, (4) prepositions, (5) verbs, (6) verb conjugation, (7) tenses, (8) auxiliaries, (9) mood, (10) plural/singular agreement, (11) conjunctions.

Yu and Chen (2012) detect word order errors in Chinese sentences when learning Chinese as a foreign language. They specify types of word order errors in Chinese from the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) corpus. The top 10 error types at sentence level in HSK are categorised as follows (Yu and Chen 2012, p. 3006): (1) word ordering error, (2) missing adverb, (3) missing predicate, (4) 'is (是)...DE (的)' sentence, (5) missing subject, (6) missing head noun, (7) 'is (是)' sentence, (8) redundant predicate, (9) incomplete sentence, (10) redundant adverb.

Since the participants in this present study are also required to point out their learning partner's L2 errors, then tracking the percentage of L2 errors committed against those noticed by their e-tandem partner's e-mails at the beginning and at the end of this project can measure the participants' growing L1 and L2 awareness. With regard to the learning diary used in this study, the following question was used: 'What target language did I learn from my partner? (including grammar, vocabulary, expressions)'. Coding participants' answers and analysing them in the same manner as that of the L2 errors

noticed in e-mails should lead to a comprehensive overview of participants' awareness of their L2.

Furthermore, because of the text-based dialogic aspect of participants' asynchronous exchanges, the following two considerations drove the analysis: 1) how participants dealt with not understanding their partner; 2) how participants coped when not able to express ideas in L2. This approach serves as an indication of how the participants mutually engaged and how the dialogue became a learning dialogue about self and other.

To summarise, the methods used for the analysis of the development of L[C]1 and L[C]2 awareness are based on well-established categories in error analysis (Wali and Blin, 2009; Simard *et al.*, 2007; Heydari and Bagheri, 2012; Yu and Chen, 2012). In addition, errors committed compared to errors corrected were examined over time. The dialogic aspect of participants' exchanges was also taken into account. Finally, participants' reflective diary entries on their L2 gains were also considered.

3.5.3 Justifications for the Use of the Data in the Study

In order to have a clear picture of the design of the study, this sub-section deals with a further overview of the use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

All quantitative data of the study are presented in Chapter 4 - Research Findings. Quantitative analysis in the study mainly focuses on the participants' answers to the end-of-project questionnaires (56 questions). Their responses to their experiences of e-tandem, intercultural awareness and language awareness development were analysed by calculating and comparing the number of their different responses.

On the other hand, all qualitative data are in Appendices. The researcher's qualitative insights into the participants' awareness development during e-tandem exchanges are based on self-report (learning diary and focus groups interview), but also analysis of e-mail and forum content which are not self-reports but evidence of change through exchange (see Chapter 5 - Discussion of Findings).

The study and its qualitative level would have benefited from a pre- and post-testing to assess growth in both language and intercultural awareness. However, this was not possible due to the sudden changes in the initial arrangements between the partner

institutions of GXUST and UCD. New and time-constraining extramural arrangements with new institutions were made - University College Cork, Ireland + GXUST, Shanghai University, China + GXUST, Trident Technical College, USA + GXUST.

Moreover, the study suffers from an imbalance between participants' willingness to invest time and effort as well as an imbalance in their L2 proficiency. Chinese participants appeared to be more motivated on the whole, while Irish/American participants were less inclined to exchange online. Moreover, Chinese participants reported longer exposure-time to the L2 (English) than their counterparts who had a considerably shorter exposure-time to Mandarin (see Figure 4.1 based on 39 respondents - 61% of participants). This impacted on the length and depth of entries and contributions thereby affecting the quality of the qualitative data. Opportunities to reflect more deeply did not emerge as had been initially anticipated, and this, in spite of the number of instruments used in the methodology which could have compensated for this short-coming.

3.6 Ethical Clearance

Bernard (2000) declares that 'the biggest problem in conducting a science of human behaviour is not selecting the right sample or making the right measurement. It's doing those things ethically' (p. 22).

According to Robson (2002), ethics refers to rules of conduct, which usually means they have to be in accord with a code or set of principles (p. 65). There are many issues in ethics. However, a central issue is that research participants are the most important individuals in a research project. In this respect, there are two main areas of concern: issues of privacy and confidentiality and those of gaining informed consent (Sarantakos, 2005; Seale, 2004).

Before starting this research, the proposed study received ethical approval from Waterford Institute of Technology's Academic Council. The following ethical issues were taken into account and are identified in the participant consent form (see Appendix F). As presented in Appendix F, the consent form is in English only, and was not available in Mandarin. However, these consent forms were distributed by the students' English teachers in China and the students had an opportunity to ask for clarification when the form was distributed. First, the consent form informed the participants of the purpose and

objectives of the study, as well as the risks and benefits, making clear to participants that the project would not cause harm. They were also made aware of the exact processes involved, ensuring that no deception would occur. Prior to engaging with this study, participants were informed that their e-mails, forum comments and diaries would be used for the sole purpose of this study. Issues of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were also addressed by careful handling of the data. Any personal content such as from participants' e-mails was not disclosed. Participants' names did not appear in the results of the study and pseudonyms were used. None of the data used in this research displays the participants' names. Confidentiality is respected and no information that discloses the identity of the participant will be released or published without consent unless required by law. The confidentiality of the data will be carefully protected. Data will be stored in a personal computer and will not be made available to others except to the researcher's supervisors, for control purposes when necessary.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

As with all research projects, limitations exist and impact the present study. The first limitation is that the study is based on volunteers, as this project could not be integrated into a curriculum, despite negotiated agreements at the outset of the project. As a result, added difficulties emerged both for the researcher and the partner teacher with regard to the preparation of participants and the supervision of their voluntary contributions. Thus, a few students did not complete their tasks as required. This situation also affected forum discussions as students' participation in online forums was not as active as anticipated.

The second limitation concerns learner-matching procedures. In the first cohort of participants, students were paired randomly with different L2 proficiency levels and interests. This appeared to affect participants' enthusiasm negatively. However, in the second cohort, participants were required to complete a form about their interests and preferences (see Appendix G), then dyads were arranged according to participants' interest and personal preferences; this, in turn, appeared to increase their motivation.

The third limitation is the students' unfamiliarity with procedures associated with e-tandem exchanges. For example, students appeared uncomfortable when writing half in their own language and half in the target language; they were slow to point out their partner's language mistakes; when comparing their different cultures, a few participants

appeared unable to probe their partner's values, beliefs and behaviour. It is obvious that participants would have benefited from face-to-face workshops introducing tandem principles and procedures before starting the project. However, because this study was extramural, online and with limited resources, it was not possible to organise such a workshop. Consequently, written explanations (see Appendix H) were sent to each participant as a compromise for not being able to offer face-to-face support before starting the project. Participant received regular advice and support from the researcher on an individual basis, relying on asynchronous online communication, because the researcher did not have access to the financial and institutional synchronous communication resources normally available to the employees of these institutions.

In addition, due to the limited time, the collected data in the study may not fully reflect individuals' change of perspectives and change in their L2 writing accuracy (e.g., the change of certain errors at the beginning and at the end of the exchange). With regard to data analysis, all the transcripts of interviews and the Mandarin-to-English translation in the study were conducted by the researcher herself, which may bring the risk of subjectivity between the translation and the nature of the original information.

One more limitation is the absence of a platform to collect participants' data. Collecting participants' e-mails and learning diaries proved challenging as the teacher-researcher depended on participants' willingness to send in their e-mails and learning diaries. This was reported by one Chinese participant:

I sent my partner many e-mails and she/he also replied to me, but I probably forgot to cc these e-mails to you and then you thought we communicated less later. (Are you two still interacting?) yes, it's just that I didn't transfer my e-mails to you. (p7.4 Question 2, Appendix V)

With regard to the nature of e-mail tandem exchange, sustaining a topic of discussion over time proved to be challenging for several participants as suggested in this report: *'usually we would forget what we discussed before and the discussion had to stop'* (p1.4 Question 6, Appendix P). However and unusually, one dyad (Case Study 1) was able to sustain one topic over several e-mail exchanges. In addition, e-mail and online forum are asynchronous text-based interaction, and did not satisfy all the participants' needs, such

as the need for a sincerer, genuine and more direct interaction with their partners or the strong desire to practise their speaking skills.

Finally, a third cohort of participants from the USA joined this project. The teacher who was in charge of this cohort in the USA was contacted by the researcher through a Chinese Teachers' Club Group via LinkedIn. This cohort agreed to participate in this study for a semester; while they do shed additional light on such exchanges, only a limited number of tasks were completed. In addition, the end-of-project questionnaire and interview of these American students could not be conducted either by the researcher or by the partner teacher.

3.8 Conclusion

This study's methodology uses a mixed method approach. The instruments used include e-mails, online forums and tasks, which provide an insight into participants' direct contribution to the e-tandem exchanges. In addition, learning diaries, as an introspective tool, were used to elicit participants' reflection on LC1 and LC2 development. A questionnaire and focus group interviews were added to collect spontaneous and deeper viewpoints from participants. A case study of three dyads was conducted from a dialogic perspective and in a descriptive manner to provide an additional insight into participants' varying levels of engagement and awareness development.

The development of intercultural awareness is broken down into categories and themes, with regard to the development of L[C]1 and L[C]2 awareness, L2 corrections and errors are coded and include a focus on participants' language use during interaction with their partner. Finally, limitations of the study are identified and serve as a reflection on this research, thereby providing a starting point for discussing future work in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4: Research Finding

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the quantitative analysis of data obtained from three cohorts of participants. In order to facilitate this, the chapter is broken down into five additional sections presenting participants' findings, as follows:

- questionnaires,
- e-mails and online-forums,
- their learning diaries,
- focus group interviews,

as well as

- case studies.

This chapter first deals with respondents' self-reflection on their e-tandem experience quantitatively based on questionnaires. Second, participants' e-mail output, task completion and online forum contributions are analysed quantitatively. Following this, findings from participants' error noticing are presented. Participants' contributions to learning diaries are also presented, including their perceived L2 gains and L2 features. Finally, 3 dyads' contribution during the e-tandem exchanges are also tracked, followed by quantitative findings from focus group interview.

All qualitative data of the transcripts of participants' e-mails, online forum discussions and focus group interviews are in Appendices. As Chinese, Irish and American participants communicated by switching between Mandarin and English, language errors appear in the transcripts, and can be seen in context in Appendices L-M and W-Z. In addition, English translation in italics for Chinese students' contributions in Mandarin are given in square brackets '[]' and these are the researcher's own translations.

4.2 Findings from Questionnaires

This section looks at participants' responses to questionnaires which they were required to submit at the end of their e-tandem exchanges. The section deals first with the number of questionnaires submitted, biographical details of respondents as well as other general information on respondents. Respondents' reflections on their e-tandem experiences, IC awareness development, L2 development and their further comments on e-tandem follow. Finally, 3 open questions were put to respondents; this gave them an opportunity to

express their topic preferences, reflect on the limitations of e-tandem, and make further additional comments.

4.2.1 Overview of Respondents and Questionnaire Survey

Table 4.1 presents the 39 respondents' biographical information; however, 1 Irish respondent did not give the details (p2.1). Thus, there are 14 female and 24 male respondents. They were aged between 19 and 22 except for respondent - p1.11 who was 25 at the end of the e-tandem exchanges. Among the 7 Irish respondents who provided their details, 4 (p1.1-p1.4) were from UCC majoring in Commerce and Chinese and they were in the final year of their course at the time of completing the questionnaires. Another 3 Irish respondents (p2.2, p2.3, p2.5) based in Shanghai University, China were also majoring in Commerce and Chinese and in their 3rd year. 1 American respondent (p2.4) was also based in Shanghai University, China but did not supply any detail about his course of study. All the 30 Chinese respondents were second year students in Guangxi University of Science and Technology, China and their majors included Automotive Engineering, Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Transportation, and Computer Science and Technology.

Table 4. 1: Respondents' biographical details

	participant	age	gender	nationality	college	course	year
1	p1.1 (C1-IR6)	21	F	Irish	UCC	Commerce and Chinese	4th
2	p1.2 (C1-IR4)	21	M	Irish	UCC	Commerce and Chinese	4th
3	P1.3 (C1-IR8)	22	M	Irish	UCC	Commerce and Chinese	4th
4	P1.4 (C1-IR10)	21	M	Irish	UCC	Commerce and Chinese	4th
5	P1.5 (C1-CN10)	21	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
6	P1.6 (C1-CN5)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
7	P1.7 (C1-CN9)	21	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
8	P1.8 (C1-CN6)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
9	P1.9 (C1-CN2)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
10	P1.10 (C1-CN4)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
11	P1.11 (C1-CN7)	25	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
12	P1.12 (C1-CN1)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
13	P1.13 (C1-CN8)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
14	P2.1 (C2-IR1)	/	/	/	/	/	/
15	P2.2 (C2-IR9)	20	F	Irish	Shanghai University	Commerce and Chinese	3rd
16	P2.3 (C2-IR3)	21	F	Irish	Shanghai University	Commerce and Chinese	3rd
17	P2.4 (C2-US10)	21	M	American	Shanghai University	/	/
18	P2.5 (C2-IR4)	20	F	Irish	Shanghai University	Commerce and Chinese	3rd
19	P2.6 (C2-CN12)	21	F	Chinese	GXUST	Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	2nd
20	P2.7 (C2-CN13)	/	M	Chinese	GXUST	Transportation	2nd
21	P2.8 (C2-CN3)	19	F	Chinese	GXUST	Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	2nd
22	P2.9 (C2-CN6)	20	F	Chinese	GXUST	Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	2nd
23	P2.10 (C2-CN14)	20	F	Chinese	GXUST	Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	2nd
24	P2.11 (C2-CN9)	20	F	Chinese	GXUST	Transportation	2nd
25	P2.12 (C2-CN5)	20	M	Chinese	GXUST	Computer Science and Technology	2nd
26	P2.13 (C2-CN4)	20	F	Chinese	GXUST	Computer Science and Technology	2nd
27	P2.14 (C2-CN2)	19	M	Chinese	GXUST	Computer Science and Technology	2nd
28	P2.15 (C2-CN1)	22	F	Chinese	GXUST	Computer Science and Technology	2nd
29	P2.16 (C2-CN10)	21	M	Chinese	GXUST	Computer Science and Technology	2nd
30	P2.17 (C2-CN8)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
31	P2.18 (C2-CN11)	21	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
32	P2.19 (C2-CN7)	23	M	Chinese	GXUST	Transportation	2nd
33	P3.1 (C3-CN2)	20	M	Chinese	GXUST	Engineering Management	2nd
34	P3.2 (C3-CN6)	21	M	Chinese	GXUST	Computer Science and Technology	2nd
35	P3.3 (C3-CN3)	22	M	Chinese	GXUST	Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	2nd
36	P3.4 (C3-CN1)	21	F	Chinese	GXUST	Transportation	2nd
37	P3.5 (C3-CN4)	21	M	Chinese	GXUST	Automotive Engineering	2nd
38	P3.6 (C3-CN5)	22	F	Chinese	GXUST	Transportation	2nd
39	P3.7 (C3-CN7)	21	F	Chinese	GXUST	Transportation	2nd

Table 4. 2: Number of questionnaires returned per cohort

Cohort	No. of questionnaires returned		Respondents
Cohort 1 (20)	13 (65%)	IR (4/10 - 40%)	IR4, IR6, IR8, IR10
		CN (9/10 - 90%)	CN3 missing
Cohort 2 (28)	19 (68%)	IR/US (5/14 - 36%)	IR1, IR3, IR4, IR9, US10
		CN (14/14 - 100%)	all
Cohort 3 (14)	7 (50%)	US (0)	none
		CN (7/7 - 100%)	all
Total: 62	39 (63%)		

Table 4.2 indicates that 39 of 62 questionnaires were returned (63%), in which 9 respondents are Irish or American and 30 are Chinese. The total return number for Cohort 1 is 13 while 19 of 28 were collected from Cohort 2. Note that in Cohort 2, one of the five respondents is American - p2.4. As this student was in the same group as the Irish students in Shanghai, the respondents are denoted as Irish/American. Only 7 of 14 participants in Cohort 3 returned their questionnaires; these participants were all Chinese while no American participant returned the questionnaire (no reason was given by the individuals and the teacher of Cohort 3). The second column also indicates that 50% or more questionnaires were returned for each cohort; Cohorts 1 and 2 comprise a higher rate of return from Chinese participants than from Irish and Irish/American participants - a difference of 50% in Cohort 1 and 64% in Cohort 2.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 are related to respondents' general information to elicit their previous learning experience of Chinese and English (Figure 4.1), of tandem exchange (Table 4.3) and visits to China and English-speaking countries (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4. 1: Prior learning of Chinese or English
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.1 displays the duration of respondents’ learning of Chinese or English as they entered the e-tandem exchange. The orange line denotes the Irish/American respondents and the blue line refers to the Chinese respondents. All the Chinese respondents had studied English more than 8 years and one of them reports studying English for 15 years. Among the Irish/American respondents, 1 respondent reports studying Chinese for 5 years prior to this tandem experience, 3+3 respondents report studying Chinese for 4 and 3 years while 1 respondent reports studying Chinese for 2 years. The figures suggest that all the Chinese respondents appear to have benefited from a longer exposure time to the L2 than the Irish and American respondents.

Table 4. 3: Responses to ‘Is this your first online tandem exchange?’

Respondents	Yes	No
Irish /American	9 (100%)	0
Chinese	30 (100%)	0
Total	39 (100%)	0

Table 4.3 indicates that all the Chinese and Irish/American respondents had never participated in e-tandem exchanges before this project.

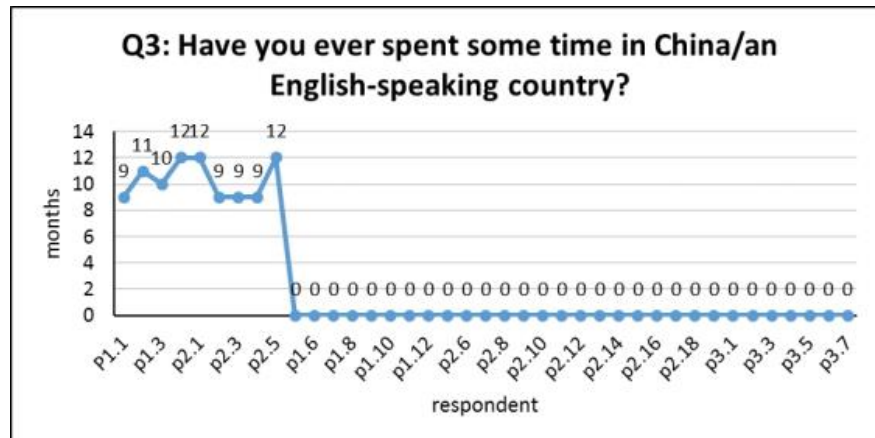


Figure 4. 2: Visits to China or English-speaking countries
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.2 shows the respondents’ visits to China or an English-speaking country. It appears that all the Irish/American respondents (9: p1.1-1.4; p2.1-2.5) from Cohorts 1 and 2 had been staying in China for at least 9 months and 3 of them had stayed for 12 months by the end of the exchange. However, all the Chinese respondents report that they had never been to an English-speaking country.

4.2.2 Respondents' E-tandem Experience

Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 49 below investigate the respondents' general impressions of e-tandem language learning.

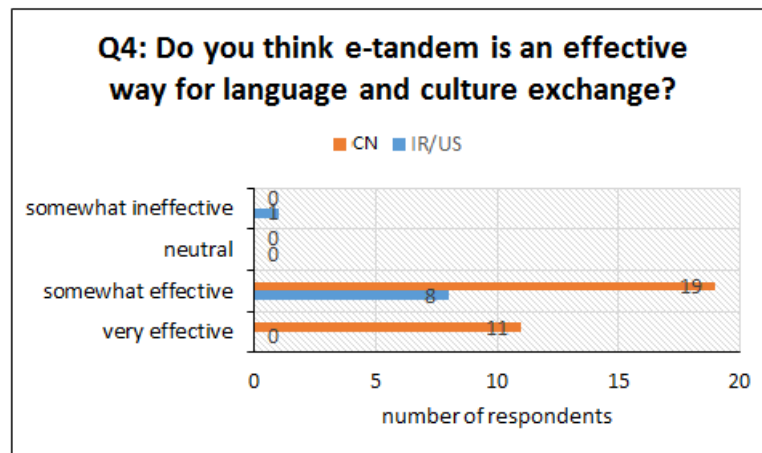


Figure 4. 3: E-tandem as a way of exchanging language and culture
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.3, 11 Chinese respondents indicate that this tandem exchange was *very effective* for their language and culture exchange, with no similar report from Irish/American respondents. 27 respondents (8 are Irish/American and 19 are Chinese), which account for 69% of total number (39), report that this exchange was *somewhat effective*. One Irish/American respondent states that it was *somewhat ineffective*. However, there is no suggestion that the e-tandem was *very ineffective*.

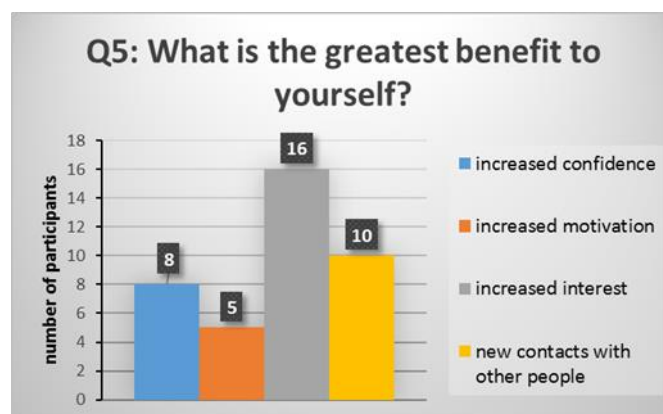


Figure 4. 4: Greatest benefits to e-tandem respondents
The percentages are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.4 indicates that 16 of the 39 respondents (41% of the total) who responded report *increased interest* in learning as the greatest benefit from this exchange. 10 and 8 report

establishing new contacts with people from other countries and increased confidence accounting for 26% and 20% respectively. 5 respondents (13%) declare *increased motivation* as their greatest benefit from e-tandem.

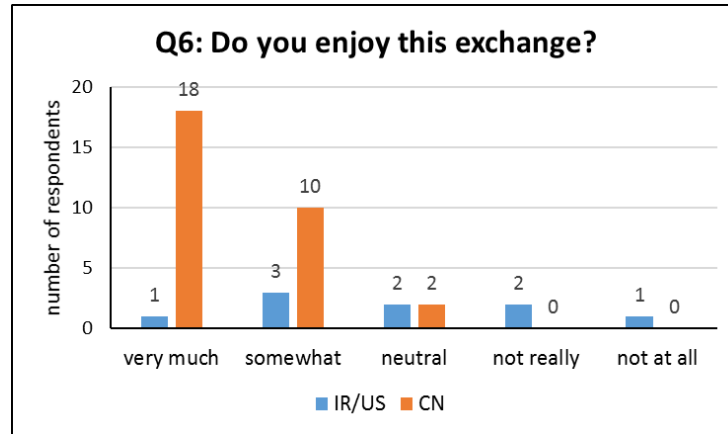


Figure 4. 5: Respondents’ reported enjoyment of e-tandem exchange
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

To the question ‘Do you enjoy this exchange?’ Figure 4.5 indicates that 19 respondents out of 39 enjoyed this e-tandem experience *very much* and 13 of them also believe they *somewhat* enjoyed this exchange. 4 respondents are *neutral* and 2 mention they did *not really* enjoy the experience while 1 respondent declares *not at all*. Thus, 32 respondents express enjoyment in this exchange which represents 82% of the total number of respondents (39). However, the results also indicate that the 3 respondents who report that they did not enjoy this e-tandem exchange are all Irish/American and none is Chinese.

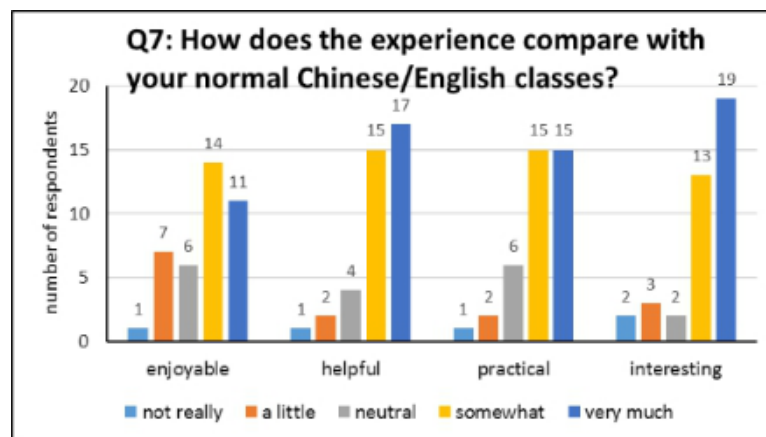


Figure 4. 6: Comparison between traditional language classes and the e-tandem exchange
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.6 indicates that 25 of 39 respondents report that this e-tandem exchange was *very* or *somewhat enjoyable* with only one participant reporting that it was *not enjoyable*.

In respect of the category *helpful*, 17 of 39 respondents find this exchange is *very helpful*, 15 *somewhat helpful*, which account for 82% of the total number of respondents. In addition, 30 participants believe this e-tandem to be *very* or *somewhat practical* and 1 says it was *not practical*. 19 participants declare this e-tandem exchange to be *very interesting*, the highest level of satisfaction indicated in any single category of responses.

Table 4. 4: Responses from Chinese and Irish/American respondents when comparing traditional language learning and e-tandem

		Not really	A little	Neutral	Somewhat	Very much
Enjoyable	IR/US (9)	0	3 (33%)	4 (44%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
	CN (30)	1 (3%)	4 (13%)	2 (7%)	13 (43%)	10 (33%)
Helpful	IR/US (9)	0	1 (11%)	2 (22%)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)
	CN (30)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	10 (33%)	16 (53%)
Practical	IR/US (9)	0	1 (3%)	3 (33%)	3 (33%)	2 (22%)
	CN (30)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	12 (40%)	13 (43%)
Interesting	IR/US (9)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)	1 (11%)	4 (44%)	1 (11%)
	CN (30)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	9 (30%)	18 (60%)

The percentages are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

As a complement to Figure 4.6, Table 4.4 displays the different responses between Chinese and Irish/American respondents. For each category, the highest number and percentage in each group are highlighted (Green for Irish/American and red for Chinese). Only few Irish/American report *very much* in the four categories (1 or 2 respondents at the most); however, when the Chinese partners respond to the categories, 16, 13 and 18 respondents, 53%, 43% and 60% respectively declare the exchange to be *very helpful*, *practical*, and *interesting*. 13 Chinese respondents accounting for 43% of the Chinese respondents (30) report the exchange to be *somewhat enjoyable*, but 4 of 9 Irish/American respondents (44%) are *neutral* while 3, accounting for 33% of the total Irish/American respondents, declare the experience to be *a little enjoyable*.

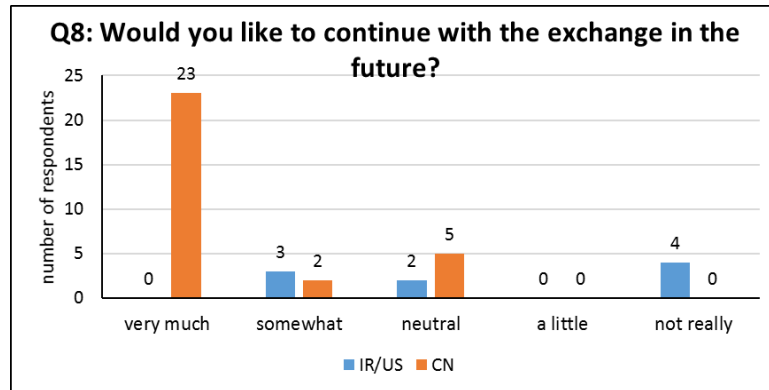


Figure 4. 7: Respondents' willingness to continue with e-tandem exchanges
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.7, 23 of 39 respondents report that they would like to continue the exchange *very much*, but they are all Chinese respondents. 5 of 39 respondents (3 are Irish/American and 2 are Chinese) also express that they were *somewhat* willing to continue, which means that 28 (72%) respondents display a positive outlook. 7 (18%) respondents are *neutral* while only 4 (10%) Irish/American respondents report *no real interest* in continuing the exchange.



Figure 4. 8: E-tandem as a different way of learning a language
The percentages are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.8 indicates that 10 respondents (26%) report that they have changed their view of language learning *very much* and 21 (54%) declare that their view on the traditional way of learning a language changed *somewhat*. However, 6 of the 39 respondents (15%) do not indicate a change of view.

4.2.3 Respondents' Reflections on IC Awareness and Development

This section deals with the results from Section C of the questionnaire 'Reflections on the

development of intercultural awareness'. Results for questions 28-43 are presented in the following figures and tables, except for Question 39 which is reported in Section 4.2.5.

4.2.3.1 General Reflection on E-tandem for Intercultural Learning

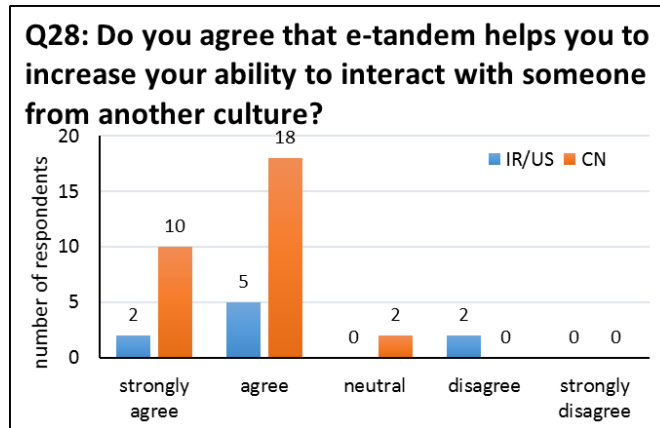


Figure 4. 9: E-tandem and the ability to interact with others
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.9, 12 respondents (31%) *strongly agree* that e-tandem helped them to increase their ability to interact with someone from another culture. 23 respondents (59%) also *agree*. This represents a total of 35 out of 39 respondents. However, 2 Chinese respondents are *neutral* and 2 Irish/American respondents also *disagree* that e-tandem increased the ability to interact with someone from another culture.

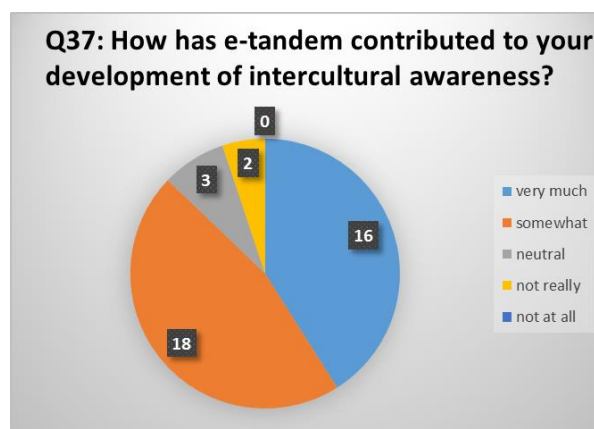


Figure 4. 10: E-tandem and development of intercultural awareness
The percentages are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 37 aims to obtain respondents' general opinions on the relationship between e-tandem and development of intercultural awareness. Figure 4.10 indicates that 18 (46%) respondents agree that e-tandem contributed *somewhat* to their development of

intercultural awareness while 16 (41%) respondents declare that it did *very much*. 3 respondents are *neutral* and 2 say that e-tandem did not contribute to development of intercultural awareness.

4.2.3.2 Reflection on Awareness/Perspective Changes

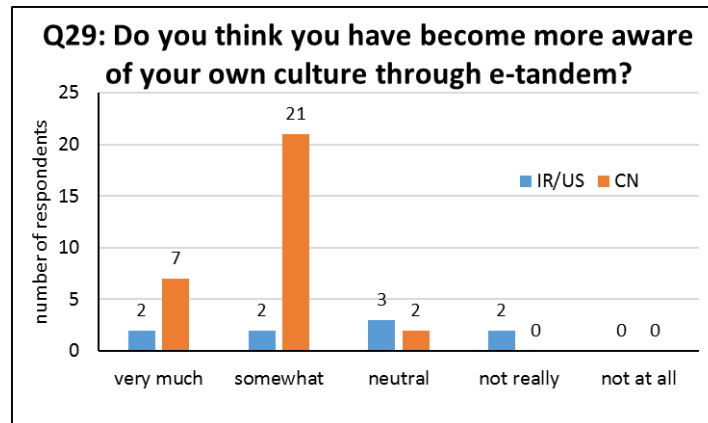


Figure 4. 11: E-tandem and respondents' awareness of their own culture
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.11 displays respondents' opinions on the relationship between e-tandem and awareness of their own culture. 9 respondents say they developed awareness of their own culture *very much*. 23 respondents believe that their [L]C1 awareness developed *somewhat* and 2 Irish/American respondents report no particular development by selecting *not really*.

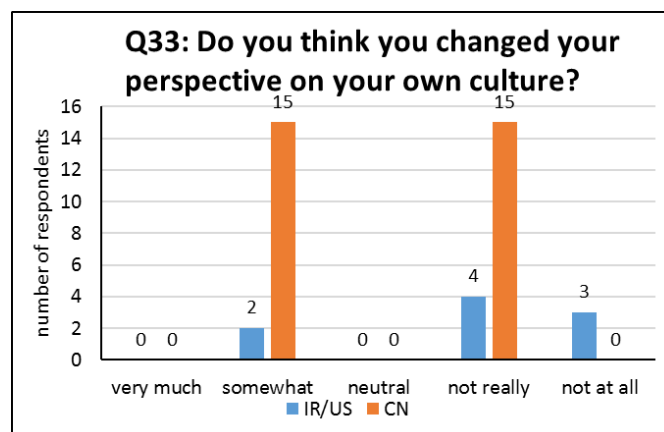


Figure 4. 12: Changing one's perspective on one's own culture
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

17 respondents (2 Irish/American and 15 Chinese) state that they changed their perspective on their own culture *somewhat* in contrast to 19 respondents (4 Irish/American and 15 Chinese) who do not report a change of perspective on the [L]C1.

This view is further supported by 3 Irish/American respondents who declare no change of perspective at all (Figure 4.12).

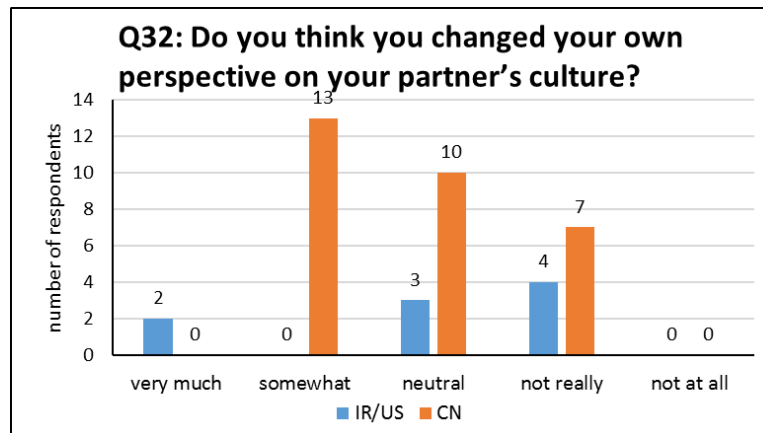


Figure 4. 13: Changing one's perspective on the partners' culture
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 32 investigates change of perspective on their partners' culture. In Figure 4.13, only 2 Irish/American respondents agree that they changed their perspectives on their partners' culture *very much* and 13 Chinese respondents choose *somewhat*. However, 13 respondents choose the response *neutral* and 11 respondents report no real change in perspective.

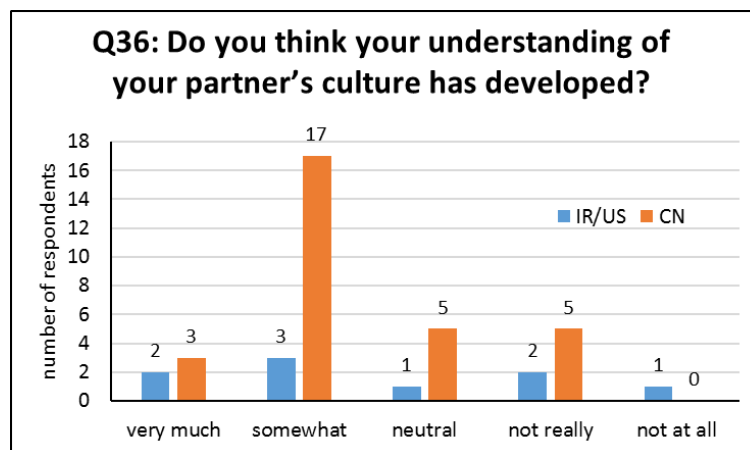


Figure 4. 14: Development of understanding of tandem partner's culture
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 36 asks if respondents saw their understanding of their partner's culture develop. 20 respondents which account for 51% of the total respondents in Figure 4.14 believe that this understanding developed *somewhat*, but 7 respondents (18%) hold the opposite opinion. 5 respondents (13%) declare that their understanding developed *very much* while 1 Irish respondent states that it did *not* develop *at all*.

4.2.3.3 Reflection on Working with a Tandem Partner Where Opinions Differed

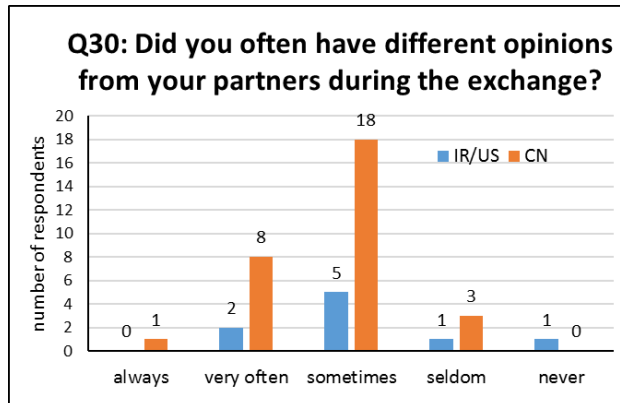


Figure 4. 15: Different opinions from partners
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.15 indicates that 1 Chinese respondent reports *always* having a difference of opinion. 10 respondents report that they *often* had different opinions. 23 respondents which account for 59% of all the respondents admit that they *sometimes* had different opinions. In addition, 4 respondents agree that they *seldom* did and 1 Irish respondent mentions that she/he *never* had different opinions.

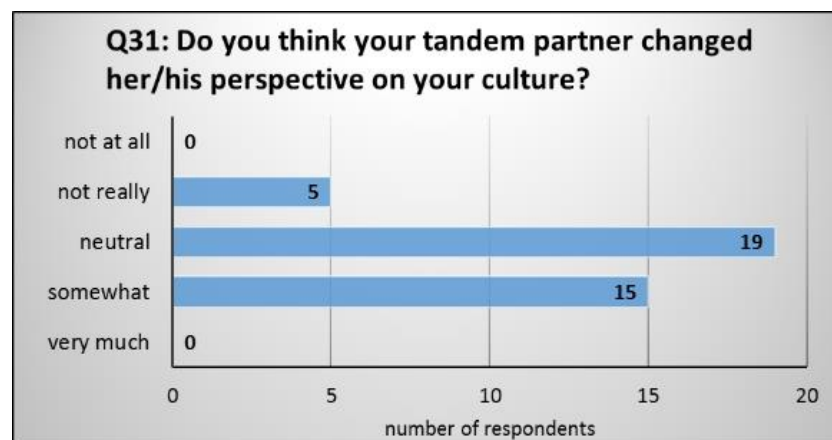


Figure 4. 16: Change of perspective on the target culture
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.16 suggests that 15 respondents declare that their partners changed their perspective *somewhat*; however, 19 respondents are not sure or don't perceive a change in their partner's perspective (5 respondents).

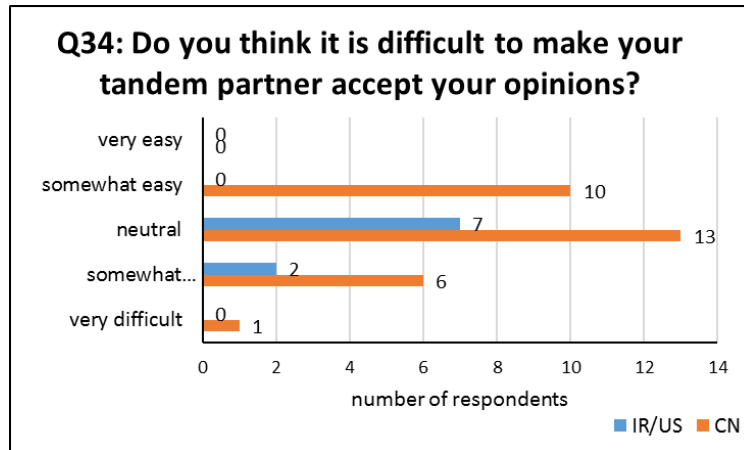


Figure 4. 17: Difficulty in making tandem partner accept participant’s opinions
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.17, 20 respondents which account for 51% of the total respondents are not sure how to answer this question. However, 10 respondents (26%) believe that it was *somewhat easy* to get their tandem partner to accept their opinions. In contrast, 8 respondents (20%) declare that it was *somewhat difficult* and only 1 Chinese respondent mentions that it was *very difficult* to change her/his partner’s perspective on the [L]C2.

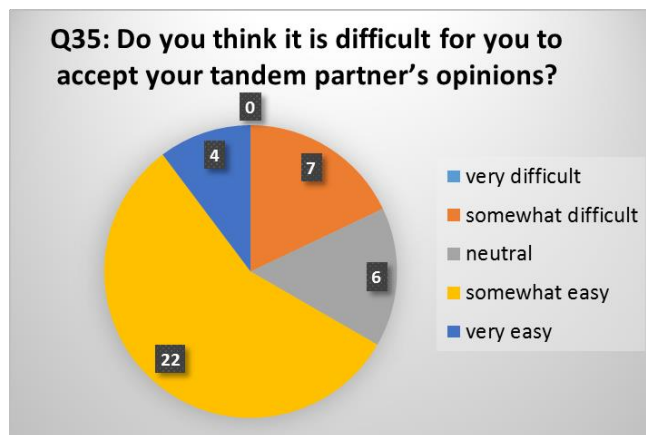


Figure 4. 18: Difficulty in accepting tandem partner’s opinions
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.18 indicates that 22 respondents (57%) declare that it was *somewhat easy* for them to accept their tandem partner’s opinions and 4 respondents (10%) also state that it was *very easy* for them, while 7 (18%) suggest that it was *somewhat difficult*.

4.2.3.4 Reflection on Comparing Similarities or Differences between Two Cultures

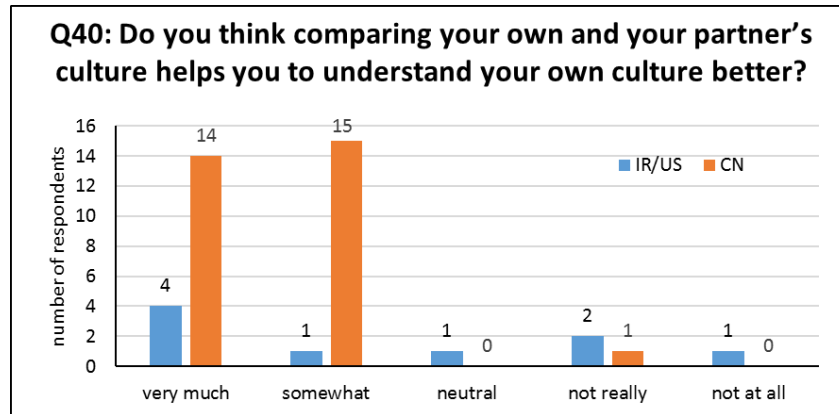


Figure 4. 19: Comparing different cultures and understanding one's own culture
 The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.19 indicates that 18 respondents (46%) selecting *very much* combined with 16 respondents (41%) selecting *somewhat* agree that comparing cultures helped to understand one's own culture better. However, 3 Irish/American and 1 Chinese respondents do not agree. Among them, 1 Irish/American respondent believes that it did not help at all.

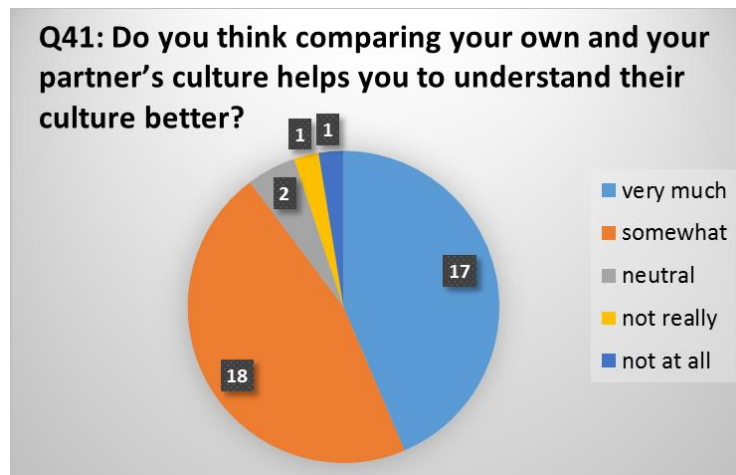


Figure 4. 20: Comparing different cultures and understanding partner's culture
 The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.20, 18 respondents (46%) *somewhat* agree and 17 (44%) of respondents agree *very much* that a comparative approach helps to understand the partner's culture better. 2 respondents report no comparative effects on their understanding of the [L]C2.

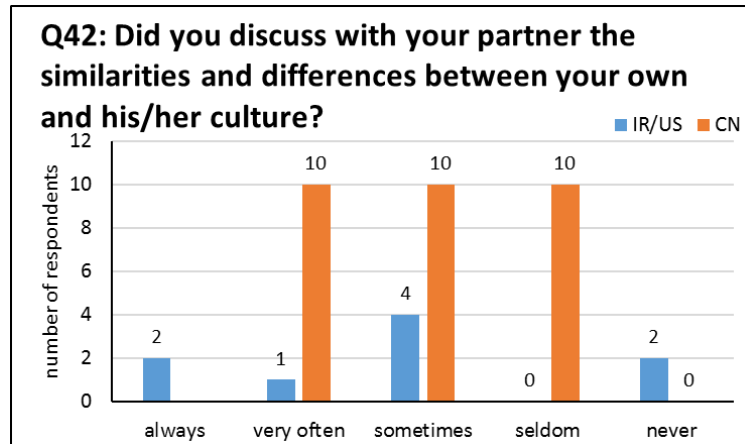


Figure 4. 21: Discussing cultural similarities and differences between partners
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.21 indicates that 2 Irish/American respondents which account for 5% of the total respondents admit that they *always* discussed similarities and differences with their partner and *very often* - 11 respondents (28%) - and *sometimes* - 14 respondents (36%) - representing a total of 69% (27 of 39 respondents). 10 Chinese (26%) respondents *seldom* discussed these matters along with 2 Irish/American (5%) respondents who never broached the topic.

4.2.3.5 Additional Reflection

Table 4. 5: Aspects of intercultural awareness that benefited participants the most
The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)
(1= the least important, 5= the most important)

scales	1	2	3	4	5
Aspects of IC awareness					
I understand that the ways of all cultures are equally viable, despite cultural differences.	0	1	9	13	15
I have a better understanding of my own cultural beliefs, values and behaviour.	0	4	12	15	7
I have a better understanding of other’s cultural beliefs, values and behaviour.	0	4	6	15	13
I am more interested in the similarities between cultures.	0	2	10	12	14
I am more interested in the differences between cultures.	0	3	5	8	22
I am more aware of how much our behaviour is influenced by our culture.	1	4	10	13	10
I can explain something from the perspective of my own culture.	0	4	10	11	13
I can explain something from the perspective of my partner’s culture.	0	6	11	15	6
I can be critical about the beliefs, values and behaviour of my own culture.	3	6	13	6	10
I can be critical about the beliefs, values and behaviour of my partner’s culture.	3	3	9	14	9

Table 4.5 is the result of Question 38: ‘what aspect of intercultural awareness has benefited you the most? Rate your answer on a scale from 1-5 (1= the least important and 5= the most important)’. In this table, 10 aspects of intercultural awareness are listed in the first column and the number of respondents under each rating is shown in the table. As one respondent did not answer this question in her/his questionnaire, there are 38 respondents in total. From the numbers in red in the table above, it is noticeable that for each aspect of IC awareness, the biggest number of respondents is always in the scale from 3, to 5 - the most important.

The viability of other cultures despite differences is acknowledged by a majority of 28 respondents. [L]C1 understanding is not rated as confidently as the previous statement with 12 respondents rating the statement at 3 and an additional 15 rating the statement at 4. However, understanding of the [L]C2 gleans higher ratings (4 and 5) for 15 and 13 respondents, respectively. It is clear that overall interest in differences is higher (8+22) than interest in similarities (12+14). Awareness of how behaviour is influenced by culture is reported at ratings 4 and 5 for 13 and 10 respondents respectively; however, quite a large number are not as assertive and choose rating 3 (10 respondents). 4+10 respondents rate the ability to explain something from the perspective of [L]C1 at 2 and 3; 11+13 respondents rate this ability at 4 and 5. As for the ability to explain something from the perspective of [L]C2, it is not as clear with 6+11 respondents rating the statement at 2 and 3; however, 15+6 respondents rate the statement at 4 and 5. A larger number of respondents chooses the neutral rating of 3 (13 respondents) when considering how critical they can be about their [L]C1. In contrast, 6+10 participants appear to be confident in this skill. It is interesting to note that as many as 9 respondents claim they are not confident in this matter. When considering the [L]C2, 14+9 believe that they can be critical about the beliefs, values and norms of their partner’s culture (4+5 ratings) against 6 respondents who express the opposite (1+2 ratings); finally, 9 respondents prefer to remain neutral about the matter (rating 3).

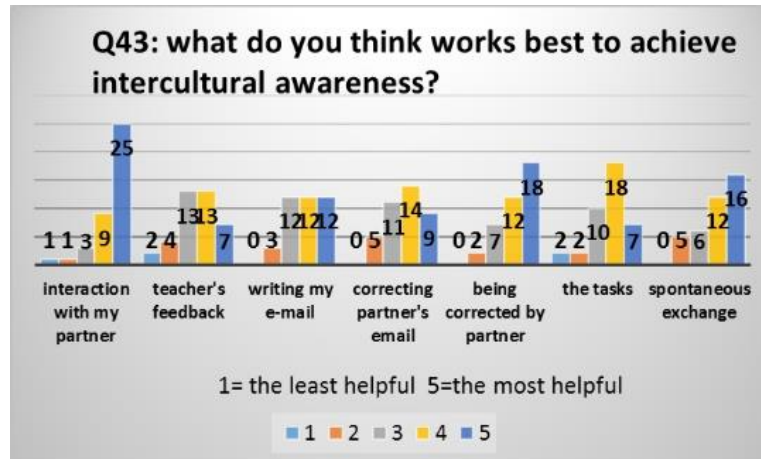


Figure 4. 22: Factors which help to achieve IC awareness
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.22, 7 factors in e-tandem which may work to achieve IC awareness are listed in the horizontal axis. Participants were required to rate them from scale 1 (the least helpful) to scale 5 (the most helpful). *Interaction with partner* (25 respondents), *corrections by partner* (18 respondents), *tasks* (18 respondents - rated at 4) and *spontaneous exchanges* (16 respondents) are rated the most highly by respondents. *Teacher's feedback*, *writing e-mails*, *correcting partner's e-mail* do not appear to generate as many clear responses in favour of the relevant statements.

4.2.4 Respondents' Reflections on Language Development

This section presents the results from Section B of the questionnaire 'Reflections on your L2 development'. In order to have a clear understanding of respondents' reflection, the questions are presented under different themes. Thus, responses to Questions 15, 16 and 19 are about tandem partners, and responses to Questions 25 and 26 relating to the tasks that appear in Section 4.2.5.

4.2.4.1 General Reflection on E-tandem and L2 Learning

Questions 9, 17 and 18 are reported under this theme and include a focus on L2 motivation and the role of the teacher.

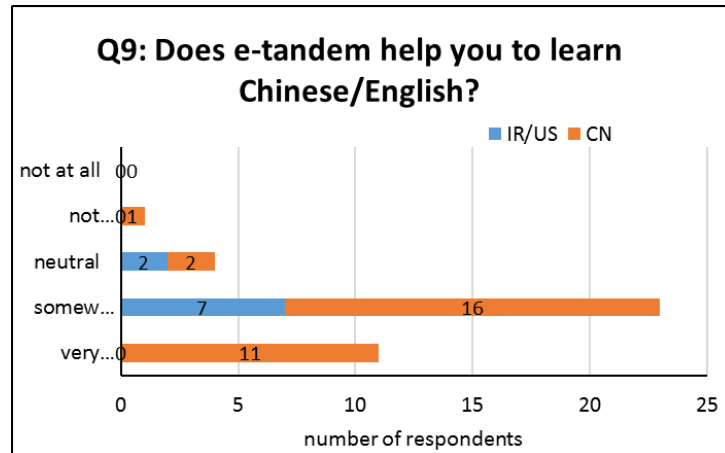


Figure 4. 23: E-tandem helps to learn an L2
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 9 is a general question about whether e-tandem helps participants to learn language. In Figure 4.23, among the 39 respondents, 23 of them (59%) declare that e-tandem was helpful in learning an L2 and 11 Chinese (28%) with no Irish/American respondent state that e-tandem helped *very much*. Only 1 respondent who is Chinese mentions that the e-tandem was not helpful in learning an L2.



Figure 4. 24: Source of LC1 and LC2 motivation to learn
The percentages are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.24 presents respondents' sources of motivation in this e-tandem study. The proposed sources are tasks, their partner, the teacher and they themselves. 14 respondents (46%) state that *their partner* was the biggest source of motivation while 8 (26%) believe that they motivated *themselves*. 5 respondents (18%) report *the tasks* as a factor in their motivation and 3 (10%) declare that it was *the teacher* who motivated them the most.

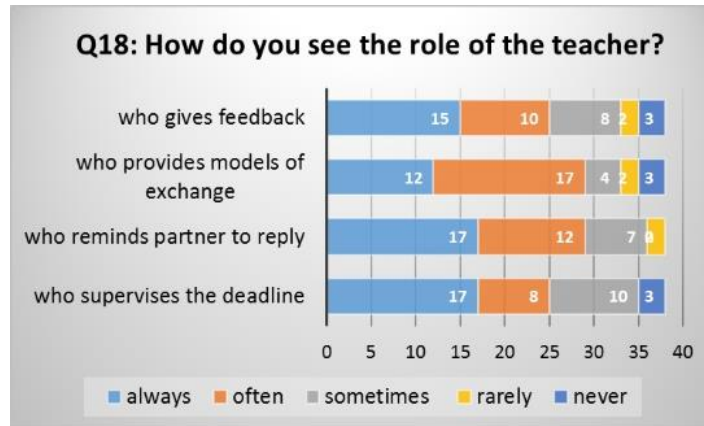


Figure 4. 25: Role of the teacher
The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Figure 4.25 shows how respondents interpret the role of the teacher in e-tandem. 4 categories are devised (see the vertical axis) on a scale from 1-5 (1 always, 2 often, 3 sometimes, 4 rarely, 5 never). 25 respondents state that the teacher should either *always* or *often* give feedback. Providing models of exchange either *always* or *often* totals 29 responses while the same total of responses applies to the teacher reminding partners to reply either *always* or *often*. Supervision of the deadline is perceived to be the teacher’s responsibility *always* or *often* in 25 responses. The number of respondents reporting that a teacher’s presence should only be felt *sometimes* or *rarely* in each category ranges from 6 to 10 responses.

4.2.4.2 Opinions on L2 Correction in E-tandem

The following figures reports on the respondents’ attitude to being corrected and to correcting L2 errors.

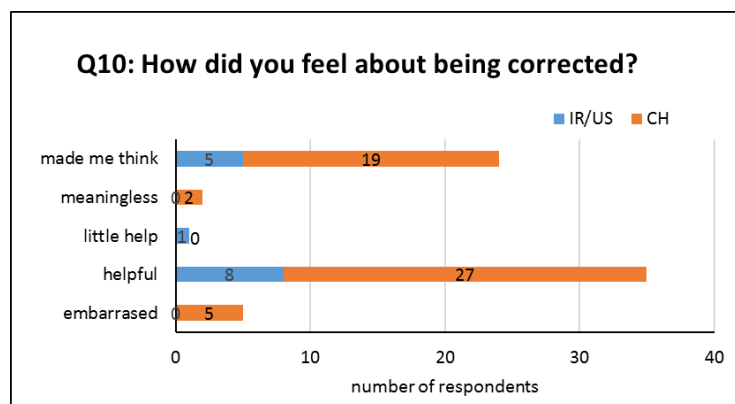


Figure 4. 26: Respondents’ attitude to being corrected
The multiple responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.26 displays the multiple responses that respondents were able to provide. The majority of responses indicate a positive disposition to being corrected by a peer. 35 responses report the exercise as being *helpful*; 24 responses indicate that the process *made participants think*. However, 5 responses who are all Chinese respondents suggest *embarrassment* and 2 responses also from Chinese participants suggest that the exercise was *meaningless*; 1 response from an Irish participant suggests that the corrections were of *little help*. In addition, 2 Chinese respondents made additional comments where being corrected by their partners helped them to remember the errors they had made.

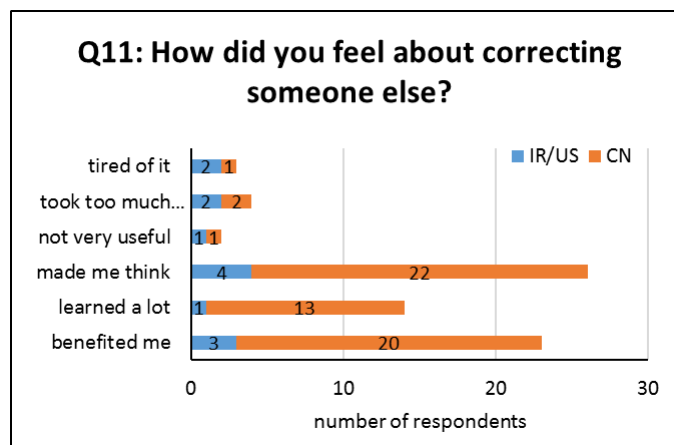


Figure 4. 27: Respondents' attitude to correcting their partners
The multiple responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Attitudes to correcting their tandem partners are displayed in Figure 4.27. The responses are multiple. The majority of responses indicate a positive attitude when correcting their partners' errors: 26 responses indicate that the process *made them think*, and that they *benefited* from this - 23 responses. 14 responses suggest that they learned a lot from this activity. However, 8 responses are negative indicating that the work was *time-consuming* - 4 responses, *tiring* - 3 responses and *not very useful* - 2 responses. It seems that percentages of negative responses in the Irish/American respondents group (5 out of 9 - 56%) are higher than among the Chinese respondents (4 out of 30 - 13%).

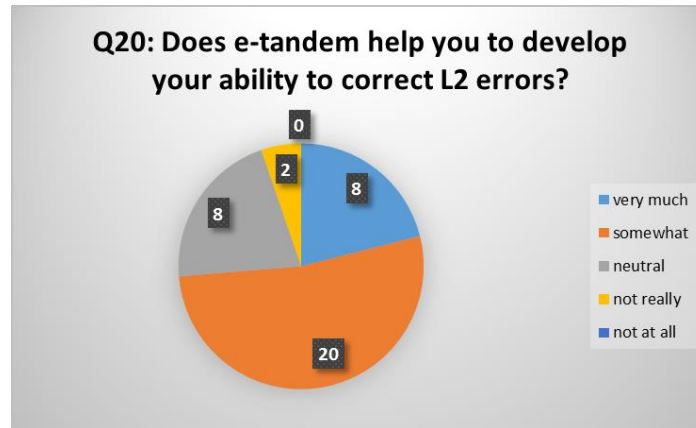


Figure 4. 28: Developing the ability to correct L2 errors
 The percentages are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

When asked if e-tandem helps to develop respondents’ ability to correct L2 errors, it is clear from Figure 4.28 that 20 respondents (53%) admit that it helped *somewhat* while 8 respondents (21%) report that it helped *very much*; however, 8 respondents are not sure. 2 respondents do not report any particular development in their ability to correct L2 errors.

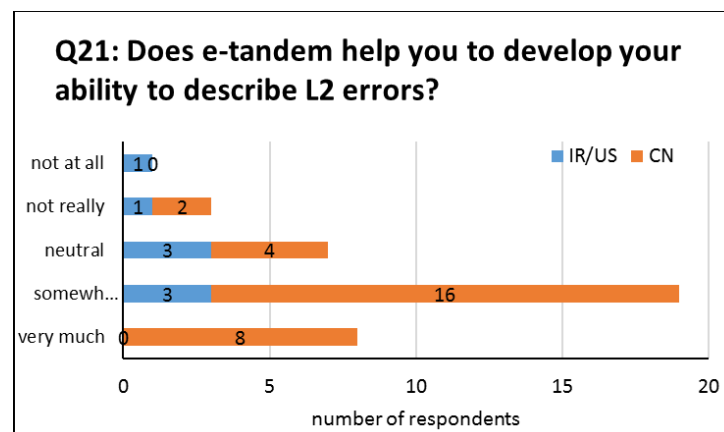


Figure 4. 29: E-tandem and the ability to describe L2 errors
 The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Figure 4.29 displays respondents’ reflection on the relationship between e-tandem and the ability to describe L2 errors. The result is similar to the one shown in Figure 4.28. 19 respondents (50%) declare that their ability to describe L2 errors developed *somewhat* during the e-tandem exchange while 8 (21%) Chinese respondents (report that their ability to describe L2 errors developed *very much*. However, 7 respondents (18%) are *neutral* and 3 respondents do not think that e-tandem helped to develop this ability.

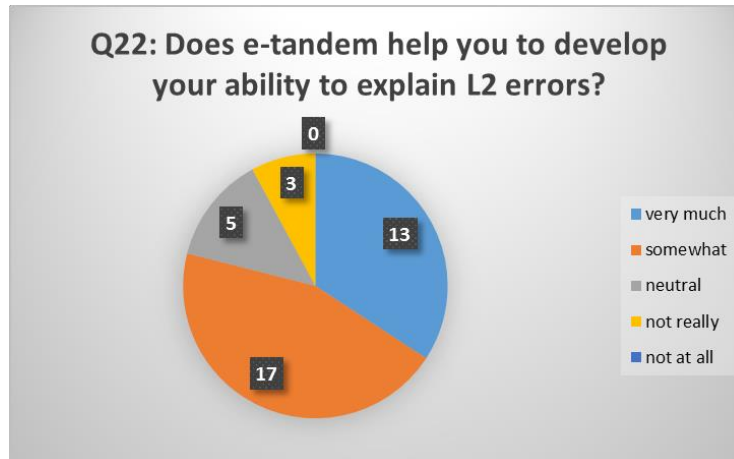


Figure 4. 30: E-tandem and the ability to explain L2 errors
The percentages are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Question 22 probes respondents' perceived ability to explain L2 errors. Figure 4.30 indicates that 17 respondents (45%) agree that e-tandem was *somewhat* helpful in developing the ability to explain L2 errors and 13 respondents (34%) declare that it helped *very much*. Apart for 5 respondents who are not sure, 3 respondents do not report an improvement in this ability.

4.2.4.3 Reflection on Noticing Language Differences and Imitating Language Use

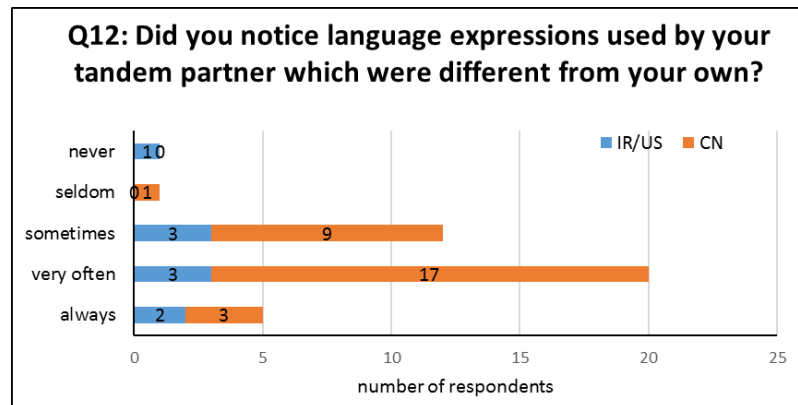


Figure 4. 31: L2 Respondents' noticing of their partners' use of L1 expressions
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.31 indicates Chinese respondents noticing English as an L2 and Irish respondents noticing Chinese as an L2. 5 respondents declare that they *always* noticed L1 expressions; 20 respondents (51%) noticed L1 expressions *very often*; and 12 respondents report noticing L1 expressions *sometimes*. Only 2 respondents (1 Chinese and 1 Irish/American) report *seldom* or *never* noticing the use of L1 expressions.

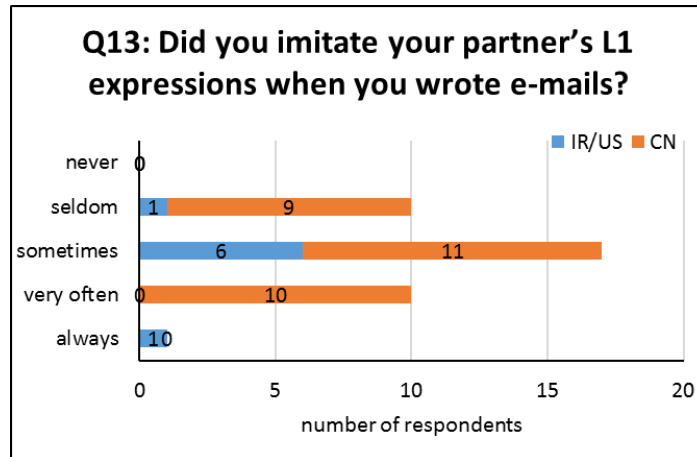


Figure 4. 32: Respondents’ imitation of their partners’ L1 expressions
The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Figure 4.32, a total of 28 respondents report imitating their partner’s use of L1 expressions: *always* - 1 Irish/American respondent, *very often* - 10 Chinese respondents and *sometimes* - 17 respondents (6 are Irish/American and 11 are Chinese); 10 respondents also admit that they *seldom* imitated their partner’s use of L1 expressions.

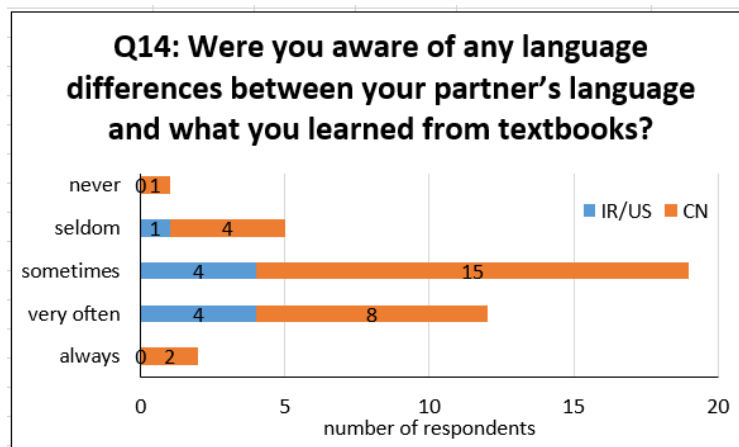


Figure 4. 33: Respondents’ awareness of the differences between their partners’ L1 and their L2 use of textbook language
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.33 illustrates the frequency of respondents’ awareness of difference in their partner’s use of language to what they learn in textbooks. A vast majority report differences, *always* for 2 Chinese respondents, *very often* for 12 respondents and *sometimes* for 19 respondents - 33 of 39 in total. However, 6 respondents, in total, fail to note this difference to any significant degree.

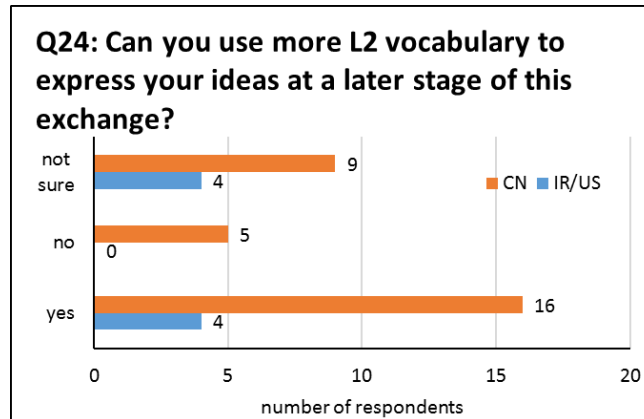


Figure 4. 34: E-tandem and the development of L2 vocabulary
The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Figure 4.34 illustrates that a majority of respondents report an increase in L2 vocabulary use as a result of the exchange - 16 Chinese + 4 Irish/American respondents (53% of the total). In contrast, 5 Chinese respondents which account for 13% of the respondents do not report any improvement in the use of L2 vocabulary. 9 Chinese + 4 Irish/American respondents (34%) are *not sure*.

4.2.4.4 Additional Reflection on E-tandem and L2 Learning

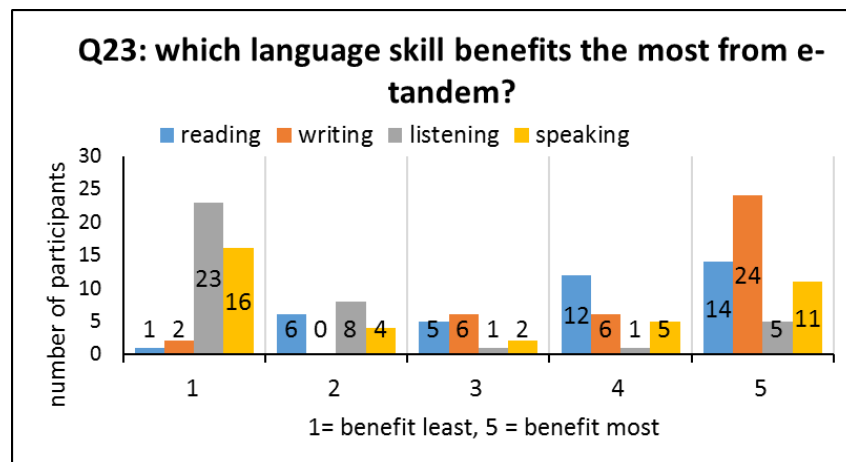


Figure 4. 35: E-tandem and language skills
The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

Language skills include reading, writing, listening and speaking. Question 23 focuses on which language skill benefits the most from e-tandem. Respondents rate their answers on a scale from 1-5 (1= benefit least and 5= benefit most). Figure 4.35 indicates that 23 respondents (which account for 61%) and 16 respondents (which account for 42%) respectively declare that their listening and speaking *benefited least*. In contrast, 24+6 respondents (79%) believe that their writing *benefited the most* with 14+12 respondents

(68%) also mentioning that their reading skills had *benefited the most*. Interestingly, the e-tandem exchange also impacts positively on speaking for 11+5 respondents (42%). In order to see if there is a difference between the responses from Chinese and Irish/American respondents, the responses from the two groups are calculated separately in Figure 4.36 and Figure 4.37.

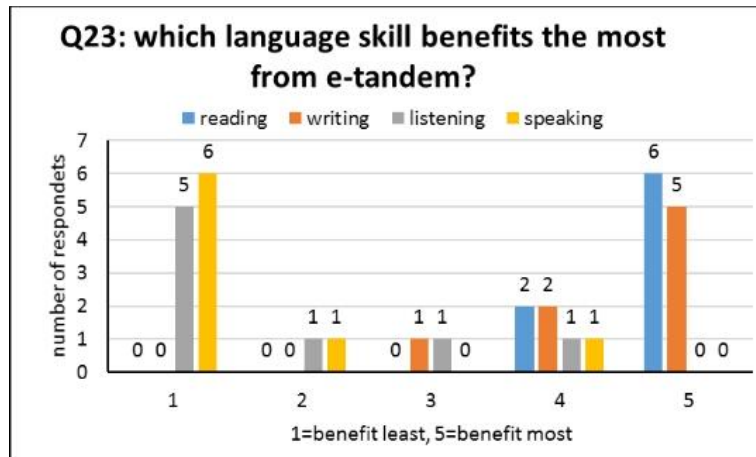


Figure 4. 36: E-tandem and language skills (IR/US respondents)

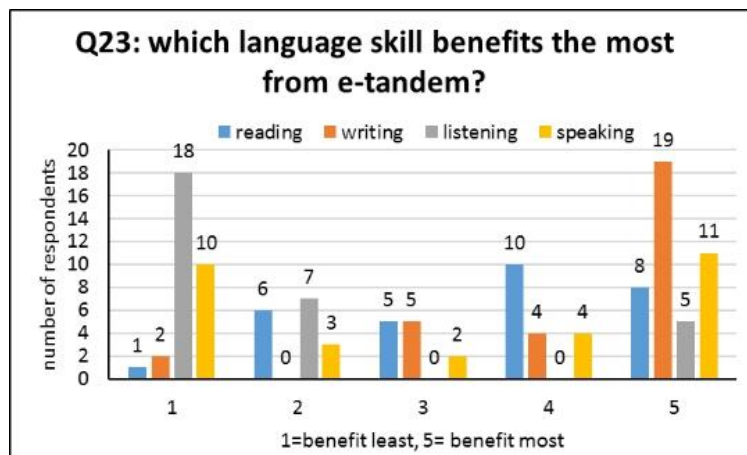


Figure 4. 37: E-tandem and language skills (CN respondents)

Figure 4.36 displays the language skill the Irish/American respondents (8 in total) think benefited most from the exchange and Figure 4.37 shows the responses from the 30 Chinese respondents. In Figure 4.36, it is clear that most of Irish/American respondents declare their reading (6 respondents - 75%) and writing (5 respondents - 63%) skills *benefited the most* from e-tandem exchange. However, in the Figure 4.37, for the Chinese, writing (19 respondents - 63%) and speaking (11 respondents - 37%) are the top two skills which they declare *benefited most*. The skills that *benefited the least*, according to

Irish/American respondents are speaking and listening while the Chinese also list listening and speaking

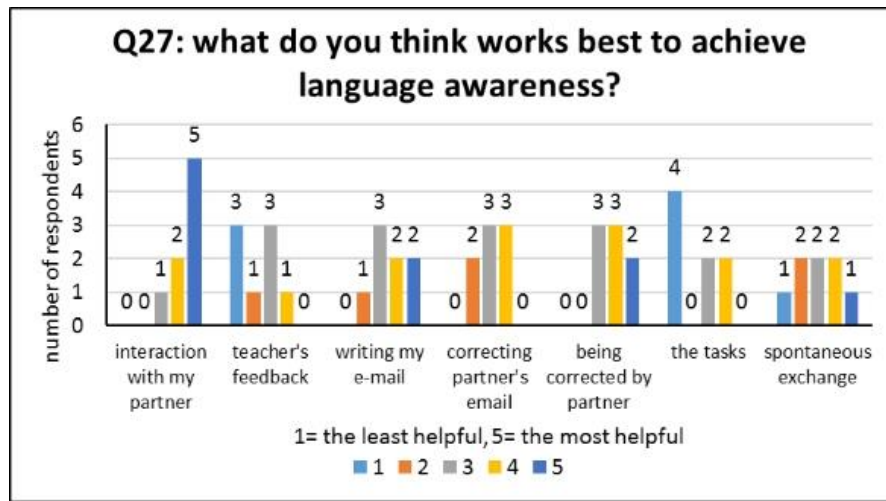


Figure 4. 38: Factors helping to achieve language awareness (8 Irish/American respondents)

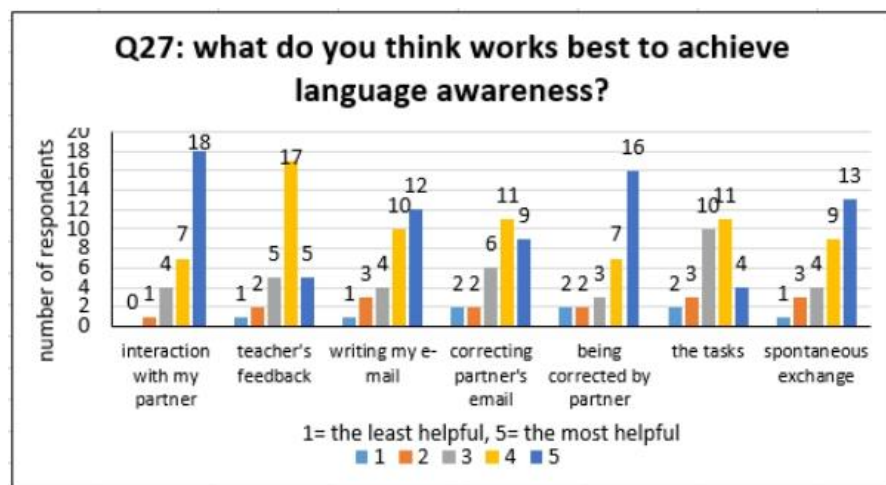


Figure 4. 39: Factors helping to achieve language awareness (30 Chinese respondents)

Total responses in Figures 4.38 and 4.39 are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants). Seven factors to achieve language awareness in e-tandem exchanges are provided to respondents (see horizontal axis). In Figures 4.38 and 4.39, *interaction with my partner* is favoured in 23 responses (5 Irish/American+18 Chinese) - 61% of respondents in this category. *Teacher's feedback* is favoured by 5 Chinese respondents with no response from Irish/American respondents. 14 respondents (2+12) believe that *writing my e-mail* was the most helpful. 9 Chinese respondents rate *correcting partner's e-mail* at 5 and 3+11 rate it at 4, but 2+16 respondents report that being corrected by the

partner works as *the most helpful*. Tasks, are rated at 5 by 4 Chinese respondents and 2+11 rate it at 4; however, 6 respondents (4 Irish/American + 2 Chinese) report this factor as *least helpful*. *Spontaneous exchange*, as an awareness raising factor is rated highly by 14 respondents - 1 Irish/American+13 Chinese (rated 5), 11 respondents rate it as 4 - a total of 25 respondents out of 38 (66%). However, spontaneous exchanges seem to be particularly valued by Chinese participants.

4.2.5 Further Comments on E-tandem

This section investigates respondents' further comments on their e-tandem exchanges. These comments are related to their reflection on the requirements of e-tandem, such as their attitudes towards the tasks, keeping learning diaries, and the limitations of e-tandem.

4.2.5.1 Opinions on the Tasks in E-tandem

The following 3 figures focus on how the respondents see the tasks as helpful to intercultural language learning through e-tandem.

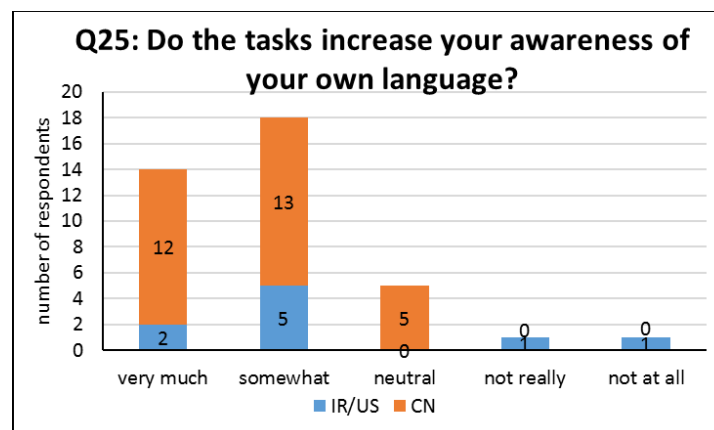


Figure 4. 40: Tasks for L[C]1 awareness
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 25, 'Do the tasks increase your awareness of your own language?', yields the following responses in Figure 4.40. 12+2 (36%) and 13+5 (46%) respondents believe that tasks increased their awareness of their own language *very much* and *somewhat* respectively. 5 Chinese students (13%) are *neutral*. 1+1 (5%) respondents provided negative responses in which 1 respondent declares that tasks did not increase this type of awareness very much; It is worth noting that the 2 negative responses are all from Irish/American respondents.

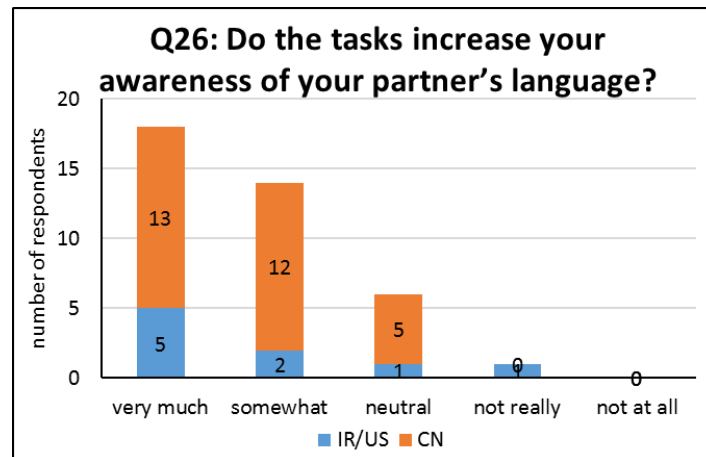


Figure 4. 41: Tasks for L[C]2 awareness
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 26 focuses on the effect tasks had on respondents' awareness of their partner's language. 13+5 (46%) respondents which account for the largest in Figure 4.41 declare that tasks increased their awareness of the target language *very much* with an additional 12+2 (36%) respondents who consider that tasks helped them *somewhat*. However, 1 Irish/American (3%) respondent reports no particular gains in the L[C]2 when engaging with tasks.

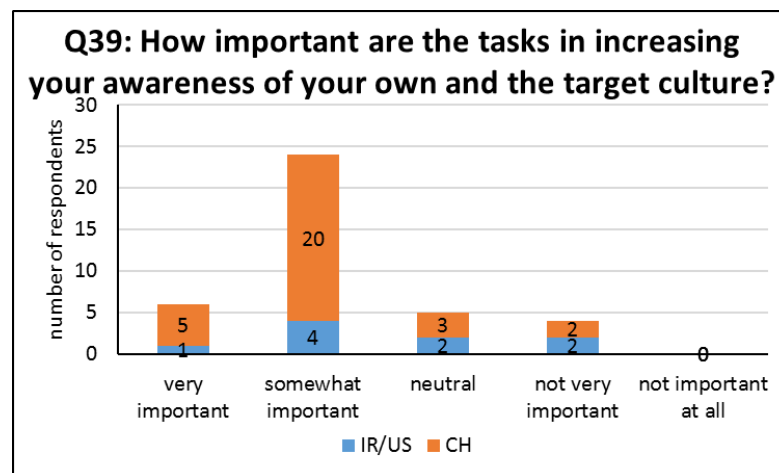


Figure 4. 42: The importance of tasks in increasing awareness of different cultures
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

24 (62%) respondents in Figure 4.42 agree that tasks were *somewhat* important supported by an additional 6 (15%) respondents who declare that tasks were *very important* in developing [L]C1 and [L]C2 awareness. However, 4 (10%) respondents do not share this view. We note that 1+4 out of the 9 Irish/American respondents (56%) believe that tasks were important compared to 5+20 out of the 30 Chinese responses (83%).

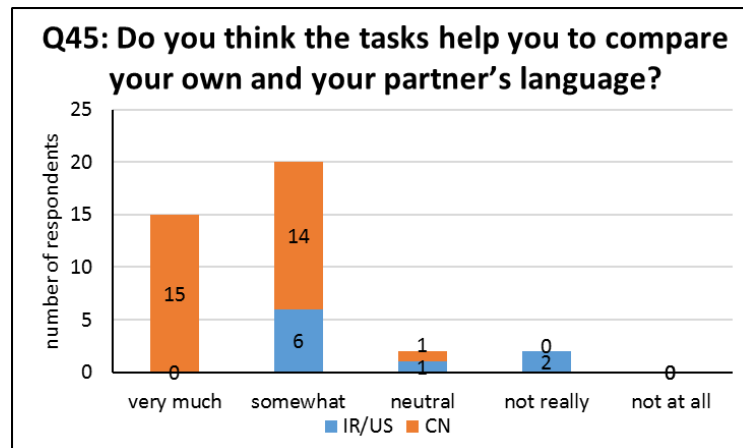


Figure 4. 43: Tasks and L[C]1 and L[C]2 comparison
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.43, 14+6 (51%) respondents admit that the tasks did help L1 and L2 comparisons *somewhat* as well as 15 (39%) respondents who declare that the tasks helped *very much*. However, 2 (5%) respondents are *not sure* and 2 (5%) also said the tasks did not help. It is interesting to see that 15 of the 30 Chinese respondents selected *very much* and 2 of the 9 Irish/Americans respondents selected *not really*.

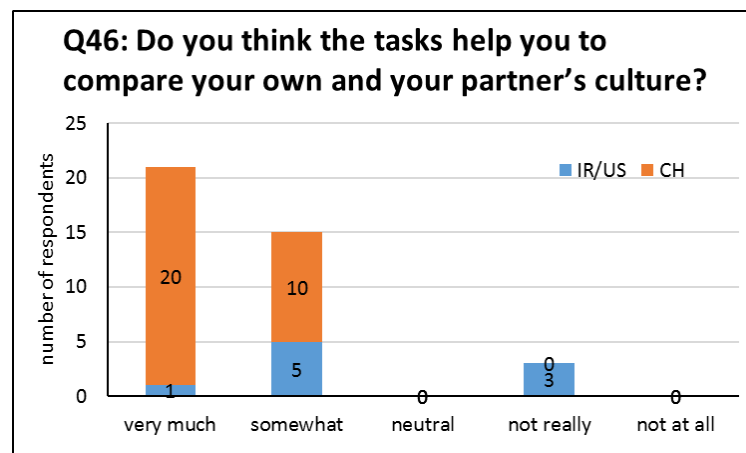


Figure 4. 44: Tasks and [L]C1 and [L]C2 culture comparison
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Question 46 deals with the relationship between the tasks and cultural comparisons. Figure 4.44 indicates that a large majority of respondents found the tasks *very* helpful for cultural comparisons - 21 (54%) respondents and 15 (38%) *somewhat*. However, 3 Irish/American (8%) respondents declare that the tasks did not appear to help and there is no negative response from Chinese respondents.

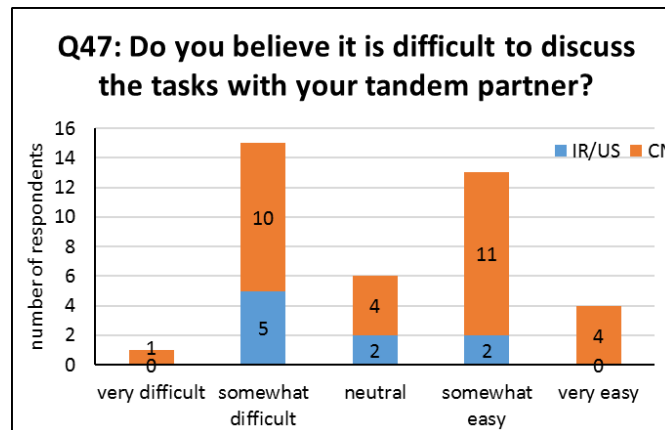


Figure 4. 45: Difficulty in discussing the tasks
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

10+5 (39%) participants in Figure 4.45 state that it was *somewhat difficult* to discuss the tasks with their partners, while, in contrast, 11+2 (33%) respondents declare that it was *somewhat easy*. 4 Chinese respondents (10% of respondents) believe it was *very easy* to discuss the tasks, against 1 Chinese respondent who reports that it is *very difficult*.

4.2.5.2 Attitudes towards Keeping Learning Diaries

Keeping learning diaries is one of the requirements in this e-tandem exchange. Figures 4.46 and 4.47 display the respondents' opinions on this theme.

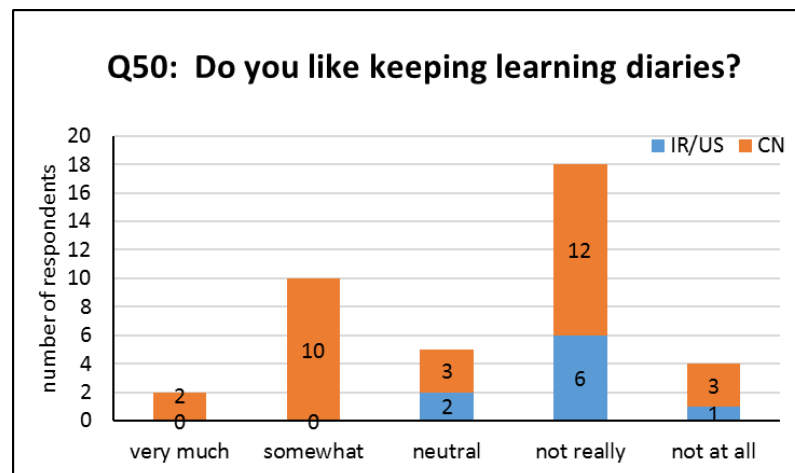


Figure 4. 46: Participants' willingness to keep learning diaries
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

It is noticeable that in Figure 4.46, 12+6 (46%) respondents are *not really* happy to keep learning diaries along with an additional 3+1 (10%) respondents who do *not* like the idea *at all*; however, 10 (26%) respondents *somewhat* like it, and 2 (5%) respondents declare that they like keeping diaries *very much*. 12 respondents (31%) who like this idea of

keeping a diary are all Chinese and all the Irish/American respondents are either neutral or tend to hold negative sentiments toward keeping learning diaries.

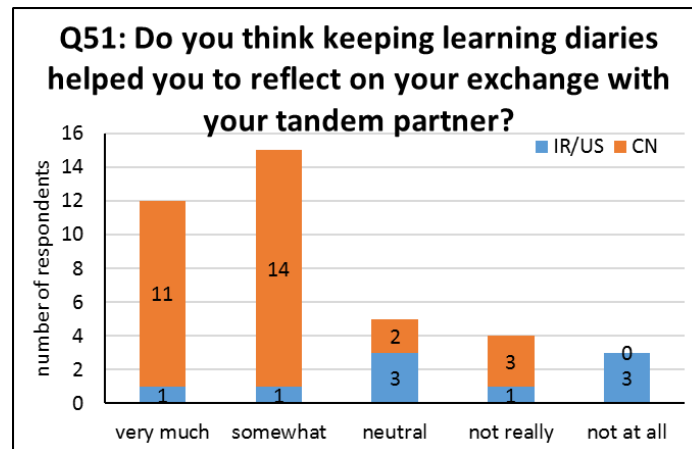


Figure 4. 47: learning diaries for reflection on the exchange
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.47 illustrates the participants' attitudes toward keeping learning diaries for reflection on their exchange. It is clear that 14+1 (38%) and 11+1 (31%) respondents report that the exercise did help them to reflect *somewhat* and *very much* respectively. 2+3 (13%) respondents do appear to be *uncertain*. 3+1 (10%) and 3 Irish/American (8%) respondents report no benefits - *not really* and *not at all*, respectively.

4.2.5.3 Attitudes towards Working with Their Tandem Partners

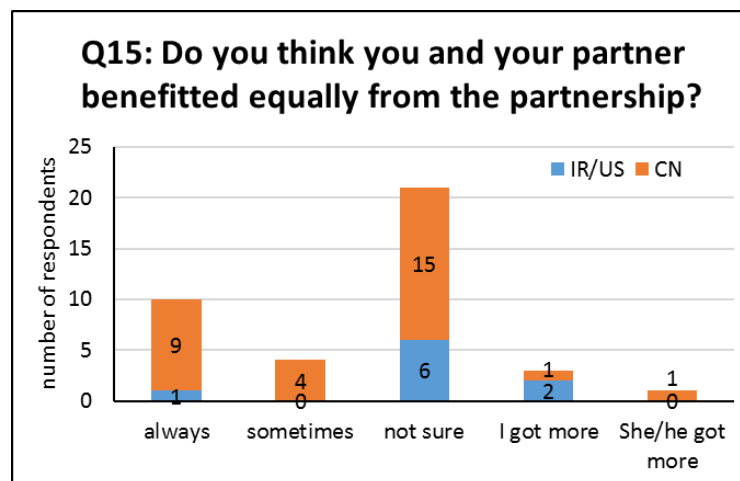


Figure 4. 48: Mutual benefits between participants and their partners
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.48 indicates that slightly more than half of respondents (15+6 - 54%) were not sure of the mutual benefits. 10 (26%) respondents declare that the benefits were *always*

mutual in their exchanges and 4 (10%) respondents report mutual benefits only *sometimes*. However, 3 (8%) respondents believe that they *got more* from this partnership with an additional 1 Chinese (2%) mentioning that *her/his partner got more* than her/himself.

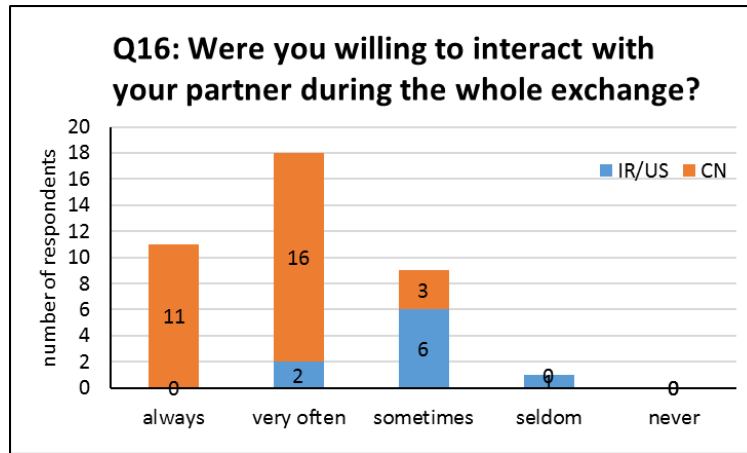


Figure 4. 49: Willingness to interact
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Although most of respondents were not sure if they benefitted equally from the partnerships, it is clear in Figure 4.49 that 16+2 (46%) respondents were *often* willing to communicate with their partners and 11 (28%) were *always* willing to communicate. 3+6 (23%) respondents agree that *sometimes* they did and 1 of the respondents admits she/he *seldom* liked to interact. Interestingly, there are no Irish/American respondents among the 11 respondents who choose *always*.

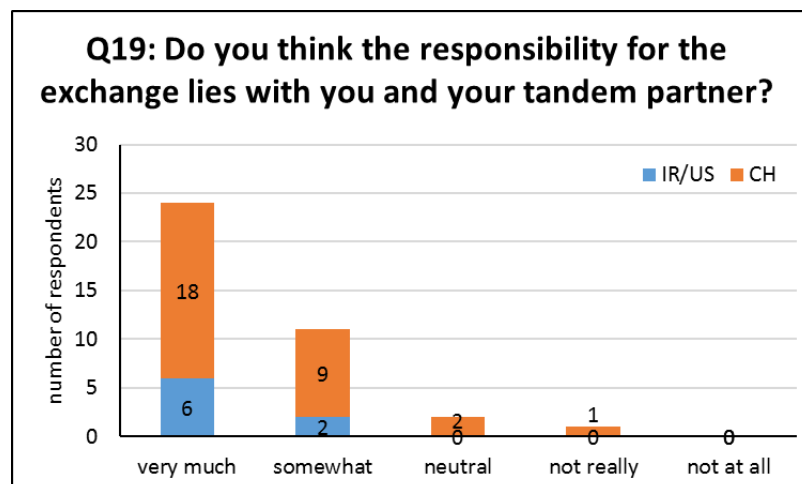


Figure 4. 50: Responsibility for the e-tandem exchange
The responses are based on 38 respondents (61% of participants)

As is shown in Figure 4.50, 18+6 (63%) respondents believe that the exchange was either

very much or 9+2 (29%) somewhat their own responsibility. 1 respondent is *not sure*, but 1 Chinese respondent reports that it was *not really* their responsibility.

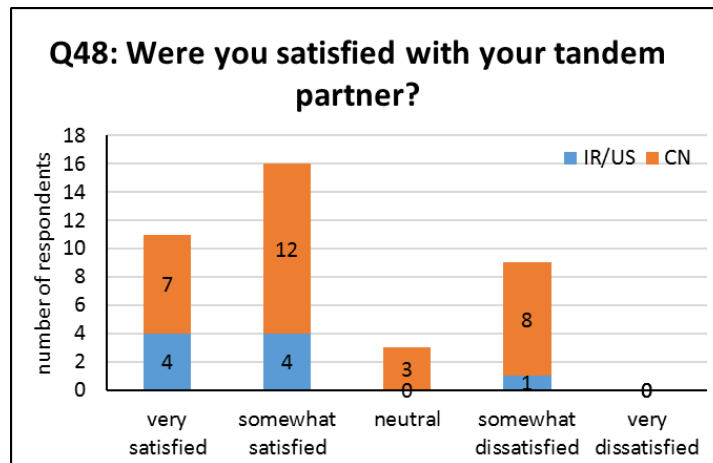


Figure 4. 51: Respondents’ satisfaction with their tandem partners
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.51 indicates that 12+4 (41%) respondents were *somewhat satisfied* with their partner and 7+4 (28%) were *very satisfied*. However, 16 (23%) respondents were *somewhat dissatisfied* and 3 who are Chinese were *neutral*. Among the 16 respondents who report their dissatisfaction with their partner, 8 are Chinese who account for 27% of the Chinese respondents and 1 Irish/American (11% in the group). Thus, it is clear that 16% more Chinese than the Irish/American respondents were not satisfied with their tandem partners.

4.2.5.4 Reflection on the characteristics of e-tandem

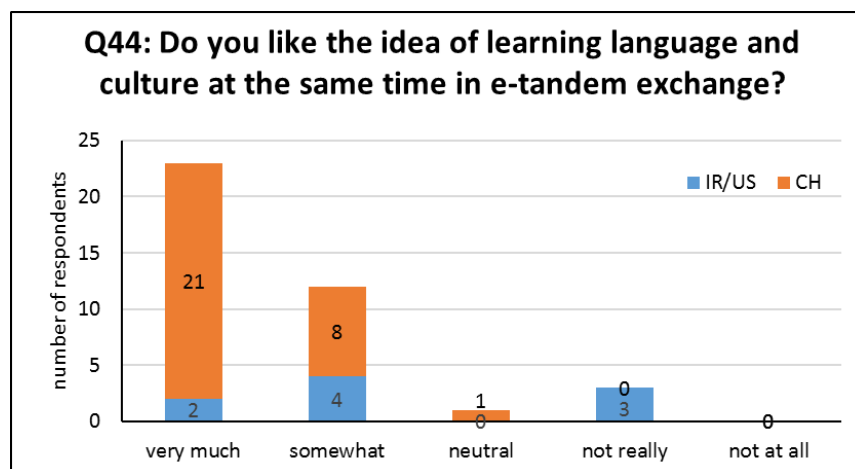


Figure 4. 52: Attitudes to combining language with culture in learning
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.52 indicates that 21+2 (59%) respondents enjoyed combining language learning with culture *very much* and an additional 8+4 (31%) respondents also *somewhat liked* this experience. However, 3 Irish/American (8%) respondents declare that they did not enjoy the approach and 1 Chinese respondent was *not sure*. It is clear that most of Chinese respondents are happy with this approach (21 accounting for 70% of the Chinese respondents) while only 2 Irish/ American (accounting for 22%) select *very much*.

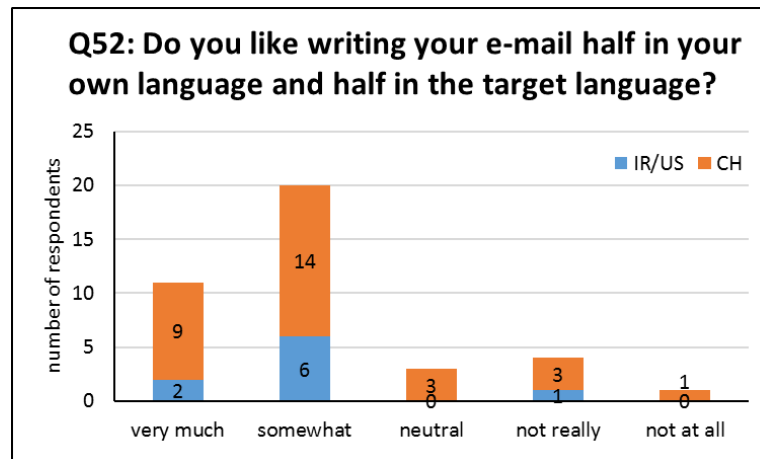


Figure 4. 53: Attitudes towards writing half in the L1 and half in the L2
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.53 indicates that overall respondents were favourable to writing their e-mails, half in the L1 and half in the L2, *somewhat* - 14+6 respondents (51%) and *very much* - 9+2 (28%), 3+1 (10%) respondents were *not really* happy and 1 Chinese respondent reports that she/he did *not* like this approach *at all*.

4.2.5.5 Reflection on Difficulties in E-tandem

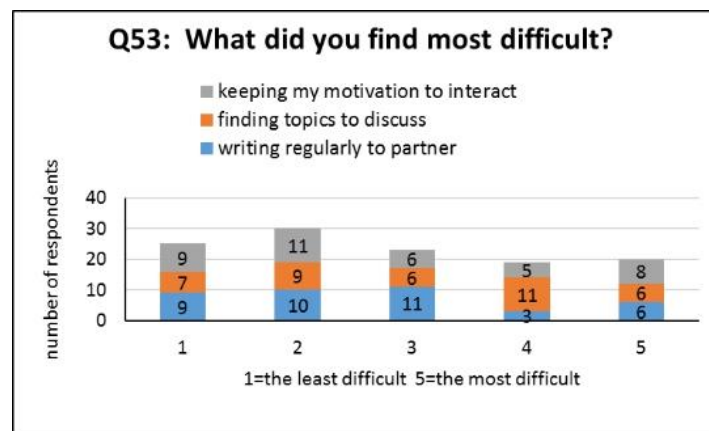


Figure 4. 54: Difficulties in e-tandem exchange
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.54 displays respondents' opinions on the 3 difficulties: *keeping my motivation to interact*, *finding topics to discuss*, and *writing regularly to my e-tandem partner*. Respondents rate their answers from level 1 (the least difficult) to 5 (the most difficult). 8+5 (33%) of 39 respondents declare that *keeping their motivation to interact* was most difficult (rated 4 and 5). In contrast, 9+11 respondents which account for 51% do not report any difficulty in *keeping their motivation* to continue the exchange (rated 1 and 2 respectively). Rated at 4, *finding topics to discuss* with their partners (11 respondents - 28%) as well as 6 respondents (15%) who report high levels of difficulty in this category. On the other hand, 9+10 respondents accounting for 49% of the respondents report that *writing regularly* was the least difficult aspect of this exchange.

In order to see the differences between Chinese and Irish/American respondents, the following figures (Figure 4.55, 4.56 and 4.57) display the number of respondents in each group separately under each category.

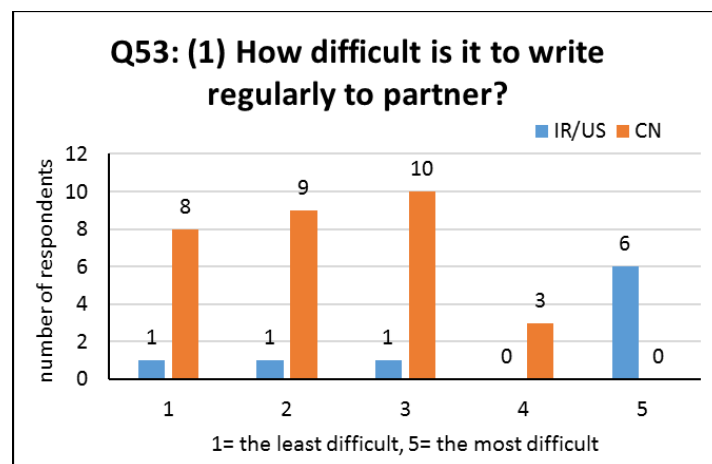


Figure 4. 55: Difficulty in writing regularly to e-tandem partner
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

Figure 4.55 addresses the question of *writing regularly* in e-tandem exchanges. In this figure, 6 Irish/American respondents (67% of Irish/American respondents) declare that it was the most difficult aspect of e-tandem exchanges. However, 8+9 Chinese (57% of the 30 Chinese respondents) rate it at 1 and 2, believing that *writing regularly* was not so difficult.

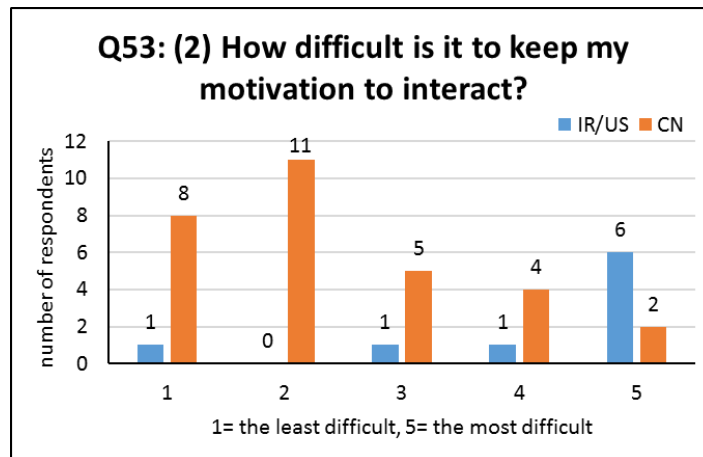


Figure 4. 56: Difficulty in keeping motivation to interact
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In Figure 4.56, there are 6 Irish/American respondents (67% of the Irish/American) who rate *keeping motivation to interact* at 5 - the most difficult - while most of the Chinese respondents, 8+11 accounting for 63% of the Chinese group, do not express the same difficulty - rating at 1 and 2.

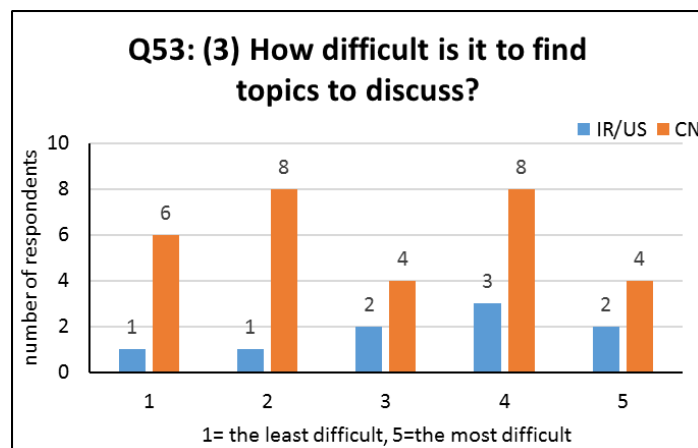


Figure 4. 57: Difficulty in finding topics to discuss
The responses are based on 39 respondents (63% of participants)

In respect of *finding topics to discuss*, 3+2 Irish/American respondents (56% of the Irish group) rate this activity at 4 and 5, along with 8+4 Chinese respondents (40% of the Chinese group); in contrast, 6+8 (47%) of the Chinese also rate it at 1 and 2, which suggests that they did not think *finding topics to discuss* was a difficult thing.

4.2.5.6 Results from Respondents' Open Questions

There are only 3 open questions (Questions 54, 55 and 56) in the questionnaire which probe respondents' further opinions on the topics they would like to discuss with their

partners, the limitations of e-tandem exchange and additional comments on this e-tandem experience. All the responses are transcribed in Appendix I, Appendix J and Appendix K.

Table 4. 6: Number of responses to topics that respondents want to discuss

	N/A	Irrelevant answer	No.
IR/US (9)	3 (p2.1, p2.3, p.2.5)	0	6
CN (30)	2 (p1.11, p2.19)	2 (p1.7, p2.17)	26
total			32

Table 4.6 shows the number of responses received. 3 Irish/American respondents did not give answers to this question ‘Are there specific topics that make you want to discuss with your tandem partner?’. Among the 30 Chinese respondents, 2 participants did not write down their answers and 2 produced irrelevant answers. The latter 2 Chinese respondents complained about their ‘lazy’ tandem partners instead (see Appendix I). Thus, 32 responses in total are considered. The specific topics are displayed in the table below.

Table 4. 7: Topics that make respondents want to discuss with tandem partner

The responses are based on 32 respondents (52% of participants)

Topic	No. of respondents		Topic	No. of respondents	
	IR/US	CN		IR/US	CN
food/eating habits	1	6	country (economy, welfare, social system)	0	4
festival	0	6	cultural things	4	3
opinions on China	0	5	education (exam system)	0	3
daily life (weekend/plan)	2	4	employment	0	3
campus life	1	4	partner’s perception of LC1	0	3

Table 4.7 lists the 10 most popular topics among respondents. As is shown, food/eating habits and festivals are the most popular topics mentioned by Chinese respondents (6 respondents for each topic). 5 Chinese respondents also show their interests in their partner’s view of China. 3 Chinese respondents also want to know how their own country is perceived by their English speaking partners, e.g. their opinions on the situation regarding Tibet, Hong Kong or Taiwan. However, it is found that most of the Irish/American groups emphasised that they liked to discuss cultural things (4 respondents) and 2 mention they liked to talk about daily life.

Table 4. 8: Limitations of e-tandem exchanges
The responses are based on 35 respondents (56% of participants)

Limitation	Respondent	Number
There is no oral/face-to-face/instant contact.	p1.4/ p2.1/ p2.4/ p1.11/ p1.13/ p2.7 p2.9/ p.2.13/ p2.17/ p3.1/ p3.2, p3.7	12
It takes time to get partner's reply.	p1.5/ p1.10/ p2.11/ p2.14/ p3.4/ p3.6	6
Partner match could be a risk.	p1.3, p2.15/p1.2/p2.10, p3.5	5
Text exchange has limitations.	p1.5/ p2.4/ p2.6/ p2.14	4
It is easy to lose motivation/interest.	p1.1/ p2.11	2
Task becomes a limitation.	p2.8/ p3.3	2

Table 4.8 displays the responses to question 55 ‘Do you see limitations for e-tandem exchange?’ (details in Appendix J). Based on 35 respondents, the 6 principal limitations are reported. The biggest limitation mentioned by 12 respondents is that *there is no oral/face-to-face/instant contact. It takes time to get partner's reply* is another limitation: ‘*time is a big problem. My partner had no more time to reply to me in time, which made us miss good opportunities for discussion*’ (p3.6); ‘*It is obvious that there is not enough interaction, so we failed to completely understand their culture*’ (p2.18); and reported by 6 respondents. Partner suitability is a limitation mentioned by 5 respondents. This limitation falls into the following 3 categories: two partners have nothing in common (p1.3, p2.15); two partners have different L2 levels (p1.2); the partner is not good/not active (p2.10, p3.5) and one propose that ‘*I think oral exchanges can increase my interest in learning English*’ (p3.7). Text exchange is also seen as a limitation by 4 respondents: text can lead to misunderstandings (p1.5); text communication is formal (p2.4); text can be a barrier between two partners (p2.6); the written text produced following careful reflection cannot expose the learner's language weakness (p2.14). *It is easy to lose motivation/interest* and *Task becomes a limitation* are pointed out by 2 respondents as two additional limitations: ‘*The tasks involve too broad topics. Learning their culture should start from appreciating their daily activities*’ (p3.3).

More specifically, there are interesting comments in Appendix J which are related to emotions, spontaneity, cultural barriers and sincerity: 1) ‘*we couldn't exchange freely and there is something between us. We interacted as a task instead of exchanging with a friend*’ (p2.6); 2) ‘*the limitation is that we are two strangers, especially as we have different cultural backgrounds, which made our communication difficult*’ (p2.15); 3) ‘*We couldn't have a deep understanding of each other as the interaction is superficial and it is also*

inconvenient' (p2.16).

Question 56 is the last open question in the questionnaire, which investigates participants' additional comments on e-tandem experience. On examining the transcripts of all the responses to this question, the responses can be divided into 3 categories: positive comments, negative comments and suggestions (see Appendix K). Among the 39 respondents, 6 did not give responses to this question, so the following analyses are based on 33 respondents who made 49 comments.

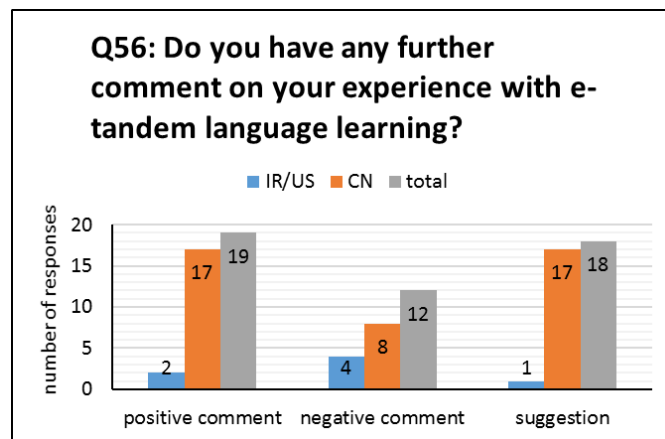


Figure 4. 58: Comments on e-tandem experiences
The responses are based on 33 respondents (53% of participants)

In Figure 4.58, it is obvious that there are more positive than negative comments and suggestions from respondents (19+18 - positive comments and suggestions; 12 - negative comment). In addition, Chinese respondents wrote 17 positive comments and 8 negative comments. However, the Irish/American respondents appear to have more negative comments than positive (4 negative and 2 positive comments). Among the 18 suggestions, 6 suggest combining synchronous or audio/video exchange with e-mail exchanges by using instant tools such as Skype, We Chat, QQ (respondents p2.2, p1.9, p1.11, p.2.8, p2.9, p3.1 in Appendix K). Several interesting suggestions are also found: *'The number of e-tandem partner can be increased, which means we can have more than one partner'* (p1.10); *'We can record our input and send to our partner'* (p2.9); *'the interaction can happen between foreign students and local students in the same college which may arouse more deep feelings and thinking'* (p2.13); *'I think we can keep diaries in English and then show them to our partner. Then we could discuss the diaries during e-mail exchanges'* (p3.3).

4.3 Quantitative Findings from E-mails, Forums, Diaries, Case studies and Interviews

This section mainly presents the quantitative findings associated with participants' online exchanges, which include their free communication as well as discussion of task through e-mails, and participants' online forum entries. In addition, quantitative analysis of participants' learning diaries, case studies and interviews are presented.

4.3.1 Overview of the E-mail Output of Three Cohorts

In order to have a clear map of the participants' completion of their e-mail exchanges and tasks, Tables 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 display the number of e-mails participants of three cohorts wrote to their e-tandem partners and the tasks they engaged in through e-mail exchanges. Based on the three tables, Table 4.12 calculates the total numbers of dyads, exchanged emails and percentages of the e-mails by Irish/American or Chinese participants.

Table 4. 9: Cohort 1: completion rate of e-mail exchanges and tasks

Dyads	Participants	Emails	Tasks	Dyads	Participants	Emails	Tasks
Dy1	IR	7	pre-activity	Dy6	IR	5	pre-activity
	CN	8			CN	8	
Dy2	IR	2	none	Dy7	IR	5	task 1
	CN	3			CN	8	
Dy3	IR	3	pre-activity /task 1	Dy8	IR	15	pre-activity/ task 1
	CN	6			CN	15	
Dy4	IR	14	none	Dy9	IR	3	pre-activity
	CN	14			CN	6	
Dy5	IR	2	task 1	Dy10	IR	4	none
	CN	11			CN	7	

Table 4.9 indicates that the two dyads who exchanged most frequently in Cohort 1 are dyad 8 (Dy8) and dyad 4 (Dy4). Each participant in Dy8 exchanged 15 e-mails and 14 e-mails each in Dy4. However, dyad 2 (Dy2) exchanged least in this cohort, with the Irish participant writing only 2 e-mails and the Chinese participant, 3. With regard to the task discussion, none of the dyads was able to finish all 4 tasks and the best result applies to two dyads who finished both the pre-activity and task1 (Dy3 and Dy8). There are 3 dyads who did not complete any task discussion (Dy2, Dy4 and Dy10). While Dy4 is the second most active pair in this cohort, they did not engage in any of the tasks.

Table 4. 10: Cohort 2: completion rate of e-mail exchanges and tasks

Dyads	Participants	Emails	Tasks	Dyads	Participants	Emails	Tasks
Dy1	IR	4	task 1/ task 2	Dy8	IR	1	task 1
	CN	8			CN	5	
Dy2	IR	2	task 1/ task 2	Dy9	IR	6	task 1/ task 2
	CN	4			CN	10	
Dy3	IR	4	task 1	Dy10	US	11	task 1/ 2/3
	CN	6			CN	12	
Dy4	IR	2	task 1/ task 2	Dy11	IR	1	task 1
	CN	5			CN	3	
Dy5	IR	6	task 1/ task 2	Dy12	IR	5	task 1/ task 2
	CN	8			CN	8	
Dy6	US	8	task 1/ task 2	Dy13	IR	4	task 1/ task 2
	CN	11			CN	7	
Dy7	IR	1	task 1	Dy14	IR	3	task 1/ task 2
	CN	3			CN	7	

As shown in Table 4.10, the most active Dyad in Cohort 2 is Dy10, in which both participants wrote more than 10 e-mails in total. In Dy6 and Dy10, the Chinese participants' tandem partners are American while other partners for the Chinese are all Irish. In this cohort, all the Chinese participants wrote more e-mails than their e-tandem partners by the end of exchange. The pre-activity was not used for Cohorts 2 and 3 and reasons for this decision were given in Chapter 3. Dy10 who exchanged most e-mails in this cohort discussed 3 tasks and the other dyads participated in task 1 or task 2.

Table 4. 11: Cohort 3: completion rate of e-mail exchanges and tasks

Dyads	Participants	Emails	Tasks
Dy1	US	3	task 1
	CN	4	
Dy2	US	10	task 1
	CN	8	
Dy3	US	3	task 1
	CN	4	
Dy4	US	3	task 1
	CN	5	
Dy5	US	2	task 1
	CN	3	
Dy6	US	7	task 1
	CN	5	
Dy7	US	1	task 1
	CN	3	

Table 4.11 indicates that partners of Chinese participants in Cohort 3 are all from America. The top two dyads who exchanged most frequently in this cohort are Dy2 and Dy6. The two American participants in these dyads sent an additional 2 e-mails to their Chinese

tandem partners. All the dyads in Cohort 2 discussed task 1 only.

Table 4. 12: Cohorts 1, 2 and 3: total number of e-mail exchanges

Cohort	Dyad	Email (total)	IR/US	CN
1	10	146	60 (41%)	86 (59%)
2	14	157	58 (37%)	99 (63%)
3	7	61	29 (47%)	32 (53%)

Table 4.12 reveals that Cohort 1, comprising 10 dyads, exchanged 146 e-mails in total over two semesters, in which Irish and Chinese participants' e-mails account for 41% and 59% of the exchanges respectively. Cohort 2 comprises 14 dyads and 157 e-mails in total were exchanged also over two semesters. E-mails from Irish participants (and two American participants) account for 37% while their Chinese partners' account for 63% of the exchanges. There are only 61 e-mails from 7 dyads in Cohort 3 who exchanged their e-mails over 4 months. The e-mails American participants wrote account for 47% while Chinese participants' entries account for 53% of the interactions.

4.3.2 Quantitative Findings from Tasks Discussions

During the tandem exchange, 4 tasks were devised for the participants. As reported in Tables 4.9-4.11, most participants only discussed Task 1 and Task 2 partially (except for Dy10 in Cohort 2 who finished the discussion on Task 3).

Task 1 - word associations

Participants were required to complete word association questionnaires and exchange their answers with their partners, and then choose at least three words for discussion. In Table 4.13 below, n/a indicates that this word was not given to the participants. For example, the word *family*, *freedom* and *crowd* were not used with Cohorts 2 and 3 because nobody in Cohort 1 showed interest in discussing them. As the Chinese participants' partners in Cohort 1 are from Ireland, the word *Ireland* was discussed while the partners in Cohort 3 who are from America, discussed the word *America*. However, the word *America* also appeared in the questionnaire for Cohort 2, because there were two American participants in the partner class.

Table 4. 13: Word choices in the word association task

Words	Cohort 1 (N=10)	Cohort 2 (N=14)	Cohort 3 (N=7)	Total
individualism	Dy3/5/8	Dy2/4/9/14	Dy1/3/5/6	11 (36%)
money	Dy5	Dy4/5/9/10	Dy1/3	7 (23%)
alcohol	none	Dy4/5/10	Dy1/3/4/6	7 (23%)
America	n/a	Dy10	Dy1/2/3/4	5 (16%)
fun	Dy5/8	Dy10/14	Dy1	5 (16%)
China	Dy3	Dy2/9/10	Dy4	5 (16%)
recycling	none	Dy5	Dy6	2 (10%)
Ireland	Dy3	Dy14	n/a	2 (8%)
freedom	Dy5	n/a	n/a	1 (10%)
family	Dy3	n/a	n/a	1 (10%)
responsibility	none	none	Dy6	1 (3%)
crowd	none	n/a	n/a	0

As shown in Table 4.13, 11 dyads discussed the word *individualism* which account for 36% of the total 31 dyads. There are 7 dyads who discussed the word *money* and *alcohol* - 23%. The three words *America*, *fun* and *China* account for the same percentage - 16% of the total 31 dyads, ranking as the third most popular words among participants.

4.3.3 Quantitative Findings from Online Forum Entries

This section presents the findings from participants' online forum discussions, including the overview of the number of forums participants joined, the number of participants' posted comments, and the excerpts of the online forum entries (see the transcripts in Appendix Z).

Table 4. 14: Overview of online forum contributions

Cohort	No. of forums	No. of comments
C1	1	CN: 2
		IR: 1
C2	10	CN: 26
		IR/US: 5
C3	5	CN: 8
		US: 6
Total	16	48

According to Table 4.14, Cohort 1 discussed only 1 forum which is the lowest number for any of the 3 cohorts. The number of forums discussions for Cohorts 2 and 3 are 10 and 5 respectively. Participants from Cohort 2 contributed most of the comments on the online forums. They discussed 10 forums (63%) and posted 31 comments in total (66%), among which 26 entries were from Chinese participants while 5 were Irish/American. Cohort 3 contributed 14 comments in contrast with Cohort 1 with only 3 comments.

The following tables (4.15, 4.17, 4.19, 2.21 and 4.23) present the participants' online forum discussions on 5 topics ('alcohol', 'responsibility', 'Ireland', 'Individualism', and 'America') in the word association task.

Table 4. 15: Forum discussion on 'alcohol' (Cohort 2)

Topic: 'alcohol/酒'
<p>Nov 30, 2012 (C2-CN10) 中国酒文化源远流长，关于酒有很多的典故，而好奇的是，外国的聚会，派对，酒会是什么样的呢，他们经常开派对吗，包括一些高中生，他们都会经常在家里开吗，还有，他们很喜欢去酒吧吗，对他们来说那是一个什么样的地方。 <u>[Chinese wine culture has a long history. There are many allusions to wine. (1)What I am curious about is what their parties, wine receptions are like. Do they often hold parties, including the high school students? Do they often hold party at home? Besides, they really love to go to pubs, right? But for them, what kind of place pub is?]</u></p>
<p>Dec 1, 2012 (C2-IR6) Every country is different. (2)<u>I know for sure that in Europe they let 14yrs olds drink but not to get wasted. Usually wine goes with their meal, (3)but this also goes with religion/cultural background. There are so many ties with alcohol out there.</u></p>
<p>Dec 3, 2012 (C2-US10) (4)<u>In the United States there are many occasions where we drink. In college many students on Friday and Saturday nights will go to parties and drink with their friends. Many times people drink wine or champagne during formal dinners or weddings. I personally like to go to bars to drink, watch sports on t.v., and play pool (billiards) with my friends.</u></p>
<p>Dec 4, 2012 (C2-CN2) 酒是双刃剑，喝的适量对身体有好处，但是过量了就会对身体有害。 <u>[There are two sides of alcohol. Drinking a little is good for health, but drinking too much would be harmful to your health.]</u></p>
<p>Dec 5, 2012 (C2-IR6) 喝得多，不只对身体有害，还会使人的脑细胞死亡。 <u>[Drinking too much would not only do harm to one's body, but also kill one's brain cells.]</u></p>
<p>Dec 8, 2012 (C2-IR9) (5)<u>In Ireland people drink at every occasion such as birthdays, funerals, Christmas as (6)drinking alcohol is a social activity with family and friends. (7)Young people also go to bars and nightclubs to drink alcohol such as vodka, rum and pints beer.</u></p>
<p>Mar 20, 2013 (C2-CN6) 你们比较喜欢喝什么品种的酒呢？在中国最常见的是白酒，米酒，葡萄酒，药酒，鸡尾酒……有一种酒不知道你们喝过吗？它叫做女儿红，女儿红酒是一种具甜、酸、苦、辛、鲜、涩味于一体的丰满酒体，加上有高出其他酒的营养价值，因而形成了澄、香、醇、柔、绵、爽兼备的综合风格。它具有养身的功效。在中国民俗中，有些人在女儿出生的那一年会酿女儿红且将女儿红封存后放入土窖，直到女儿出嫁那一天才会拿出来喝。不知道你们有没有关于酒的一些习俗呢？ <u>[(8)In China, the most popular wine are white wine, rice wine, medicated wine, red wine. There's a special wine called Nuer Hong which is sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, fresh, and astringent. It is of a higher nutritional value, which is good for health. According to the Chinese folk custom, people would make Nuer Hong in the year their daughter was born and stored it in the cellar. They won't drink it until their daughter's wedding day. (9)What kinds of wine do you like to drink? Do you have some conventions about wine in your country?]</u></p>

Table 4.16 shows the quantitative data from Table 4.15.

Table 4. 16: Overview of forum ‘alcohol’ (Cohort 2)

Entries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Date	30/11/12	1/12/12	3/12/12	4/12/12	5/12/12	8/12/12	20/3/13
Participants	C2-CN10	C2-IR6	C2-US10	C2-CN2	C2-IR6	C2-IR9	C2-CN6
words	61	43	61	23	17	41	95

In Table 4.16, 7 entries appeared in the year 2012, except for the last entry in the next year 2013; 5 of 7 entries were made in December, one in November and one the following March which is the last entry. The entries were made by 6 participants (3 Chinese, 2 Irish and 1 American). Among them, the Irish participant from Dy6 made two entries (2 and 5); other participants wrote one comment each. The last entry made by a Chinese participant is the longest one containing 95 words, then the first and the third entries are the second longest with 61 words each while entry 5 is the shortest one with 17 words made by an Irish student.

Table 4. 17: Forum discussion on ‘responsibility’ (Cohort 1)

Topic: ‘responsibility/责任’	
Jan 11, 2012 (C1-IR6)	
<u>(1)When talking about responsibility, you mainly put the meaning of responsibility to your family life and the country in general. This could clearly reveal the collective characteristic of your Chinese people. (a stronger sense of loyalty to family and country)</u>	
Feb 13, 2012 (C1-CN10)	
<u>Yeah, (2)we Chinese consider it important for a man to support a family, because in the past, the Chinese women are thought to live with the men, the same as the elder. Men are often full of power, so they can support the whole family.</u>	

Table 4.18 shows the quantitative data from Table 4.17.

Table 4. 18: Overview of forum on ‘responsibility’ (Cohort 2)

Entries	1	2
Date	11/1/12	13/2/12
Participants	C1-IR6	C1-CN10
words	40	45

There are only 2 comments in Table 4.18. One made by an Irish participant in January and the other by a Chinese in February in the same year.

Table 4. 19: Forum discussion on ‘Ireland’ (Cohort 2)

Topic: ‘Ireland/爱尔兰’	
Nov 30, 2012 (C2-CN10)	想到爱尔兰，我们都不约而同地想到了和平，宁静和美丽的风景，爱尔兰确实是个这样一个国家，也很令人向往，而国外的朋友却为什么会想到 recession 呢，这是指经济吗，还是别的什么？我不明白。 <i>[(1)When we talk about Ireland, I thought of its peace, the quiet and beautiful view. Ireland is such a country I am looking forward to. However, the Irish students associated the word ‘recession’.</i> (2) <i>Does it mean there is economic recession In Ireland now?</i>
Dec 4, 2012 (C2-CN8)	想到爱尔兰，它是个很美的国家，我很向往呢，是不是这个美丽的国度里的人们喜欢养宠物？为什么搭档会想到狗？ <i>[Ireland is a very beautiful country. (3)Do people there like raising pets? (4)Why did the Irish people associate the word ‘dog’?]</i>
Dec 8, 2012 (C2-IR9)	(5) <i>In Ireland a lot of families have pets the most typical pet a family has is a dog. Ireland has more green areas than China so dogs can run around freely by their owners home however in China I have noticed people prefer cats.</i>
Dec 10,2012 (C2-CN9)	在中国，其实大部分家庭养的宠物也是狗，其次才是猫，养宠物可以让人放松精神，培养责任心。也许在爱尔兰，人们对狗的感情的确很深吧，这让我想到和谐。 <i>[(6)In China, actually, most of the families keep dogs as first choice, then cats. Pets can make people relaxed and help to cultivate a sense of responsibility. (7)Maybe in Ireland, people have really deep love for dogs. This gives me a picture of harmony.]</i>

Table 4.20 shows the quantitative data from Table 4.19.

Table 4. 20: Overview of forum on ‘Ireland’ (Cohort 2)

Entries	1	2	3	4
Date	30/11/12	4/12/12	8/12/12	10/12/12
Participants	C2-CN10	C2-CN8	C2-IR9	C2-CN9
words	43	21	44	44

In Table 4.20, 4 entries are from 4 participants of Cohort 2 (3 are Chinese and 1 is Irish). The first entry was written in November, 2012 while the other 3 were in December. The length of Entries 1, 3 and 4 are 43 or 44 words each and the second entry is 21 words.

Table 4. 21: Forum discussion on ‘Individualism’ (Cohorts 2&3)

Topic: ‘individualism/个人主义’	
Dec 10, 2012 (C2-CN9)	在对个人主义这个词的理解中，我们跟爱尔兰的学生的理解有一些不小的出入，我想，这应该是因为不同的语言对一个词的解释也是有所不同吧 <i>[As for the understanding of the word ‘Individualism’, (1)there are some differences between us and the Irish students. (2)I think the reason is that words can have different meanings in different languages.]</i>
Mar 22, 2013 (C2-CN3)	确实，对比了我们和爱尔兰同学那边的答案后，发现真的中外思维的差异。。。为什么我们对个人主义这个词想到的大都是贬义的词性。。。而在爱尔兰的同学们看来，形容的却处处是积极的。个人主义，我还是觉得这是个偏贬义的词。。。有主见但不能极其的个人主义，社会不是你一个人的，所以还是要学会包容，懂得合作。 <i>[Indeed, (3) I found different thinking between us and the foreigners after comparing the answers of the Irish students and ours... (4)Why are most of our words related to individualism negative...while the words from the Irish students are positive. (5)As for ‘Individualism’, I still think it is a negative word...We should have our own minds, but we cannot be too individual. The society does not belong to anyone, so we should learn to tolerate and know how to cooperate.]</i>
Jun 4, 2013 (C3-US6)	<i>(6)All the American responses are positive (except for “introverted” which can go either way). Many of the Chinese responses are negative.</i>
Jun 7, 2013 (C3-CN7)	这和它的程度深浅有关吧，适当的就是有主见、有个性的表现，但过分的就成了自私自利的表现了，一切以自我为中心了而忽略他人。 <i>[(7) I think this should be relative to the degree of individualism? (8)If someone behaves properly, then we can say she/he is independent or individual. But if she/he behaves too much independently, then it is selfishness, because she/he ignores others and is self-centered.]</i>

Table 4. 22: Overview of forum on ‘Individualism’ (Cohorts 2&3)

Entries	1	2	3	4
Date	10/12/12	22/3/13	4/6/13	7/6/13
Participants	C2-CN9	C2-CN3	C3-US6	C3-CN7
words	32	79	21	42

Table 4.22 presents the quantitative findings from forum discussions on the word ‘individualism’, in which there are four entries from Cohorts 2 and 3. Two Chinese participants in Cohort 2 posted their comments in December 2012 and March 2013 respectively and the other two comments from Cohort 3 appeared in June 2013. The longest entry is 79 words (Entry 2) while the shortest one is Entry 3 with 21 words.

Table 4. 23: Forum discussion on ‘America’ (Cohort 3)

Topic: ‘America/美国’	
Jun 4, 2013 (C3-US6)	My response was “diverse”.
Jun 5, 2013 (C3-CN1)	“diverse”有什么特殊的含义呢? [<i>What does ‘diverse’ indicate here?</i>]
Jun 15, 2013 (C3-US6)	Mei: by “diverse” I mean that (1)America has many different types of people. Everybody looks different (except for the cliques in high school). Everybody acts differently. Everybody has a different goal in life and a different pathway to that goal. America has many immigrants. (2)Because America has many immigrants. America is constantly changing. (3)We are diverse because we all have different opinions. Each and every one of us identify ourselves differently. We take pride in being different. We take pride in being individuals. We are told to find our own talents, form our own ideas, make our own decisions based on our own personal life experiences. (4)Once we are out of our parent’s homes, they don’t tell us what to do unless we ask (in my experience anyway, I cannot speak for others). My parents trust that they raised me well enough so that I can find my own way down my own path to success and happiness.

Table 4. 24: Overview of forum on ‘America’ (Cohort 3)

Entries	1	2	3
Date	4/6/13	5/6/13	15/6/13
Participants	C3-US6	C3-CN1	C3-US6
words	4	5	158

There are 3 entries in Table 4.24. Entries 1 and 3 are from the same American participant with 4 words and 158 words respectively. The second entry was from the Chinese participant, consisting of only 5 words. All the 3 entries were written in June 2013.

4.3.4 Quantitative Findings from Correcting Partners’ Language Errors

Tables 4.25, 4.26, and 4.27 display the participants’ instances of noticing their partner’s L[C]2 errors in each cohort. In the three tables, those participants who continued to correct their partners’ errors for three months or more are recorded (except for C3-US1 in Table 4.27, which lasted only two months).

The results are displayed in the form of fractions, where the denominator represents the total number of errors the non-native speaker partner made and numerator refers to the number of errors pointed out by native-speaker partner. The percentages of errors addressed by native speaker partners appear below each fraction.

Table 4. 25: Percentage of errors noticed on a monthly basis (Cohort 1)

Participant	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
CN1	1/12 (8%)	-	3/12 (25%)	-	-	5/15 (33%)	-	-	4/11 (36%)
CN4	5/8 (63%)	1/3 (33%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	4/4 (100%)
IR4	6/8 (75%)	3/6 (50%)	1/2 (50%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
CN8	5/13 (39%)	5/11 (45%)	-	-	-	-	-	6/15 (40%)	4/6 (67%)

The first cohort in Table 4.25 began their e-tandem exchanges in March and finished in November, spanning two semesters (March to May is the first academic semester; September to November is the second one; and the college holiday is from June to August). Table 4.25 indicates that 4 participants continued to correct their partners' errors. The table also indicates differences between participants which are as follows: compared with the other three participants, the first Chinese participant in this table corrected her/his partner's errors more regularly (in March, May, August and November) and the percentage of errors noticed by this participant is steadily increasing (8%, 25%, 33% and 36%). Both participants from Dy4 corrected errors for three months, but there is a big gap between the last correction and the first two corrections for the Chinese partner (she/he first noticed errors in March and April, and then resumed in November). However, her/his partner noticed errors during the first three months of the first semester and no more corrections in the second semester occurred. The last single Chinese participant from Dy8 corrected errors for two months in each semester. The percentages of errors noticed and corrected appear to increase from the beginning to the end (39% to 67%), except from April to October (45% to 40%).

Table 4. 26: Percentage of errors noticed on a monthly basis (Cohort 2)

Participant	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
CN1	1/3 (33%)	1/4 (25%)	1/2 (50%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
CN5	4/5 (80%)	13/22 (59%)	4/20 (20%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
CN10	7/7 (100%)	2/4 (50%)	3/10 (30%)	1/5 (20%)	-	-	-	2/8 (25%)	-
US10	6/6 (100%)	16/26 (62%)	2/11 (18%)	-	-	-	3/8 (38%)	-	-
CN12	-	3/8 (38%)	6/8 (75%)	-	-	-	5/6 (83%)	-	-
IR12	-	4/8 (50%)	2/6 (33%)	2/7 (29%)	-	-	-	-	-

In Table 4.26, Cohort 2's exchanges also span two semesters (October to January is the first academic semester; March to June is the second one; and the college holiday is from February to March). 6 participants are reported in this table, 2 dyads (Dy10 and 12) and 2 single participants. Most of the participants' error noticing happened in the first semester. Both the first two Chinese participants in this table corrected errors in the first three months, however, the percentage increases from 33% to 50% for the first participant while the percentage drops from 80% to 20% for the second one. Participants of Dy10 seem to correct each other more often and both of them noticed 100% of errors in the first month, October. However, in the following months of the first semester, their noticing of errors is less frequent and the percentages decrease (Chinese participant: 50% to 30% to 20%, American: 62% to 18%). In Dy12, the percentage of errors noticed by the Chinese participant increases (38%, 75%, 83%), while the Irish partner's decreases (50%, 33%, 29%).

Table 4. 27: Percentage of errors noticed on a monthly basis (Cohort 3)

Participant	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
US1	7/14 (50%)	9/15 (60%)		-	-
CN1	4/9 (44%)	1/5 (20%)	1/2 (50%)	-	-

Cohort 3 in Table 4.27 exchanged e-mails for one semester only from March to July, however, there is no error correction in June and July. The American participant noticed more errors in April than March, as the percentage rose from 50% to 60%. The Chinese partner noticed more errors in May (50%) than in March (44%).

To further analyse the type of language errors corrected by the participants, the number of different errors corrected by the four dyads in Table 4.21-4.23 (C1-Dy4, C2-Dy10 and 12, C3-Dy1) is calculated in Table 4.28 and Table 4.29 below.

Table 4. 28: Number of error types corrected by Chinese partners

Participants	Wrong n./v./adv.	Word order error	Missing sub./verb.	Redundant adv./verb.	Wrong sent. structure	Uncompleted sent.	Wrong punctuation
C1-CN4	3	3	1	1	0	1	1
C2-CN10	7	2	2	1	5	0	0
C2-CN12	3	2	4	4	0	1	0
C3-CN1	3	1	0	1	1	0	0
total	16	8	7	7	6	2	1

In Table 4.28, the 7 types of Mandarin errors usually corrected by the Chinese participants in the 4 dyads are wrong nouns/verbs/adverbs, missing subjects/verbs, word order error, wrong sentence structure, redundant adverbs/verbs, uncompleted sentence and wrong punctuation. The errors that appear to be noticed most often are wrong nouns, verbs or adverbs (16), followed by word order error (8), missing subject or verbs (7), redundant adverbs or verbs (7), wrong sentence structure (6), uncompleted sentences (2), and wrong punctuation (1) appear to attract least attention.

Table 4. 29: Number of error types corrected by Irish or American partners

Participants	Misuse of words	Wrong spelling	Missing conj./v./art.	Wrong tense	Wrong sent. structure	Wrong prep.	Wrong word order
C1-IR4	2	4	3	0	1	0	0
C2-US10	10	8	4	3	2	0	0
C2-IR12	2	3	1	1	1	0	0
C3-US1	6	2	2	3	0	2	1
total	20	17	10	7	4	2	1

In Table 4.29, the 7 most common types of English errors corrected by the English native speakers in the 4 dyads are, in decreasing order, misuse of English words (20), wrong spelling (17), missing conjunctions/verbs/articles (10), wrong tense (7), wrong sentence structure (4), wrong preposition (2) and wrong word order (1).

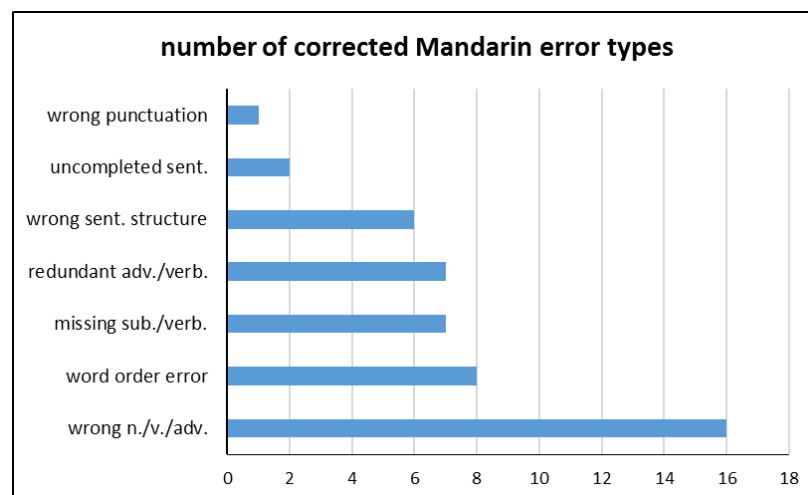


Figure 4. 59: Total number of corrected Mandarin error types in 4 dyads

To summarise, Figure 4.59 indicates the top three errors noticed and corrected by Chinese participants as wrong nouns/verbs/adverbs, wrong order, and redundant adverbs/verbs.

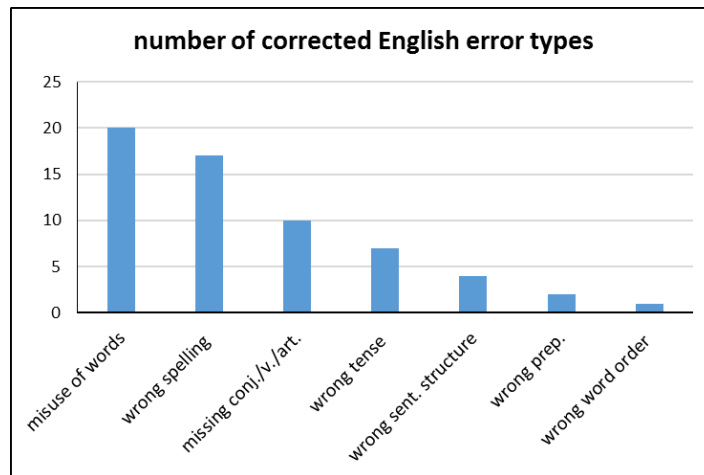


Figure 4. 60: Total number of corrected English error types in 4 dyads

However, as shown in Figure 4.60, misuse of English words, wrong spelling, and missing conjunctions/verbs/articles are the top three English errors noticed and corrected by the native English speakers.

4.4.4 Findings from Participants' Learning Diaries

This section looks at the learning diaries submitted by the participants from three cohorts. According to the template of the learning diary (see Appendix A), data from diaries are divided into three categories: students' self-reflection on their intercultural learning, target language learning and the difficulties met during e-tandem exchanges.

Based on the frequency of e-mail exchanges, students were required to update their learning diaries every four weeks. However, most of the students did not meet the requirement. Table 4.30 is the overview of their submission.

Table 4. 30: Overview of participants' submission of learning diaries

Frequency of diary submissions	No. of participants	Participants
once	21	C1-IR3/ CN6/ CN9/ CN10 C2-IR4/ IR5/ IR9/ CN1/ CN2/ CN3/ CN4/ CN5/ CN7/ CN8/CN11/CN12/CN13 C3-CN1/ US3/ CN4/ CN5
twice	6	C1-CN1/ CN3/CN4 C2-CN9/ CN14 C3-CN6
three times	2	C2-CN10 C3-CN2
four times	1	C2-US10
five times	2	C1-CN8/ IR8
total	32	

Table 4.30 indicates that 32 participants in total submitted their learning diaries. Among them, 21 participants (66%) submitted a learning diary only once, which is very common

in this e-tandem project between Mandarin and English. 6 participants submitted twice during their e-tandem exchanges. There are 2 participants who submitted their diary 3 times and only 1 American participant from Cohort 2 who submitted the diary four times. Both participants from Dyad 8 of Cohort 1 submitted their diaries most frequently - 5 times each.

Participants' Self-reports about Their Perceived Language Gains

This sub-section looks at the students' reflection on their L2 learning in their learning diaries. Newly L[C]2 features/items learned from their partners include grammatical forms such as tense, vocabulary, new expressions, and useful sentence structures. The number of these L2 related observations are first calculated from Table 4.31 to Table 4.33.

Table 4. 31: Number of L2 noticing occurrences in the learning diaries (Dyads with single submission)

Participants	No. of language gains	Participants	No. of language gains	Participants	No. of language gains
C1-IR3	3	C2-CN1	2	C2-CN11	2
C1-CN6	0	C2-CN2	1	C2-CN12	2
C1-CN9	3	C2-CN3	1	C2-CN13	2
C1-CN10	1	C2-CN4	5	C3-CN1	3
C2-IR4	2	C2-CN5	3	C3-US3	2
C2-IR5	2	C2-CN7	2	C3-CN4	1
C2-IR9	1	C2-CN8	5	C3-CN5	1

Table 4.31 displays the number of L2 gains reported by 21 participants with single learning diary submissions. Apart from participant CN6 in Cohort 1 reporting no language gains, others identify at least 1 L2 noticing. Participant CN4 in Cohort 2 reports the most - 5.

Table 4. 32: Number of L2 noticing occurrences in the learning diaries (Dyads with two submissions)

Participants	Submission 1	Submission 2
C1-CN1	0	1
C1-CN3	0	3
C1-CN4	5	2
C2-CN9	2	3
C2-CN14	2	2
C3-CN6	1	2

Table 4.32 displays the number of L2 noticing occurrences by 6 participants in their two diary submissions. It appears that the L2 noticing occurrences increase in 4 participants (CN1, CN3, CN9, CN6). However, participant CN4 in Cohort 1 reported much less L2 noticing in the second submission (2) than the first one (5).

Table 4. 33: Number of L2 noticing occurrences in the learning diaries (Dyads with three submissions)

Participants	Submission 1	Submission 2	Submission 3
C3-CN2	2	0	0

Table 4.33 indicates that the participant CN2 in Cohort 3 submits learning diaries three times. Apart from the first submission, there are no L2 gains reported in the second and the third submissions.

2 dyads are reported in Table 4.34, as Table 4.30 indicates that only 2 dyads (Dy8 of Cohort 1 and Dy10 of Cohort 2) had submitted their diaries three times or more than three times.

Table 4. 34: Number of L2 noticing occurrences in the learning diaries (Dyads with three or more submissions)

Participants	Submission 1	Submission 2	Submission 3	Submission 4	Submission 5
C1-CN8	3	4	5	7	10
C1-IR8	0	2	5	9	4
C2-CN10	5	2	2	n/a	n/a
C2-US10	3	2	3	3	n/a

In Table 4.34, the L2 noticing, i.e. English, occurrences of the Chinese participant (dyad 8 - Cohort 1) steadily increased in her/his 5 submissions (3, 4, 5, 7 and 10). However, there is no increase in the other three participants' submissions.

The differences in the number of participants' L2 noticing occurrences within the same dyad are presented in Figures 4.59 and 4.60.

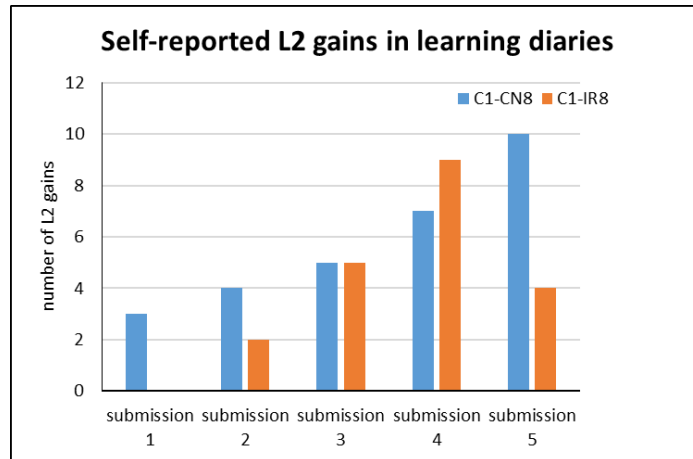


Figure 4. 61: Self-reported L2 gains in learning diaries (Dyad 8 - Cohort 1)

Figure 4.61 shows a sustained increase in L2 gains reported by the Chinese partner, from the beginning to the end of the exchange. The Irish participant, on the other hand, reports fewer gains in the last diary entry than in entry 3 and 4. However, one can still notice marked L2 gains when compared to the first entry.

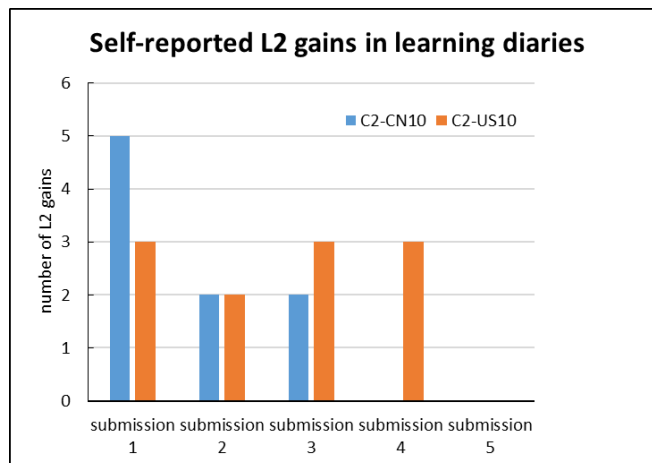


Figure 4. 62: Self-reported L2 gains in learning diaries (Dyad 10 - Cohort 2)

Figure 4.62 indicates a decrease on the part of the Chinese partner from the first diary entry to the third entry in her/his self-reported L2 gains. The American participant's self-reported L2 gains appear to be constant with an average of 3 with slightly fewer (2) in the second entry.

**Table 4. 35: Number of self-reported L2 features
(Dyad 8 - Cohort 1 and Dyad 10 - Cohort 2)**

Participants	Vocabulary	Expressions	Sentence structures	Grammar	Total
C1-CN8	4	19	6	0	29
C1-IR8	7	6	7	0	20
C2-CN10	1	1	1	6	9
C2-US10	4	3	2	2	11
total	16	29	16	8	69

Table 4.35 calculates the number of L2 features most often reported. From the total number of all the language features reported by the 4 participants, L2 expressions are most frequently reported - 29 and L2 grammar features are least frequently reported - 8. Dyad 8 in Cohort 1 reported a total of 49 language features as L2 gains. In this dyad, the largest gains for the Chinese participant is in the number of L2 expressions learned (19). Both participants in this dyad reported no grammar gains. As for Dyad 10 in Cohort 2, a total of 20 L2 features were reported as L2 gains which is less than half of the number in the first dyad. However, the participants in Dyad 10 noticed 8 L2 grammar gains.

4.4.5 Results of Three Dyads: Case Studies

In this section, 3 dyads are chosen for further analysis based on the degree of their engagement with the e-tandem exchanges: high, moderate and low levels of engagement (see their e-mail transcripts in Appendices L, M, N).

4.4.5.1 Case 1: High Level of Engagement (Dyad 10 in Cohort 2)

Figure 4.63 shows the frequency of e-mail exchanges by Dy10 in Cohort 2. Participants in this dyad communicated with each other every month during the required period and responded to each other every time, except in the last month (the Chinese participant wrote 1 e-mail and did not receive any response from the American partner).

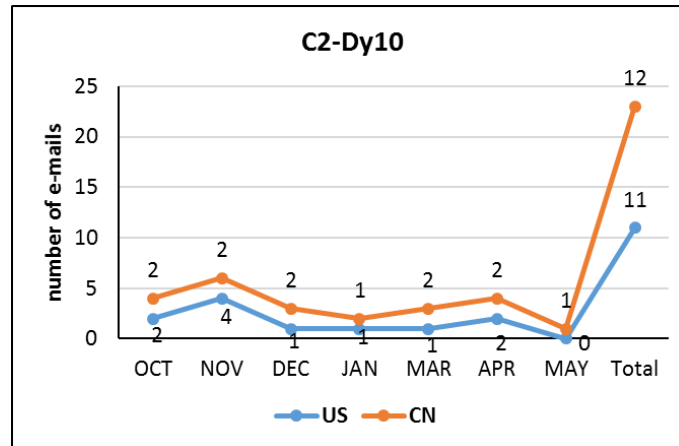


Figure 4. 63: Number of exchanged e-mails (Dyad 10 - Cohort 2)

Language Learning between Participants US10 and CN10

This sub-section investigates the language corrections and reflection on L2 learning of Dyad 10 from Cohort 2. The following tables are obtained from Table 4.24, Table 4.26 and Table 4.27.

Table 4. 36: Percentage of errors noticed on a monthly basis (Dyad 10 in Cohort 2)

Participant	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
CN10	7/7 (100%)	2/4 (50%)	3/10 (30%)	1/5 (20%)	-	-	-	2/8 (25%)	-
US10	6/6 (100%)	16/26 (62%)	2/11 (18%)	-	-	-	3/8 (38%)	-	-

Dyad 10 corrected each other more frequently than other participants. In Table 4.36, both participants noticed 100% of errors in the first month, October. However, in the following months of the first semester, their noticing of errors is less frequent and the percentages decrease (Chinese participant: 50% to 30% to 20%, American: 62% to 18%).

Table 4. 37: Number of error types corrected by Dyad 10 in Cohort 2

Participant	Wrong n./v./adv.	Word order error	Missing sub./verb.	Redundant adv./verb.	Wrong sent. structure	Uncompleted sent.	Wrong Punctuation
C2-CN10	7	2	2	1	5	0	0
Participant	Misuse of words	Wrong word order	Missing conj./v./art.	Wrong prep.	Wrong sent. structure	Wrong tense	Wrong spelling
C2-US10	10	0	4	0	2	3	8

In Table 4.37, the errors that appear to be noticed most often by the Chinese participant (CN10) are wrong nouns, verbs or adverbs (7), followed by wrong sentence structure (5),

however, uncompleted sentences and wrong punctuation appear to attract no attention. The American partner (US10) noticed the misuse of English words (10) most frequently, and then wrong spelling (8), while wrong preposition and wrong word order were not corrected by this American participant.

4.4.5.2 Case 2: Moderate Level of Engagement (Dyad 1 in Cohort 1)

From Figure 4.64, Dyad 1 of Cohort 1 exchanged 15 e-mails in total, of which 7 are from the Irish participant and 8 are from the Chinese partner. The Chinese participant wrote at least once a month except in April and the Irish participant did not write any e-mail in May, July and October.

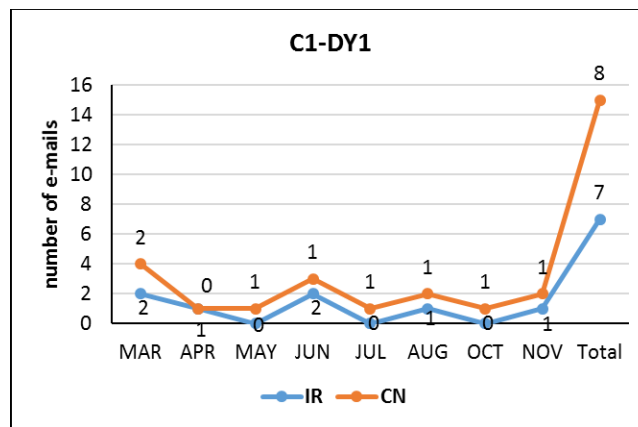


Figure 4. 64: Number of exchanged e-mails (Dyad 1 - Cohort 1)

4.4.5.3 Case 3: Low Level of Engagement (Dyad 13 in Cohort 2)

Figure 4.65 shows the frequency of e-mail exchanges between the participants in Dyad 13 of Cohort 2. The Chinese participant wrote 7 e-mails and the Irish partner just 4.

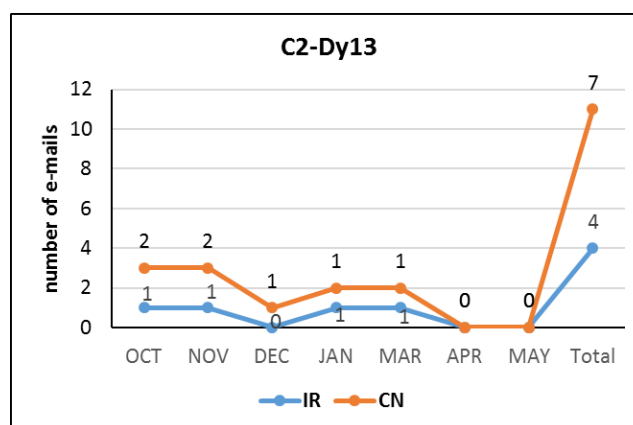


Figure 4. 65: Number of exchanged e-mails (Dyad 13 - Cohort 2)

4.4.6 Findings from Focus Group Interviews

This section reports the findings from focus group interviews (see Transcripts P-V). Table 4.38 displays the groups and the participants who contributed to the interviews.

Table 4. 38: Participants in focus group interviews

Cohort	Group	Participants	Total
Cohort 1	Group 1	CN2, CN4, CN6, CN9, CN10	5
	Group 2	CN1, CN5, CN7, CN8	4
Cohort 2	Group 3	IR3, IR9, US10	3
	Group 4	IR1, IR13	2
	Group 5	CN3, CN6, CN9, CN12, CN13, CN14	6
	Group 6	CN1, CN2, CN4, CN5, CN10	5
Cohort 3	Group 7	CN1, CN2, CN4, CN5	4
			29

Table 4.38 indicates that there are 7 focus groups in total. In Cohort 1, there are 2 focus groups and all the participants are Chinese. There are 4 focus groups in Cohort 2, among which Groups 3 and 4 are Irish and Group 5 and 6 are Chinese. Group 7 in Cohort 3 is Chinese as well. In total, there are 29 participants of whom 5 are Irish/American and 24 Chinese.

4.7 Conclusion

Research findings in this chapter were gleaned from 4 research instruments: questionnaires, the content of exchanged e-mails and online forums, learning diaries, and focus group interviews. 39 questionnaires which account for 63% of all the participants were returned. Findings from the questionnaire were also considered from the Chinese and the Irish/American respondents' perspectives and compared; these shed light on these respondents' perception of the e-tandem experience focusing on the development of their intercultural and language awareness.

Quantitative analysis of data from exchanged e-mails, online forums, learning diaries, and focus group interviews focused on the overview of participants' contributions to the e-tandem exchanges. Participants' self-report about the L2 gains and features (vocabulary, expressions, sentence structures and grammar) in learning diaries were also analysed quantitatively. According to different levels of 3 dyads' engagement (C2-Dy10, C1-Dy1 and C2-Dy13), the number of their exchanged e-mails was also analysed quantitatively.

Chapter 5 now discusses these findings and also the qualitative data in Appendices.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Categories and Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses quantitative research findings gleaned from several data collection methods which were presented in Chapter 4; they include: questionnaires, e-mails, online forums, learning diaries and focus group interviews. In addition, categories emerging from the qualitative data are also displayed and discussed in this chapter. The discussion of these results addresses the following 4 research questions: 1. How can telecollaboration create and/or develop intercultural awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants? 2. Do L1-L2 specific exchanges contribute to the development of language awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants? 3. In e-tandem partnerships, is awareness more likely to emerge from informal exchanges or task-based discussions? 4. What are the challenges that may arise during the e-tandem exchanges and how do the participants meet them? Finally, findings from the 3 case studies and response patterns among Chinese and Irish/American participants are compared and discussed.

5.2 IC Awareness Emergence in a Third Space Facilitated by Telecollaboration

The first research question guiding this study aims to explore the relationship between telecollaboration and the participants' intercultural awareness development. More specifically, the emergence of a third space for the development of IC awareness is considered. The findings in this study are categorised and themes emerged during participants' IC exchanges and further discussed based on the three indicators of the development of a third space: a dialogic space, a site of struggle and an evolving space (Helm *et al.*, 2012).

5.2.1 Categorising Participants' Exchanges

5.2.1.1 Mutual Engagement and Convergence

In this sub-section, findings from the transcripts of the e-mail exchanges of 3 cohorts are categorised to suggest the following aspects: how the participants take each other's views on board, how they show their disagreement, how they respond to each other and how they aim to build good relationships. The data is analysed according to different themes of awareness of self and other (see Table 3.9 in Chapter 3). Categories include *culture as a relative construct*; *self-awareness - discovering differences in behaviour*; *developing awareness - differences in values*; *willingness to modify behaviour*; *discussion of personal*

and difficult issues. In addition, examples are also presented based on categories as *dealing with disagreement, finding commonalities, and dealing with misunderstanding*.

In the following examples taken from e-mail transcripts, since Chinese and Irish/American participants communicated by switching between Mandarin and English, the English parts written by the Chinese participants are kept without corrections, and *vice versa*. In addition, English translations for the Chinese parts are given in square brackets '[]' and these are the researcher's own translation.

Cultural practices: a potential for the development of the understanding of culture as a relative construct

Example 1 of Cohort 1 shows the Irish participants of Dy8 comparing **the Chinese Qingming Festival to the Irish Halloween** following explanations given by the Chinese participant.

Example 1 (p. 124-126, Appendix W)

C1-CN8: '...我们现在是清明节, 放了三天的假!' [*Now the Chinese Qingming Festival is taking place and we have three days' off*]

C1-IR8: 'I hope you enjoyed 清明节[*Qingming Festival*]: 在爱尔兰我们没有那个节 [*we don't have this festival in Ireland*]. What is it? Is it a festival for Spring? What do people do to celebrate it?'

C1-CN8: 'The 清明节[*Qingming Festival*] isn't a festival for Spring, 我们是回去扫墓, 是去祭拜祖先[*We usually go back our hometowns to clean the graves and to offer sacrifices to ancestors in Qingming Festival*].'

C1-IR8: 'Ah, I see, 清明节[*Qingming Festival*] is a festival for the dead! We also have one of those on October 31st. Most people think it is just Halloween, but a long time ago it was the night that spirits used to come out. On the Catholic calendar, it is 'All Saints Day' on October 31st, where we go to church to pray for the dead.'

Two participants in Example 2 talked about **different teas in China and Ireland**. The Irish participant likes Chinese tea after she/he arrived in China and can also appreciate the flower tea recommended by her/his Chinese partner.

Example 2 (p. 180-182, Appendix X)

C2-IR12: '告诉我, 你喜欢茶吗? 我们学习这个课在我们的书。中过来以后, 我真的喜欢很多的茶!!' [*Tell me if you like tea? I learned about this topic in my textbook, so when I arrived in China, I like tea more and more.*]

C2-CN12: 'I'm happy that you like teas, I'm the one of tea fans. China has the long history of it. For many people, learning tea clow them way [*sic*], but you can make it!'

C2-IR12: ‘Yes, when I go back to Ireland, I'm going to miss all the tea in China, because Ireland has a different kind of tea which I don't like! I think it's called black tea, but I'm not sure!’

C2-CN12: ‘Do you know the flower tea? Sometimes I will buy some to drink, and it is good for our health’

C2-IR12: ‘Yes, I think some of the flower teas are very tasty!’

In the Example 3, although the participants in Dy13 of Cohort 2 agreed that Irish people eat potatoes and Chinese people eat a lot of rice, they found that **Irish people also eat rice**.

Example 3 (p. 56-57, Appendix N)

C2-CN13: ‘我有听说你们那边吃得比较多是土豆，说实话，对于我们整天吃大米的，我真的想不出那会是一种什么样的感觉。’ [*I heard that your people eat a lot of potatoes. To be frank, since I eat rice every day, so it is hard for me to imagine that.*]

C2-IR13: ‘It is true that all Irish people eat potatoes but I also like rice. I eat it everyday here. I now am used to the Chinese food.’

While the examples above belong to declarative culture knowledge and are stereotypical, they facilitate the initial development of an understanding of culture as a relative construct in a very tangible and accessible manner for participants (e.g. festivals, tea and food will be different and of the LC1). However, in no way does this introduction to the LC2 represent procedural knowledge which, presumably, would require longer exposure to and first-hand experience of the culture.

Self-awareness - discovering differences in behaviour

Example 4 comes from Dy1 of Cohort 1, which shows the **difference between the two participants in behaviour toward nightclubbing and holiday times**; they found one hobby in common: swimming.

Example 4 (p. 51-52, Appendix M)

C1-IR1: ‘放假了，你会做社么？你喜欢跟你的朋友一起去夜总会？’ [*it's holiday time now, so what do you do on holiday? Do you like going to the nightclub with your friends?*]

C1-CN1: ‘我不喜欢去夜总会。你是不是经常去夜总会呢？要是放假了，我应该会天天和朋友去游泳因为这里实在是太热了。’ [*I don't like going to nightclub. Do you often go there? If I am on holiday, I swim with my friends every day because it is too hot here.*]

C1-IR1: ‘在爱尔兰最大人很喜欢去夜总会。他们也喜欢和啤酒庆祝[*In Ireland, people would like to go to nightclub. They also like drinking beers to celebrate*]。For fun,

I do go out to night clubs almost every week, I do quite enjoy them. 这是一样在中国吗? 天气很热我也很喜欢去游泳跟我朋友[*Is it the same in China? I would also go swimming with friends in very hot weather*]. ’

Examples 5 and 6 also show participants’ awareness of their different behaviours with regard to **food** (ex.5). In Example 6, even while both participants were in China, they described **different behaviours between them when they get together with friends**.

Example 5 (p. 145, Appendix X)

C2-CN3: ‘你已经在上海两个多月了, 应该和爱尔兰的生活差别挺大的吧, 饮食方面还吃的习惯吗?’ [*You have been in Shanghai for two months. The life here should be quite different from Ireland, right? Are you used to the food here?*]

C2-IR3: ‘My eating habits in Shanghai are much different to when I’m in Ireland, because in Ireland, I can cook my own dinner or my mom will make me a yummy, healthy dinner! But, in Shanghai, I have no kitchen! So I eat a lot of Chinese food in the Canteen or in the restaurants near my campus!’

Example 6 (p. 174-175, Appendix X)

C2-IR9: ‘...I also went to KTV for the first time, a large group of friends and I drank beer and sang songs until 4 am. What kind of activities do you do with your friends?’

C2-CN9: ‘Sometimes we also go to KTV, but I seldom singing all night. We often go to eat, play or shopping. What activities do you have in Ireland?’

Examples 1-4 refer mainly to some facts and features (such as around Qingming and Halloween, different kinds of tea, food, nightclubbing and holiday). As mentioned above, although these cultural facts are the declarative knowledge of culture, they are quite important for partners. These easy-to-discuss topics serve to establish a good relationship and are a basis for future and more complex topics. However, while the e-mail exchanges focused on such topics for the majority, the use of tasks helped to bring the discussion to a deeper level.

Developing awareness - differences in values

In Example 7, the two participants from Dy4 of Cohort 1 discovered that they have a **different work ethic** as according to the Irish participant, Chinese students are perceived to work harder than Irish students. Dy8 of Cohort 1 in Example 8 indicates **different attitudes towards drinking alcohol**.

Example 7 (p. 110-111, Appendix W)

C1-IR4: ‘To be honest, you have very few mistakes. Mainly just spelling mistakes.’

C1-CN4: ‘really? I always think my English is very poor, because my English compositions

never get high marks in exams!:) :)’

C1-IR4: ‘Would I be right in saying that Chinese education standards are very high? This is what I have been told. To pass an exam here, you only need 40%. I have heard that it is around 60% in China. Is this true?’

C1-CN4: ‘我不知道我们国家的标准是不是很高，但我们国家学生的学习压力很大，为了能进入大学，都很努力学习的！’ [*I am not sure if the standard in our country is high, but it is true that the students in China are all under heavy pressure. In order to get into colleges, they all work really hard.*]

C1-IR4: ‘I think Chinese students have a great work ethic. I always see Chinese students in the library studying hard. It is definitely a good routine to get into. It will pay off.’

Example 8 (p. 123-124, Appendix W)

C1-IR8: ‘在中国你们庆祝不庆祝圣帕特里克节？今天晚上我跟我朋友去酒吧喝酒！你喜欢不喜欢喝酒？’ [*In China, do your people celebrate St. Patrick's Day? I will go to the pub with my friends. Do you like drinking or not?*]

C1-CN8: ‘我也喝酒，不过我不敢喝得太多。你知道喝太多对身体不好。我听说你们上周过 ST.PATRICK DAY [sic]，你们是怎么过的，放假放多少天？’ [*I drink too, but I don't drink too much. As you know, drinking is not good for health. I heard it was ST.PATRICK DAY last week in your country. How do you celebrate it and how many days off did you have?*]

C1-IR8: ‘For St. Patrick's Day, 我们有了一天的放假（汉语怎么说？）。我跟我朋友玩儿得很好，但是因为我那天开车，我不能喝酒。 [*we had one-day off. I had fun with my friends on that day. But I couldn't drink as I drove that day.*] Irish people tend to drink too much on St. Patrick's Day, so not being able to drink was unusual! As you say, drinking too much alcohol is very bad for you, 但是爱尔兰人很常喝太多了！ [*but Irish people always get drunk!*]

C1-CN8: ‘你的朋友喝得太多酒，你可以劝他们少喝点嘛！’ [*your friends drink too much! You should persuade them to drink less!*]

Suggestion of willingness to modify behaviour

In Example 9, the Chinese participant expressed her/his willingness or perhaps a personal aspiration to perhaps modify her/his behaviour (**going abroad**). We must also keep in mind that these exchanges are also characterised by a concern for ‘keeping the partner on board’ through polite agreement and even engaging in flattery by expressing admiration for the partner.

Example 9 (p. 48, Appendix M)

C1-IR1: ‘The course I am studying is Commerce with Chinese Studies. I am in my second year of study. Next year I will be going to Shanghai to study in the university for one year and I am very excited to be going there. Are you currently studying in Ireland or in China? What part of China are you from?...’

C1-CN1: ‘You have only study Chinese two years and you said you will come to Shanghai for one year study, I am very admire you, because I have been studying English ten years, I also not dare go to anywhere but China. In fact, I even have not leave

Guangxi. If I have the chance to go aboard, I will very happy to do that. ...'[sic]

Discussion of personal and difficult issues

Examples 10, 11, 12, 13 suggest participants' interest in talking about their personal difficulties and issues, thereby moving the conversation beyond cultural artifacts. Dy8 of Cohort 1 in Example 10 discussed the problem of **finding a girlfriend**, a topic which led to awkwardness in the communication as expressed in the privacy of the diary (See Table 5.3 below). The participants in Example 11 (Dy9 of Cohort 1) discussed **what they do if their teachers are not perceived to be good**. The Chinese student mentions that the situation has to be tolerated while the Irish partner expresses surprise and mentions a procedure for complaining within the university. Participants in Example 12 exchanged their **suggestions on learning language**. Initial differences either related to individual personalities or cultural behaviours emerge between the Chinese and Irish partners, the former expressing anxiety, and low self-esteem in using the L2 - *depressed and ashamed* - while the latter refers to humour as a means of overcoming the difficulty.

Example 10 (p. 122-123, Appendix W)

C1-CN8: '...I don't have a girlfriend now, do you have one now?'

C1-IR8: '...我现在也没有年女朋友。你应该有爱尔兰女朋友,爱尔兰的女孩很漂亮!'.
[I don't have one either. You should find an Irish girlfriend, because they are all very beautiful!]

C1-CN8: '爱尔兰的女孩子真的漂亮吗,呵呵,能不能介绍几个给我认识一下,给她们邮箱我也可以的,我们可以做异国朋友啊! '[Oh, really? Hehe, could you introduce some Irish girls to me? Or give me their e-mails? We may become friends.]

C1-IR8: '我的汉语课有多女孩子,我问她们。但是, [There are a lot girls in my Chinese class. I can ask for you, but] I think a lot of them have pen pals already!...'

Example 11 (p. 133-134, Appendix W)

C1-CN9: '...我想请问一下你爱尔兰学生是否可以自由选择自己喜欢的老师上课? 因为我们遇到了一个很烂的老师,她上课是好像是在炫耀她有多聪明,而又总说我有笨。 [I want to ask you if the Irish students can choose the classes of their favourite teachers. Why I ask this, because we have a very bad teacher who always shows off how smart she is in classes and also says how stupid we are] Unfortunately, however terrible she is, we have to tolerate her. Because she decides our exam score.'

C1-IR9: '然后,你还问我一个关于老师的问题。我们不可以随便选择我们喜欢的老师上课。但是,我们什么时候遇到一个不好的老师,我们什么时候就可以抱怨,而且这个抱怨一定是机密的。所以大部分的时候,老师不会知道是哪个学生批评她。可是,幸运的是我们这个学期没有那种的老师。但是你说你们那边的老师总说你们很笨。。。这个太糟糕了,真不行。真让我大

吃了一惊了。我希望她会改变。’ [*well, on the question about the teacher. We can't choose the teacher we like freely. However, if we meet a terrible teacher, we can complain anonymously. Then the teacher won't know which student did that. And luckily, we don't have this kind of teacher in this semester. But as you said, your teacher always says you are stupid, this is too bad. She mustn't do that! This surprised me a lot! I hope she can change.*]

C1-CN9: ‘你们抱怨又有什么用呢?’ [*but does complaining work?*]

Example 12 (p. 135-137, Appendix W)

C1-CN10: ‘...since I was a english [*sic*] lover and I want to improve my English, I tend to get close to foreigners and I hope to make friends with them.’

C1-IR10: ‘...I'll switch to English now (我的汉语说得不好!) [*my Chinese is not good*]’

C1-CN10: ‘Yes, it's speech contest. Now I am really concerned about it...I really want to improve my oral English as well as the ability to give speech in front others. Can you provide me some suggestions?’

‘学习汉语是一个巨大的工程，这非常需要耐心和激情，我很高兴你对汉语很感兴趣， [*Learning Chinese is not an easy job and needs great patience and passion. I am glad that you are interested in learning Chinese.*] I think you will sustain many challenges and obstacles, but if you make up your mind into it, you will make it and end up with a big success Of course, I will do whatever to help you. so, don't hesitate to ask for help because you (would) give me a helping hand if I was trapped in a similar situation, I think.’

C1-IR10: ‘I hope I'm not too late to help with your speech contest. The best advice I can give is to talk to English speakers. That way, you'll be able to hear the correct pronunciations, and they will be able to correct any mistakes you make. 如果你不能说一说跟英国人，你就可以看英语电影字幕，或者英语电视节目字幕。你应该英语说得不太快。你应该念着学习英语单词。你也应该学习语法比词汇太多了。 [*If you don't have the chance to talk with English speakers, you can also read the subtitles of English movies or English TV programmes. You can read the words after it. Besides, you should focus more on grammar than vocabulary.*] It is better to say simple sentences well than complicated ones badly.’

C1-CN10: ‘Thank you, I really appreciate it for your advice. Actually, I've learnt grammar during middle school, now what perplex me is that I haven't stored enough words and phrases in my glossary. What's more, I think oral English is so poor that I lack of confidence in communication with others. Once I tried to talk with foreigners to improve my oral English, but sometimes I tended to get into a [*sic*] awkward situation, which made me depressed and ashamed. Whereas, I still have the dream of speaking fluent English. So, I joined the English Fans' Association. Every Friday evening, I pushed myself into chatting with other English lovers in English, but I didn't find that I have improved myself to a higher level, now I am a little anxious about it, What should I do now?’

C1-IR10: ‘Don't be embarrassed at not being able to speak English very well! I know exactly what you mean when you're talking about awkward situations! I've always found that it helps if you are with a friend when speaking with foreigners, because you can help each other out. 今年我跟我同学有一个中国朋友。他英语说得很好，可是我们汉语说得很糟糕！他帮助我们说汉语，写汉字。 [*we have one Chinese friend who speaks very good English. Because our Chinese*’

is bad, so he helps us to speak and write Chinese.] When things got awkward, me and my friend would laugh at each other and make a joke of it. As we got to know our Chinese friend better, things gradually got less awkward. 现在我们都是好朋友! [*Now we are best friends*] ‘你放心吧! [*Don't worry!*] Remember that it takes years to speak a language fluently; you just have to keep practicing and practicing and you'll gradually get better and better! You should definitely keep going to the English Fan's Association. It sounds very useful!’

In Example 13, both participants mentioned their **personal issues**. The Irish participant mentioned that she/he missed home and family and the Chinese participant said her/his parents' expectations were too high in respect of her/his academic success. However, there appeared to be an unwillingness to address both issues on the part of both partners.

Example 13 (p. 142-144, Appendix X)

C2-IR2: ‘I love China so far but I am missing home and my family. China is so different to Ireland and it is a beautiful country.’

C2-CN2: ‘I think Ireland must be a wonderful place, ...About my country, I think the history of China is interesting, ...’

C2-IR2: ‘Yes Ireland is beautiful. However the weather is not good in Ireland, it always rains! I think the Chinese history is very interesting. ...’

C2-CN2: ‘Recently, many things happened around me, some make me happy, some almost make me crazy, but I still find something worth to effort. and what I do are getting my life meaningful, I like this feeling.’

C2-CN2: ‘the only thing I do not like is that my family always talk about my examination marks. They want me to get high marks in my major courses, but U know I hate my major courses. I just want to learn something I like, because I am a real person, I have my own thought, my own dream.’

In addition to the above categories, additional examples indicate how the participants dealt with disagreement, found commonalities and dealt with misunderstandings during e-mail interactions.

Dealing with disagreement

In Example 14, the Chinese participant introduced a **local dish** from her/his hometown. However, the Irish participant stated that she/he does not like Chinese food and also introduced her/his **favourite food** to her Chinese tandem partner. Finally, they realised that this kind of western food is very expensive in China. The exchange also shows that before expressing disagreement, the Irish partner made a positive remark (the beautiful picture). Similarly, the Chinese participant appears to be anxious to find a positive outcome to the exchange by showing concern for the Irish participant (‘can you eat your favorite [*sic*] food in Shanghai?’)

Example 14 (p. 149-150, Appendix X)

- C2-CN4:** 'Nanning snacks have a long history and have various kinds. I want to let you know Laoyoufen/老友粉。I like acid、peppery. Laoyou include all of this. There are many things in it. Tomato, vegetable, acid bamboo, port, peppery, special bean. So I like it very much. Every time I go home that I will eat it. 你喜不喜欢这些食材?' [*Do you like these food materials?*]
- C2-IR4:** '我很喜欢你的照片给我。那宁很漂亮和这个中国菜看来很好吃。但是我不喜欢中国菜，大菜不同和我很喜欢。 [*I like the picture you sent me very much. Nanning looks very beautiful and the dishes look delicious. But I don't like Chinese food.*]...Chinese food is very different to Irish food - I sent you a picture of what I like to have for dinner, it is called bacon and cabbage. Its [*sic*] very delicious and one of my favorite meals.'
- C2-CN4:** 'Can you eat your favorite [*sic*] food in shanghai?'
- C2-IR4:** '不是，我不能吃我的最好吃饭在上海，因为在市中心大菜贵及了，故而我不能吃这种菜。' [*No, it doesn't mean I can't find my favourite food in Shanghai. It is because it is too expensive in the city centre, so I couldn't eat them.*]

Example 15 below shows how the two participants communicated their **different opinions on the singer (Taylor Swift)**. After the American participant had mentioned her/his dislike of this singer, the Chinese student turned to discuss Korean music which both of them are interested in.

Example 15 (p. 193-194, Appendix Y)

- C3-CN3:** 'I like listening to the music, I am good at singing, I am usually go to sing songs with my friends. My favorite music star is Taylor swift. Do you have admired someone?'
- C3-US3:** '... I don't particularly like Taylor Swift, but I have been told that I look like her. 我喜欢韩国的音乐和中国的音乐! [*I like Korean music and Chinese music.*] Do you maybe like any Korean bands?'
- C3-CN3:** '... You look like Taylor and you must be a pretty girl. I listen to the Korean's music too, I like 少女时代 [*wonder girls*], they are not only good at singing but also good dancers. ...'

While Examples 14 and 15 are superficial expressions of disagreement, they are nevertheless handled with consideration by the partners who attempt to find a positive outcome to the discussion, possibly as a strategy for future exchanges. Overt disagreement tended to be expressed in the diaries (e.g. C1-IR8 of Table 5.3, p. 183).

Finding commonalities

Examples 16, 17 and 18 taken from Cohort 2 show how the participants **worked to find commonalities and concurrence between each other**. The main strategy used by the participants in order to find shared interests takes the form of questions. In Dy5, Example

16, the Irish partner noticed that her/his Chinese partner liked singing; this led to a conversation where **songs** were discussed and agreement was reached on the benefit of listening to western songs **to learn English**. 3 questions out of 11 sentences were formulated.

Example 16 (p. 154-157, Appendix X)

- C2-IR5:** ‘你也说– 你喜欢唱歌。你觉得，中国歌比英国歌好吗？我很喜欢听音乐，但是我不能会唱歌！你能不能完一个乐器？’ [*You also said that you like singing. Do you think Chinese songs are better than English ones? I like listening to music, but I can't sing. Do you play any musical instrument?*]
- C2-CN5:** ‘Perhaps I have listened more our country songs, I prefer to listening to foreign songs, it not only we can relax ourselves, but also can we study English. I can play the guitar, but not very well, I can play the songs named "Angel wings", "Lonely". Singing songs is so happy, I think you can learn to it.’
- C2-IR5:** ‘I think you are right, listening to Western music is a great way for you to learn English! Which singers do you like the most?’
- C2-CN5:** ‘I like Western music. Ah, I think gentle music will fit to me. such as We Are the world, God is a Girl, You are always on my mind and so on. Those (are) so great.’

Dy7 in Example 17 found two things in common; **music** and **eating jiaozi**. The communication is driven by questions, 10 out of a total of 22 sentences.

Example 17 (p. 166-167, Appendix X)

- C2-CN7:** ‘I major in Software Engineering. And you? Do you like Chinese food? 你来到中国习惯么？你有什么爱好？’ [*Are you used to China? What hobbies do you have?*]
- C2-IR7:** ‘我的专业是汉语和商业。你喜欢你的大学吗？是什么大吗？我喜欢中国的食物，我特别喜欢饺子。你喜欢西餐吗？’ [*I study Chinese Language and Business. Do you like your university? Is it big? I like Chinese food, especially Jiaozi. Do you like western food?*] I am now quite used to living in China and enjoy it very much. My hobbies are drawing, playing the piano and going out with my friends. What are your hobbies? Do you play an instrument?’
- C2-CN7:** ‘I haven't eaten Western-style food. I heard that roast beef is delicious.！我喜欢在安静时听音乐，因为我可以安静的思考问题并且放松心情，我也喜欢乐器，譬如钢琴，二胡，架子鼓。但是我都没有接触它们，你有自己的钢琴吗？你一定弹得很好吧！我也喜欢吃饺子，特别喜欢吃油炸的饺子…。’ [*I like listening to music quietly, because I can think and relax. I like musical instrument, such as piano, erhu, and drums. But I don't play them. Do you have your own piano? You must play very well. I like jiaozi too, especially fried one.*]

After talking about the purpose of holding a part-time job, Dy8 in Example 18 said they seemed to have something in common: their **dreams for the future**. There are fewer questions than in Example 17 (3/10 sentences); however, their objective is to reveal more

personal information.

Example 18 (p. 167-168, Appendix X)

- C2-CN8:** 'Do you like travelling? Last week I went to Guilin where is very beautiful,...I Have two jobs, I can make money now, but sometimes I feel tired and want to give up. In order to travel to many places I have to persist ...What about you? what's your dream and do you like China?'
- C2-IR8:** '我也很喜欢去旅行和我计划去泰国。你有没有去 [*I like travelling very much and I plan to visit Thailand. Have you been there?*]...I find it very interesting that you have two jobs. Try not to tire yourself out, ...We seem to have something in common. I also have some dreams. When I finish college I hope to live and work in London or New York.'

Dealing with misunderstandings

The following examples from Cohort 2 indicate how the participants dealt with **misunderstandings**. Example 19 shows a misunderstanding on the Irish participant's part which led the Chinese participant to share **a personal story about basketball** as way of ensuring that that the conversation would not end as a result of this misunderstanding.

Example 19 (p. 154-155, Appendix X)

- C2-CN5:** '...My course is Computer science and Technology. I like playing badminton, tennis, and singing. And you?'
- C2-IR5:** '你的专业听起来很有意思，但是我不知道很多有关电脑的！你说-你喜欢打篮球。我也对打篮球非常感兴趣。' [*Your major sounds interesting, but I am not good at computer. You said you like playing basketball, so do I.*]
- C2-CN5:** 'I didn't say I can play basketball, and instead, playing badminton. Actually, I had interested in playing basketball, but the dream that I want to learn to play basketball was destroyed by my teacher in primary....So, now, I'm hardly playing basketball, and haven't join the club.'

The exchange in Example 20, suggests a willingness to **minimize the effects of a pressurised situation** by referring to **the limitations associated with L2 use** and/or different worldviews and perceptions due to different cultural contexts.

Example 20 (p. 155-156, Appendix X)

- C2-CN5:** 'I'm so busy this week. especially three days before, I need to write the code that the teacher arranged. And tell classmates somethings that the teacher told me, and so on. Even though I have try my best to do that, but I forget something that happen just now easy, so my teacher scold [*sic*] me because of I forgot hand in the registration form about the Chinese spoken test. This my error on the work! and I have little sad.'
- C2-IR5:** '听起来这星期你很忙！ [*You seem to be very busy this week!*] Your college work sounds very complicated. Did you finish all the work that you needed to do for

your teacher, and for your work with the student's union?’

C2-CN5: ‘我们学校其实也没那么复杂的，应该是我表达得不好，或者是思维方面的差异，使你产生了错觉！呵呵！’ [*Actually, it is not so complicated as you thought. Maybe my expressions are not right or maybe we have different thinking, which make you think wrong. Hehe!*]

Example 21 discusses **an Irish tradition in a movie called ‘Leap Year’**. The Irish participant cleared the misunderstanding and the Chinese participant changed her/his original idea. There is also an effort on the Chinese participant’s part to acknowledge different points of view. The Irish participant also displays a willingness to share more information about her/his culture.

Example 21 (p. 172-173, Appendix X)

C2-CN9: ‘Recently I watched a movie called " Leap year ". In this movie, they said: In Ireland, there's this tradition: that in a leap year, a woman can propose to a man on February 29th, one day every four years. Is it true? This tradition is so fascinating. And whether it continues into the present?’

C2-IR9: ‘I've also seen the film "Leap year" and thought it was quite funny. Yes, the tradition of a woman being able to propose to a man on February 29th is true, however it is very uncommon in Ireland nowadays. From what I can remember of that film it did not reflect what modern day Ireland is like, as the film was written by an American director. It made Ireland look much more rural and old fashioned than it actually is.’

C2-CN9: ‘我很赞同你对“Leap Year”这部电影的看法，从不同的角度看爱尔兰，对它做出的评价也就不同，能了解到那么多爱尔兰的事情我很兴奋！我对一些地方的独特的风俗很感兴趣，我也越来越喜欢你们国家了。’ [*I quite agree with your views of the movie ‘Leap Year’. People will make different comments on Ireland if they think from different perspectives. I am very excited to learn so much about Ireland. I am also interested in special customs of different places. I think I like Ireland more and more.*]

C2-IR9: ‘我很高兴你觉得爱尔兰风俗有趣。如果你喜欢提高你的爱尔兰了解风俗你应该检查：<http://www.tg4.ie/> TG4 是一个爱尔兰电视播放。’ [*I am glad that you find Irish customs interesting. If you like to know more about it, you should check this website: <http://www.tg4.ie/>. TG4 is the Irish TV channel.*]

In Example 22, the two participants discussed their **high school life**. After comparing and explaining what kind of life they had in high school, they finally understood each other and reached a conclusion about the differences between Chinese and American high school life: Chinese students experience much more pressure than American students in high school; the high school students in China tend to focus on study on a daily basis while the students in America know studies are important, but also spending time with friends is part of their daily lives. The American partner’s response is very detailed; both

partners were eager to check one another's comprehension and sought or provided confirmation at the end of the exchange that they had understood correctly. The American partner was also concerned with stereotyping derived from American movies, namely that students in America do not experience pressure.

Example 22 (p. 33-37, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘你们的高中生活是不是像在电影里看到的那样丰富，是不是经常有 party，每天都有很多活动，在中国，高中生活基本就是“三点一线”地读书，宿舍，食堂，教室，我们十年寒窗苦读都是为了高考，因为我们考大学的压力很大。’ [*Is high school life as colorful as we see in the movies? Do your students often hold parties and have a lot of activities? In China, our high school students just have three things: reading in classroom-dormitory-cafeterias. For ten years we study very hard for college entrance examination, because of the heavy pressure.*]

C2-US10: ‘You are correct; my high school life was not like what you see in the movies. We had high school football games (美式足球), prom, and things like this that you probably have seen in the movies. However, my school was very small. So what you have seen in the movies doesn't reflect what my high school life was like. Our graduating class had about 120 students. That was considered to be a lot of students for our school, but compared to other schools it's very small. You said that in high school here students have three things: reading, dormitories/cafeterias, and classroom. In the U.S. it's not the same. It's often said in the U.S. “the high school years are the best years of your life.” For students in the U.S. high school is a time for growth and development. Studies are important, but also hanging out with friends is part of growing. Many students participate in clubs and activities. For my high school many students were in band, drama club, Ag. (Agriculture), etc. We learn so much personally and academically during this period of time.我觉得你们的想法很好，可是做法不好。如果你每天就学习，生活过得开心吗？’ [*I think your idea is good, but I don't agree with what you do. If you study every day, are you happy?*]
‘其实，我很好奇，好像中国学生的压力比美国学生更大。比如你告诉我你得好好地学英文因为需要考 CET 4/CET 6，而且中国学生需要考高考。如果考砸了，得等一年，然后可以再考。在美国学生也有压力。[*In fact, I also want to know why the Chinese student has greater pressure than American students, for example, you tell me you should work hard on English for the CET4/6. Besides, when students fail in the college entrance exam, they have to wait for a year to take it again. However, the American students also have some pressure.*] For example, when I was in high school I had to take a test called the ACT (American College Testing). I had to pay \$50 (315 元 [yuan]) to take this test. The test had 5 sections: Science, Math, Reading, English Grammar, and Writing. All the questions were multiple choice. However, each section was timed. So you only had about 35 minutes to complete each section. ... So there is some pressure to do your best to get the score you want. In a span of 5 months I took the text 3 times. On the 3rd attempt I got my desired score. So, after taking this exam the only pressure I had was to find out if I was accepted into my college. So to me I think the pressure to get into college for Chinese students is so much greater

than it is for students in the U.S. because students in China only have one attempt at the college entrance exam, right? 你觉得我的声明准确吗? ' [Do you think I am right?]

C2-CN10: 'You said that students in China have more pressure than America, yes you are right, so Chinese students have few activities, studies are the most important things for them, nobody wants to wait another year, and a prom is nearly impossible for a high school to hold.'

5.2.1.2 Task Discussion

The data from participants' task discussions via e-mail exchanges (as opposed to forum entries - see Section 5.2.1.3 below) suggests 7 categories: (a) understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2; (b) evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2; (c) comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2; (d) comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2; (e) speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2; (f) interest in [L]C1/[L]C2; (g) discussion on clash of opinions. Thus, in this section, data from participants' discussions on Tasks 1 and 2 are analysed according to the above 7 categories.

Task 1 - word associations

In order to see how the participants' negotiation and understanding of their partners' views on the most popular six words (*individualism, America, alcohol, fun, money, China*), the following section presents the conversations of the dyads under the same topic (e.g. all the dyads who chose to discuss *individualism*). Each sentence in the proposed extracts is preceded by a number and underlined according to its relevance to one or more of the seven categories. The relationship between sentence and category is then reported immediately below each conversation.

Word association: Individualism (Extracts 1-5)

5 dyads (Dy8 of Cohort 1, Dy9 of Cohort 2, Dy4 of Cohort 2, Dy3 of Cohort 3 and Dy6 of Cohort 3) communicated their views on the responses to *individualism*.

Extract 1 (p. 131-132, Appendix W)

C1-CN8: 'and the individualism, you have thought the meaning freedom, creative.' '在我们这里的人想到的更多会是个个人主义。你们那里的人大多数想到的会是你一样吗? [(1)Most of our people regard it as egotism.(2)Do your people see it as the same?] I haven't thought that, so (3)I wonder how do you thought of them, and so on. From the difference between us, (4)it maybe due to our different culture I think.'

C1-IR8: '(5)I think Westerners and Chinese are equally individual. (6)For me, if one is

creative then one must be an individual, 但是可是在中国这个不对. [(7)but it seems to be a different story in China] ’

This conversation in Extract 1 is taken from Cohort 1 between the Chinese and Irish participants in Dy8. Their comments can be categorised as: (1) (6) - understanding of [L]C1; (2) (3) - interest in [L]C2; (5) - comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2; (4) (7) - speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2.

Extract 2 (p. 173, Appendix X)

C2-CN9: ‘(1)when you watch "Individualism", you'd think about "reading" and "studying", but when I watch "Individualism" I'm think about "selfish, arrogant", because (2)I don't consider it is a word that have good meaning.’

C2-IR9: ‘(3)As for individualism I took the meaning to describe a person as independent. (4)This does not imply that a person is arrogant or selfish, rather that a person can work productively on their own and does not always need the support of other people.’

In this extract, the Chinese participant used English to express her/his view which was understood by her/his Irish tandem partner. Here, sentences (1) and (4) are categorised as a comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2; (2) is understood as discussion on a clash of opinions; and (3) is categorised as understanding of [L]C1.

Extract 3 (p. 151-152, Appendix X)

C2-IR4: ‘(1)(Individualism means) Who you want to be. Unique.’

C2-CN4: ‘(As to) Individualism 我想成为一个很有能力的人，不是在一个团体孤立的人，我工作以后肯定会和别人合作的，所以不能有个人主义。[(2)I want to be a very capable person, not be lonely in a group. I will cooperate with others in the future work, so I don't need individualism.]’

There are two comments marked in Extract 3, sentence (1) is categorised as understanding of [L]C1 and sentence (2) represents an expression of [L]C1 values as well as a discussion on a clash of opinions.

Extract 4 (p. 194-195, Appendix Y)

C3-US3: ‘I'm sorry about my late response. Here is my word association too. ...In your association, (1)Why did you think of ‘自私’ [selfishness] with 'individualism'?’

C3-CN3: ‘(2)In my opinion, 'individualism' means somebody do what he want to do, ignoring other' feelings, isn't (it) a selfish behaviour? (3)My question: why you put "Introverted" after "individualism"?’

In Extract 4, the American participant asked his Chinese partner to explain his answers. After giving his explanation, the Chinese participant also proposed a new question. Sentences (1) (3) are categorised as interest in [L]C2 and sentence (2) is the evaluation of [L]C2.

Extract 5 (p. 200-202, Appendix Y)

C3-CN6: ‘My word associations are as follows: ...3. Individualism (个人主义): 以自我为中心, 自私自利, 独到的想法 [*individualism: self-centered, selfishness, unique thought*]’

C3-US6: ‘(here is my answers) 3. Individualism (个人主义): express yourself, make true friends, new ideas, excitement.’

C3-US6: ‘I realized I forgot to add my thoughts about your answers to the word association. (1)Your responses to individualism (个人主义) seemed negative!’

C3-CN6: ‘(2)I’m so sorry that I confused the individualism and egoism.(3)It is a symbol of freedom, and it is the opposite of collectivism.’

Extract 5 shows the dialogue of Dy6 in Cohort 3. The Chinese participant here changed her/his understanding of individualism. The three sentences here are categorised as: speculation about[L]C2 - (1); understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2) (3).

Word association: America (Extracts 6 and 7)

‘America’ is discussed by 5 dyads. Two dyads discussed the word in considerable detail (see Extracts 6 and 7).

Extract 6 (p. 34-37, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘Saying the United States, you naturally think of home, “身在异乡为异客” [*A lonely stranger in a strange place*], it is natural, you must miss your home so much, especially in [*sic*] Thanksgiving day, “每逢佳节倍思亲”啊 [*I miss my family all the more on every festive day*]. You mention about freedom, 我了解到美国人都是自由主义者吧 [*(1)I guess that Americans are all liberals*], ...I associate (‘America’ with) the statue of liberty. what is more, we both think of president Obama,常常出现在新闻的首页, 我们中国人也很难不知道, 是吧 [*who often appears on the newspaper, so our Chinese also know him, right?*]’. ‘一想到美国, 还会联想到 Hollywood, 众多的明星, 想 Michal 那样的舞王, 想到 party, 想到电影中的美国人都很 open, 相对来说中国人会不会显得拘谨呢, 有时候还很害羞, 特别是女性, 中国女性以矜持为德, 不宜过于奔放, 在古代更为明显, 这也是典型的中国人性格吧, 不过现在, 各国文化相冲击, 也许也不太明显了, 呵呵, you see?’ [*when it comes to America, I will also associate it with Hollywood and many famous stars, such as king dancer Michael Jackson. (2)I also think that the Americans in films are very open. However, Chinese people seem to be stiff. (3)Sometimes they are very shy, especially women. Chinese women value having a reserved manner rather than being too open, which is more obvious in ancient time. This is also a typical Chinese*’

character. But nowadays, influenced by different cultures, this may not be the same as before.]

C2-US10: '(4)I think you are right. Many Americans are very open. We speak our minds and are not afraid to protest against things we don't believe in. However, (5)I don't feel like Chinese people are stiff at all. Japanese people are very stiff. Actually I think they are way too formal sometimes. I do think you are right about the differences between the women in the U.S. and China. (6)From what I've observed the women here seem very conservative while many women in the U.S. are very open. Also (7)I think relationships between men and women are drastically different between our two countries.'

In Extract 6, the Chinese participant first compared her/his associations with her/his partner's and presumed that Americans value freedom, which is speculation about [L]C2: sentence (1); sentences (3) and (4) belong to understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 as both participants were talking about their understanding of the people or women in their cultures; comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2 can be found in sentences (2) (6) (7); and sentence (5) is a discussion on a clash of opinions.

Extract 7 (p. 192-193, Appendix Y)

C3-CN2: '对于 America (美国) - Fast Food, Hard Rock and Old Jeans. 我不是很了解 [I don't quite understand]. (1)Can you tell me about it? I want to know more about you culture. Especially for the latter two, I believe that it would be very interesting'

C3-US2: '(2)My culture is always changing. (3)In my town, they eat at MC Donald's often but I don't because it is bad for my health. Many people come from the south, so they are very old-fashioned, also Rock 'n Roll and old jeans are very popular.'

C3-CN2: '你好, 听你说了之后, 我对你们的文化有所新了解, 我这个人非常喜欢吃零食, 也非常喜欢摇滚音乐 [Hi, (4)After reading your words, I think I learned something about your culture. (5)I personally like snacks and also like rock music very much]. I hope to you the feelings of rock a day atmosphere. I think exercise for an hour every day the body will become more and more healthy. So I did not pay attention to food (means: *I do not care about food*). I am not picky eaters.'

C3-US2: 'when it comes to America, believe it or not, nothing here interests me at all. Not that i hate it here but i usually think about leaving. (6)I'm very much interested in ancient China and Japan so most of the things I love are in ether country.'

C3-CN2: '在我看来, 美国是个非常向往的地方, 那里有许多令我想去了解的, 比如 NBA, 教育等等。但是我更喜欢中国, 因为中华文化上下五千年, 还有许多文化等我去了解, 我觉得学习中文比较难, 因为中国文字文化博大精深, 需要你用时间去投入才能有所了解。' [(7)In my opinion, America is the country people are looking forward to and there are more things of America I want to learn about, such as NBA, education, etc. (8)But I like China better, because of its 5 thousand years' history and culture. (9)I think it's difficult to study Chinese, because Chinese character and culture are broad and profound and it takes time for you to learn about them.]

In Extract 7, two participants from Dy2 of Cohort 3 discussed America and China. Both participants showed their interest in [L]C2: sentences (1) and (6); the American partner answered the Chinese partner's question by giving evaluation and understanding of her own culture - [L]C1: sentences (2) and (3); after her/his partner's explanation, the Chinese participant indicates her/his understanding of [L]C2: sentence (4) and tried to relate it to her/his own situation - sentence (5); the last 3 sentences - (7), (8) and (9) belong to the Chinese evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 as the Chinese participant indicates his opinion and attitude towards America, China and leaning Chinese.

Word association: Alcohol (Extracts 8-10)

The following Extracts 8-10, are conversations between 3 dyads who discussed associations with the word 'Alcohol'.

Extract 8 (p. 34-36, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: 'You associate it with whiskey, parties and bar, it is undifficult for me to understand, (1)whiskey is a kind of liquor which is popular with Americans, and Americans like parties, and night life, right? They are iconic, I guess so. ..., in China, 大部分生意都是酒桌上谈成的 [(2)in China, most of the business should be done while drinking], merchants are good at drinking. (3)saying about the big dinner party (in China), it is about drinking, dinner party is a drinking party. 中国人还有不醉不归的说法, 喝酒就要尽兴, 伟大的诗仙李白还是个酒鬼, 素有“李白斗酒诗百篇”的说法。男人喝酒还会猜码以添乐趣, 而每个地方的码又有所不同。中国有国酒, 像茅台, 五粮液, but they are expensive, so are wiskeys? '[there is a saying in China 'We must drink until we are thoroughly drunk!'. We should enjoy drinking. A famous poetic genius, called Libai, is a drunkard. It is said that Libai can't produce 100 poems until he drinks. (4)A Chinese man likes to play some games for fun after drinking. But people from different places play different games. (5)Typical Chinese wines are Maotai, Wu liangye. but they are expensive. (6)How about Whiskeys?]

C2-US10: '... (7)In reality do many business men drink like this so they can make deals with other companies? Oh, and (8)a good brand of whiskey is rather expensive in the U.S. However, there are cheaper brands.'

Comments in Extract 8 can be categorised as: speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2 - (1) (7); understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2) (3) (4) (5) (8); interest in [L]C2 - (6). The Chinese partner did not answer the US partner's question in sentence (7).

Extract 9 (p. 151-152, Appendix X)

C2-IR4: '(I associate alcohol with) (1)Socialising and fun with friends. (2) (but) Can be very influential - bad. Expensive.'

C2-CN4: '我也认为酒是一种与陌生人沟通的好东西, 特别是在生意上。喝醉酒是

一件很难受的事也是一件很危险的事，特别是酒后驾车。’ [(3)I agree that alcohol is a good thing for communicating with strangers, especially in doing business. (4)But getting drunk is very uncomfortable and dangerous, especially for driving]

Comments in Extract 9 can be categorised as: understanding of [L]C1 - (1); comparison between similarities of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (3); evaluation of [L]C1 - (2) (4).

Extract 10 (p. 202-205, Appendix Y)

C3-CN6: ““one drink too many”是一首歌？歌词是什么？中文意思是什么？” [(1)Is it a song? What are the lyrics? What does it mean in Chinese?]

C3-US6: ““(2)One drink too many" is a saying frequently used when a person wakes up with a hangover or made a fool of himself the night before. It is also a song from the 1970s. If you can get on YouTube in China, here is a link to the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IIF66fa-fY>”

C3-CN6: “但是“one drink too many”意思一个人喝的太多，是用来形容一个人的刚醒的醉态或者形容自己在自欺欺人？” [but it means a person drinks too much, which means (3)when a person wakes up with a hangover or made a fool of himself the night before?]

C3-US6: ‘Yes, I see you understand the meanings of "one drink too many."’

In Extract 10, Dy6 of the third cohort exchanged their views on the same topic more than twice in order to gain meaning. Their comments can be categorised as: interest in [L]C2 - (1); understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2) (3). The last comment from the American participant indicates mutual engagement and clarifying a potential misunderstanding.

Word association: Money (Extracts 11-15)

Money is also a popular topic. There are 5 Dyads who made comments on it.

Extract 11 (p. 33-36, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘some says, 钱是万恶之源，这太过偏激 [(1)Money is the root of all evil, it is too extreme], in China, 中国的国情是两级分化 [(2)polarization is common], it is a big gap between the eastern part and the western part, the western part is still poor, while the eastern part is developing at a top speed, many people struggle to the hunger, many children cannot go to school because they can not afford the tuition, many people can not afford the high medical fee 却也有人每天大鱼大肉，开豪车，住豪房，把钱用在了灯红酒绿的享乐中，奢侈的现象另人咋舌，包括外国人也不敢恭维 [(3)However, some people drive luxury cars and live in big house. They spend money in all luxurious things, (4)which astonishes others, even foreigners cannot understand], all the time, (5)This phenomenon cause many domestic and foreign people's comment.’

C2-US10: ‘我们有一个说：“富人越来越富，穷人越来越穷。[One people say “The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer”]” (6)In the United States there is a large gap between the upper class and middle/poor class. In the 90's there

was this comedian named George Carlin who had a joke about the economic and social class of the United States. He said "What do I think about the economic and social class of this country? The upper class keeps all of the money, pays none of the taxes. The middle class pays all the taxes, does all of the work. The poor people are there...just to scare the shit out of the middle class. Keep 'em showing up at those jobs." (7)This is still a problem in the U.S. today. 我觉得我们的生活用金钱统治。如果你有钱，你有权力，但如果你没有钱，你就是一个小虫 [(8)*I think our lives are ruled by money. If you have money, you get power. But if you don't have, you are nothing*]. So many people in the world cannot afford the things they need for living. So many people are living in poverty. 真难过 [*I feel very sad*].

These participants' discourse in Extract 11 can be categorised into: understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2) (3) (6); evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (1) (4) (5) (7) (8). Interestingly, the American participant here also gave her/his partner her/his perspective on the topic in question by sharing an LC1 joke about the economic and social classes of the United States.

Extract 12 (p. 157-158, Appendix X)

- C2-CN5:** '在我心中，“钱”一直扮演着很邪恶的角色，因为我们中国的很多电视剧，上演的都是因为钱而造成了一场场悲剧的场景，而那些始作俑者都是“金钱主义”的，这样的长期熏陶，使得我不得不有这样的想法；当然，我也知道“钱不是万能的，但是没有钱是万万不能的”，有了钱，我们可以去很多地方旅游还有帮助一些贫困的人。' [(1)*In my mind, money always plays an evil role because (2)in the TV series of China there are a lot tragedies caused by money. The root of all these is money. That's why I have such an idea. However, I also know that "Money is not everything, but without money you can do nothing". If we have money, we can travel everywhere and help poor people.*]
- C2-IR5:** '你的电子邮件很有意思的。你谈到金钱的罪恶。这是一门在大学里，我真的很感兴趣，我是学一点点的经济，特别是中国经济在，所以我知道一点点吧。我很想听到关于这一点，虽然你认为什么！' [*Your e-mail is very interesting. You mentioned the sin of money, which is one of the courses I am interested in. I study economics in university, especially Chinese economy, so I knew something about it. (3)I would like to hear more about it, although you feel money is evil.*]

Comments in Extract 12 can be categorised as: evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (1); understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2); interest in [L]C2 - (3).

Extract 13 (p. 151-152, Appendix X)

- C2-IR4:** 'Money (钱) (makes) Student life (struggle). (It also makes people) Greed – does money really lead to happiness? (1)(It)Determines a lot of things.'
- C2-CN4:** '中国有句老话：钱不是万能的，但是没有钱是万万不能的；钱并不能决定快乐，快乐可以从很多方面获得，但是，钱可以决定我们以后的生活水

平。’ [There is a Chinese saying: “Money is not everything, but without money you can do nothing”. (2)Money is not the only thing to make one happy. We can be happy for a lot of things. But money can determine our living standard.]

Participants’ comments (1) and (2) in Extract 13 are participants’ evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2. The Chinese partner also shared a saying/proverb, conveying the cultural value attached to the word ‘money’.

Extract 14 (p. 173, Appendix X)

C2-CN9: ‘In your questionnaire, (1)you mean when you see "money", you would think about "China"?’

C2-IR9: ‘The reason I said China made me think about money is because (2)I believe there is lots of money to be made from working in China.’

In this short Extract 14, the Chinese participant showed the interest in [L]C2 - (1) and the Irish partner told the Chinese participant her/his understanding of [L]C2 - (2).

Extract 15 (p. 195, Appendix Y)

C3-US3: ‘In your association, you put something after ‘钱’ [*money*] and it meant ‘capacity wealth’. (1)What does 'capacity wealth' mean?’

C3-CN3: ‘I put "ability, job and wealth" after the (word)money, but it does not mean capacity wealth, i wanted to convey money is one of the capacity.’

In Extract 15, the American participant showed interest in [L]C2 - (1) and asked her/his Chinese partner to explain. Although there are many grammar errors in the response, one understood that if one can earn money, one will have more ability to have a better life.

Word association: China (Extracts 16 and 17)

Extracts 16 and 17 are discussions on the word ‘China’.

Extract 16 (p. 34-37, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘你说的 Feng shui 是“风水”吗，中国人确实很讲究风水，特别是买房子的时候，风水不好会影响运气的，你可以信也可以不信 [What you mentioned Feng shui is our Chinese Fengshui? (1)Chinese people do believe in Feng shui, especially when they buy houses. It is said that Fengshui can influence one’s luck and of course, it’s up to you for believing or not]. 而孔子 (2)[As for Confucius], he is a pride of us, 中国人奉他为圣人，在国外还有孔子庙 [(3)he is regarded as a saint in China. (4)There are also Confucian temples in foreign countries], (5)his thoughts has a far influence on us. 《论语》不知你可曾听说，那本书有助于修身养性[Have you heard about the book “Lunyu” which is good for self-cultivation], (6)it makes a person benefits a lot.’

‘你想到了书法，这是中国的国粹，中国书法有悠久的历史，有各种各样的书法，行书，隶书，楷书，草书等等，美中抒发都有各自的代表人物，古代

书法加油王羲之等等，中国的文字也历经几千年了，也许有一天你会看到日本（Japan）的文字和中文有些相似，…中国是四大文明古国之一，它 5000 的历史，你有兴趣可以一读。’ [*You also associated calligraphy with China, (7)which is typical Chinese culture. (8)Calligraphy has a very long history in China and there are various kinds of calligraphy, such as Xingshu, Lishu, Kaishu, Caoshu and so on. Wang xizhi is one of the representatives of the ancient calligraphers. (9)Chinese character also has a history more than thousands of years. (10)Maybe you will see there is some similarities between Chinese characters and Japanese ones. (11)China is an ancient civilization with more than five thousand years of history. If you are interested in it, you can read more about it.*]

C2-US10: ‘对，我的 FENGSHUI 是风水[*yes, what I refer to is FENGSHUI*]. (12)Some people in the U.S. also believe in feng shui. Former President Bill Clinton believed in feng shui. So he had a feng shui master re arrange the Oval Office in the White House so he would have good qi. (13)His name was Pun-Yin. Have you heard of him?’

In Extract 16, the Chinese participant commented on three words (‘Feng shui’, ‘Confucius’ and ‘Calligraphy’) which were associated with China by the American partner. Their discourses can be categorised as: understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (1) (3) (4) (8) (9) (11); evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2) (5) (6) (7); speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2 - (10); comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2: (12); interest in [L]C2 - (13).

Extract 17 (p. 173-174, Appendix X)

C2-CN9: ‘when you see "China", it reminds you "government", (1)what view do you have of Chinese government?’

C2-IR9: ‘Finally (2)I would have an optimistic view of the Chinese government, although I do believe the Party does need to work on issues regarding inequality and corruption in China. Coming from Ireland, (3)a country that is a democracy with numerous political parties I can tell you that just because (4)there is democracy does not mean there is no corruption within the political sphere. (5)I would be fascinated to learn your view of the Chinese government?’

C2-CN9: ‘在我看来，中国政府是一个亲民政府，一切以人民群众为本。中国政府是一个由中国共产党执政的政府，当然了，我国也有一些其它的党派，但是占少数。由于一些历史原因，在香港和澳门，我国采用的是“一国两制”制度，也就是：在香港和澳门，并不是由中国共产党执政，而是由中国国民党执政。当然咯，在每个国家都有贪污腐败的现象，我国也不例外，但是我们也正在想办法用最有效的方法来解决这个问题。我对我国政府有足够的信心。’ [(6)In my opinion, the Chinese government is a government of the people, for the people. (7)The Chinese government is ruled by the Communist Party, of course, China also have other parties, which are in the minority. Due to some historical reasons, (8)in Hong Kong and Macao, China's policy is "one country, two systems", which means in Hong Kong and Macao, the Chinese communist party is not in power, but the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). (9)Of course, in every country there is corruption, China is not an exception, but our government is trying to use the most effective way to solve this problem. I have enough confidence in our government.]

C2-IR9: ‘我越来越明白你的国家政治制度。’ [*I think I have a much clearer picture about the political system of your country*]

Dyad 9 of Cohort 2 in Extract 17 discussed their opinions on their respective governments. There are 9 sentences which can be categorised as: interest in [L]C1/[L]C2 - (1) (5); evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2) (4) (6) (9); understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (3) (7) (8).

Word association: Fun (Extracts 18 and 19)

There are two extracts (18 and 19) related to the associations with the word ‘Fun’.

Extract 18 (p. 131-132, Appendix W)

C1-CN8: ‘the word of fun, 你有一个写的 sunshine。我没有想到这个意思, 你是怎么想到它的? 是不是你认为你们在阳光下玩 can make you have fun, is it right, 是不是你们都是这样想的?’ [*You associated the word sunshine to the word ‘fun’. I have no idea. (1)Why did you think of this word? (2)Do you mean that you can have fun playing under the sunshine? Is it right? (3)Do all your people think like that?*]

C1-IR8: ‘你说得对, 我们的文化不一样, 所以可是我们向德不一样 [You are right, (4)we have different cultures, so we think differently]. (5)The word ‘sunshine’ to me evokes ideas of fun, happiness and relaxation, so that’s why I wrote it.’

This conversation in Extract 18 focuses on the word fun and its associated word ‘sunshine’ from the Irish participant’s perspectives. 4 sentences from their comments can be categorised as: understanding of LC1 - (5); interest in [L]C1/ [L]C2 - (1) (3); speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2); comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2: (4).

Extract 19 (p. 33-35, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘关于 Fun (乐趣), 这是一个一想到就让人快乐的词 [*as to fun, it’s a word which can make me happy*], (1)everybody lakes [sic] fun, no matter what is your country, no matter who you are, no matter what color of you, 中国人说“没事找乐子”就是这样 [(2)as Chinese people always say ‘just have fun’], although you are busy, your life can not be lacked of fun.’

C2-US10: ‘(3)I agree, you need a balance of fun and studies/work. Yin and Yang! 阴阳很重要 [Both Yin and Yang are very important]!’

The 3 comments from the above Extract 19 can be categorised as: comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2: (1); understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 - (2); evaluation of [L]C2 - (3).

Summary

The 19 extracts of Task 1 discussions described above include 8 dyads from three cohorts and a total of 95 comments were categorised. As a result, several categories emerged and are displayed in the table below. Table 5.1 lists the exact number of dyads in each category and the number of occurrences when the participants engaged with each category along with the percentage of categories emerging from the intercultural awareness construct.

Table 5. 1: Statistics on categories on IC awareness emerging from task discussions

Categories	No. of dyads (N=7)	No. of occurrences
understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2	7 (C1-Dy8 /C2-Dy4.5.9.10 /C3-Dy2.6)	34 (36%)
evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2	7 (C2-Dy4.5.9.10 /C3-Dy2.3.6)	24 (25%)
interest in [L]C1/[L]C2	6 (C1-Dy8 /C2-Dy5.9.10 /C3-Dy2.3)	15 (16%)
speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2	4 (C1-Dy8 /C2-Dy10 /C3-Dy3.6)	9 (9%)
[L]C1/[L]C2 differences comparison	3 (C1-Dy8 /C2-Dy9.10)	6 (6%)
[L]C1/[L]C2 similarities comparison	3 (C1-Dy8 /C2-Dy4.10)	4 (4%)
discussion on a clash of opinions	3 (C2-Dy4.9.10)	3 (3%)

In Table 5.1, 34 comments accounting for 36% of all the 95 comments fall into the category of *understanding [L]C1/[L]C2* and 24 comments (25%) pertain to the *evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2*. 15 comments indicating *interest in [L]C1/[L]C2* account for 16%. 9 comments (9%) can be associated with *speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2*. 6 comments belong to *comparison of differences between [L]C1/[L]C2* category (6%) and 4 comments (4%) fall into the categories of *comparison of similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2*. With regard to *discussion on a clash of opinion*, 3 comments (3%) are reported. The middle column in this table indicates that 7 out of 8 dyads responded to the categories of *understanding LC1/ LC2* and *evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2*. 6 dyads engaged in *interest in [L]C1/[L]C2* and 4 dyads proposed *speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2*. The other 3 categories: *comparison of differences or similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2* and *discussion on a clash of opinions* are discussed by 3 dyads each. In addition, Dyad 10 in Cohort 2 is represented in every category. Dyad 8 in Cohort 1 engaged with 5 categories except for *evaluation of [L]C1 and [L]C2* and *discussion on a clash of opinions*. Dyad 9 in Cohort 2 also engaged with 5 categories except for *speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2* and *[L]C1/[L]C2 similarities comparison*. However, Dyads 2, 3 and 6 in Cohort 3 are represented in only three categories each.

5.2.1.3 Online Forum Entries

Online forum discussions on 5 topics ('alcohol', 'responsibility', 'Ireland', 'Individualism', and 'America') in the word association task were presented in tables 4.15, 4.17, 4.19, 2.21 and 4.23 (Chapter 4). The table below is a comparison of the discussions of the word association task between e-mails and forum entries. As participants displayed low engagement in online forum, only two participants were found to discuss task 1 both in e-mail and forum (Table 5.2).

Table 5. 2: Comparison between participants' task 1 discussion in e-mails and forums

Participant	Comments	
C2-CN9	E-mail	'when you watch "Individualism", you'd think about "reading" and "studying", but when I watch "Individualism" I'm think about " selfish, arrogant", because I don't consider it is a word that have good meaning.'
	Forum	As for the understanding of the word 'Individualism', there are some differences between us and the Irish students. I think the reason is that words can have different meanings in different languages. (Dec 10, 2012)
C2-CN10	E-mail	'You associate it with whiskey, parties and bar, it is undifficult for me to understand, whiskey is a kind of liquor which is popular with Americans, and Americans like parties, and night life, right? They are iconic, I guess so. ..., in China, 大部分生意都是酒桌上谈成的 [<i>in China, most of the business should be done while drinking</i>] , merchants are good at drinking. saying about the big dinner party (in China), it is about drinking, dinner party is a drinking party. 中国人还有不醉不归的说法, 喝酒就要尽兴, 伟大的诗仙李白还是个酒鬼, 素有“李白斗酒诗百篇”的说法。男人喝酒还会猜码以添乐趣, 而每个地方的码又有所不同。中国有国酒, 像茅台, 五粮液, but they are expensive, so are wiskeys? '[<i>there is a saying in China 'We must drink until we are thoroughly drunk!'. We should enjoy drinking. A famous poetic genius, called Libai, is a drunkard. It is said that Libai can't produce 100 poems until he drinks. A Chinese man likes to play some games for fun after drinking. But people from different places play different games. Typical Chinese wines are Maotai, Wu liangye. but they are expensive. How about Whiskeys?</i>]
	Forum	Chinese wine culture has a long history. There are many allusions to wine. What I am curious about is what their parties, wine receptions are like. Do they often hold parties, including the high school students? Do they often hold party at home? Besides, they really love to go to pubs, right? But for them, what kind of place pub is? (Nov 30, 2012)

Students continued their discussion on tasks on forums after exchanging different viewpoints with their partner in e-mails. In Table 5.2, one Chinese participant from Cohort 2 (C2-CN9) first compared her/his answer with the partner's; the Chinese participant not only mentioned the differences of the understandings between Chinese and Irish students, but also became aware of the relationship between language and

culture: *‘I think the reason is that words can have different meanings in different languages’*. With regard to Chinese participant - C2-CN10, she/he focused on introducing the Chinese wine culture (that is [L]C1) to her/his partner when first discussed in task 1 in e-mails and later on in the forum, she/he posed a lot of [L]C2 questions about the contexts within which it is acceptable to consume alcohol. This indicates the participant’s interest in [L]C2 norms. In this way forum entries provided opportunities for deeper questioning in relation to understanding the cultural meanings of words thus giving some insight into the growth of IC and language awareness. This shows the beginning of awareness development, and it is further confirmed by participants’ self-reflection in the questionnaire.

5.2.2 Participants’ Self-reports about their Intercultural Experience

5.2.2.1 From Diaries

The following items from participants’ learning diary entries also indicate their intercultural gains and experience from this e-tandem exchange.

Item 1

C1-IR8: ‘Chinese and Western names are quite different, and Chinese people have as much trouble deciding what to call a Westerner as Westerners do with Chinese people’.

Item 2

C1-IR8: ‘I should point out, however, that some of the typos I made probably made him ask the same question about the way Chinese is taught in Ireland!’

Item 3

C1-IR8: ‘He was too apologetic when I corrected him about my name. Either China or the West has different ways of gauging how apologetic one should be for a given situation or this was simply how he had been taught to apologise in English (i.e. it came across as a larger apology than it was)’

Items 1-3 were written by the same Irish participant in Cohort 1, in which she/he realised that both Chinese and Westerners have trouble in deciding what to call the other (Item 1) and how apology is used in different cultures (Item 3). In Item 2, she/he also speculated that her/his Chinese partner would also evaluate the way in which Chinese is taught in Ireland as a result of the typos the Irish partner had made. Items 2 and 3 contain the formulation of hypotheses, indicating reflection on the LC2 and a sensitivity, through language use, to the partner’s culture as well as to intercultural

communication: ...*probably made him ask...; Either China or the West has different ways of gauging...; ...or this was simply how he had been taught...*

Item 4

C1-CN3: ‘对爱尔兰人以前不允许离婚的政策我很惊讶，但是我觉得如果在我国实行就不可能，文化和地域差异非常大。’ [*I'm very surprised at Irish policy that divorce was not allowed before. This could not happen in China, as we are in different region and have quite different cultures.*]

The Chinese participant in Dy3 of Cohort 1 reported in Item 4 that if the Irish law of not allowing divorce was used in China, it would not be actually appropriate, once more, revealing an awareness of the relevance of context in communication.

Item 5

C2-CN2: ‘通过搭档的描述，觉得爱尔兰是一个很美好的国家。但也许我并没有看到不好的一面，就像她能看到中国的繁华，却不知道我们国家仍有很落后的地方。’ [*From my partner's word, I know Ireland is a very beautiful country and everything there is good, but there may be some bad aspects I haven't seen. This is just like what she/he understood of China as a busy and rich country and she/he didn't see the backward and poor places in China.*]

The Chinese participant in Dy2 of Cohort 2 wrote Item 5 to state that both China and Ireland have their negative sides as well as their good sides, in order to convey a more authentic account of their respective cultures.

Item 6

C2-CN13: ‘外国人学习中文也是蛮难的，就像我们学习英语一样，学习一门外语是不容易的，我们不仅仅要学习语言的本身，我们还要学习它的文化、习俗等等。’ [*It is also difficult for foreigners to study Chinese, as we also feel it is difficult to learn English. It is not easy to learn a foreign language as we study not only language itself but also its culture and customs.*]

In Item 6, the Chinese participant in Dy13 of Cohort 2 believed that learning an L2 is equally difficult for the Chinese and the Irish students since cultural considerations must also be added to the learning experience.

Item 7

C2-CN9: ‘每个国家都有不同的习俗、制度。比如说食物，学校的制度，校运会等等。从不同的国家、不同的视角、不同的时代去看待一个国家得出的结论是不一样的。’ [*Different countries have different habits and systems, such as food, education system, etc. If we look at one culture at different stages or from different perspectives, we may draw different conclusions.*]

In Item 7, the Chinese participant in Dy9 of Cohort 2 wrote that difference of each country determines people’s different perspectives and suggests the beginning of an understanding of culture as a relative construct.

Item 8

C1-CN8: ‘我了解到英语名字上的知识，如我搭档的名字有中间名，所以通常应该叫他 Michael，而不是 Brian。’ [*I learned that English names can have a middle name, for example, my partner should be called Michael, not Brian which is his middle name.*]

Item 9

C3-CN3: ‘他们对外国的文化比我们了解得多，我们应该向他们学习。’ [*My partner knows more about other cultures than me, which I should learn from him.*]

The Chinese participant in Dyad 8 of Cohort 1, Item 8, would like to call her/his partner by her/his first name instead of her/his middle name. In Item 9, the Chinese participant from Cohort 3 expressed her/his willingness to learn more from her/his partner and about foreign cultures.

Table 5.3 indicates that culture became a barrier during participants’ exchanges.

Table 5. 3: Challenges related to culture

Culture	Asking awkward questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C1-IR8: ‘It’s also rather awkward for a Westerner to answer negatively to a question about whether or not they have a girlfriend without bringing down the mood...’ 2. C1-IR8: ‘Him asking for the address of girls that I know was an awkward problem. While this may be perfectly acceptable in China, to a Western girl this might seem like an odd request, or an unwelcome advance.’
	Lack of deeper culture exchange	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C2-CN4: ‘我们之间的交流仅限在一些日常生活中，并没有很深入到一些文化中...’ [<i>Our exchanges only involve in some daily topics, not particularly related to cultural things.</i>] 2. C3-CN4: ‘...我的搭档对于我提的问题回答的比较笼统，从中了解对方的文化不够具体，导致对交流失去耐心...’ [<i>My partner always gave me some ambiguous answers which made me learn very little about his culture. And then I lost my patience...</i>]

There are two difficulties related to culture, presented in Table 5.3. From sample diary items in the right-hand column, one Irish participant pointed out a particular issue perceived to be inappropriate from a western viewpoint leading to embarrassment and

affecting the communication between the two partners ('bringing down the mood', 'unwelcome advance'). The second difficulty reported by one Chinese participant related to the limited time spent on exchanging cultural information.

Table 5. 4: Challenges related to participants' ability to use the L2

Ability to use the L2	Spelling and vocabulary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C1-CN1: '很多单词拼写感觉困难, 平时接触英语的时间是越来越少了。' [<i>I feel it is difficult to spell many words, because I have less opportunity to use English.</i>] 2. C2-CN2: '很多词语都不懂怎么用英语来表达, 词汇量不够。' [<i>There are many words which I don't know how to express in English. My vocabulary is not enough.</i>]
	Typos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C1-IR8: 'I found that typos are a bit more serious when typing in characters, as it could change the meaning of a sentence entirely. As such, I realized that I need to proof-read my letters more carefully before sending them off.'
	Writing in the target language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C1-CN2: '...总的来说就是词不达意, 还是无法好好应用英语进行交流。' [...<i>Generally speaking, it is not easy to express myself in English.</i>] 2. C2-CN10: '写英文邮件觉得不是很顺, 英语写作能力还有待提高...写英文邮件慢。' [<i>It's difficult to write in English. My English writing needs to improve...it takes time for me to write English e-mails.</i>]

Table 5.4 lists some of the challenges arising from participants' ability to use the L2. They fall into three sub-categories (see the middle column) illustrated by sample entries taken from their diaries (the right-hand column). Thus, the first difficulty participants met from this table is lack of L2 vocabulary and being unfamiliar with spelling. One of the participants mentioned the increased difficulty when typing characters in Chinese and the necessity to proofread before sending e-mails to partners. Chinese students also mentioned that writing in the L2 was a challenge and time-consuming. These comments suggest that in addition to cultural difficulties as outlined in Table 5.3, language issues are also reported to hinder fluent communication.

5.2.2.2 From Focus Group Interview

Participants' self-reports of their intercultural awareness are also found in focus group interviews. Tables 5.5 and 5.6 present additional comments related to [L]C1/ [L]C2 awareness and change in communication behaviour.

Table 5. 5: Comments related to [L]C1/[L]C2 awareness

Comment	Participant
1. 'the useful thing is that the exchange was a kind of development in culture. We learned American and Chinese culture from the exchange'	p7.2 (Questions 4 and 6, Appendix V)
2. 'I was always thinking of how to introduce my culture to my partner and then I had to learn more about my own culture'	p2.1 (Question 4, Appendix Q)
3. 'I learned about how my partner understands China'	p6.1 (Question4, Appendix U)
4. 'It's meaningful to raise cultural awareness in foreign language study, because I knew her/his views on China'	p7.3 (Question4, Appendix V)
5. 'I could understand how my partner regarded China, which helped to further understand Chinese culture'	p7.4 (Question4, Appendix V)
6. 'I do not see any relationship between learning a language and culture'; 'The exchanges made me think about my own culture'; ' <i>(what, do you think, helped you to increase this awareness?)</i> writing e-mails. <i>(so do you mean exchange?)</i> yes, communication can help to increase this awareness'	p1.2 (Question 4, Appendix P)
7. 'So I think the awareness of one another developed'	p5.4 (Question 4, Appendix T)
8. 'because I want to be sure if what I learned was the same as theirs'	p1.4 (Question 4, Appendix P)
9. 'Thus, we can see the differences from our behaviour and culture. <i>(what helps you to develop this awareness?)</i> it is through my partner's reply'	p5.1 (Question 4, Appendix T)
10. 'It is the big difference and sharp comparison between our different thinking'	p6.1 (Question4, Appendix U)

Table 5.5 lists the comments from focus group interviews relating to participants' reflection of their [L]C1 and [L]C2 development in e-tandem. Comment 1 from participant p7.2 indicates the awareness both in [L]C1 and [L]C2, in this case, a better understanding of university life. Comments 2-6 illustrate participants' development of [L]C1 awareness/perspective although there is one exception in Comment 6 about the relationship between language and culture learning. Apart from self-awareness, Comment 7 is related to the awareness of the other and Comment 8 shows a participant's awareness of different perspectives. Comments 9 and 10 indicate their awareness of how [L]C1 and [L]C2 awareness is perceived through comparison and confirm views expressed by Fantini (2005) and O'Dowd (2012).

Table 5. 6: Comments related to change in communication behaviour

Comment	Participant
11. 'so when I wrote Chinese, I had to check if there were any errors and I paid attention to my grammar. As for the English part, I usually thought that if I did not write correctly, how can I communicate with my partner. Thus, my language awareness developed a little'	p1.3 (Question 5, Appendix P)
12. 'As we wrote half in English half in Chinese. I needed to consider if my partner could understand me when I wrote in English and also consider if she/he can accept my Chinese, for example, I would ask myself if she/he could understand certain idioms'	p1.4 (Question 5, Appendix P)
13. 'but when I write to Lanlan, I have to correct the grammar, so I have to really concentrate on what I have to write. It's too informal too casual - some phrases I used and I was afraid that Lanlan couldn't understand'	p3.2 (Question 5, Appendix R)
14. 'I was always thinking how to introduce my culture to my partner and then I had to learn more about my own culture. I think it is my desire to make my partner understand my culture'	p2.1 (Question 4, Appendix Q)
15. 'This exchange is like providing an opportunity for me to practise what I learned from textbooks, to use what I learned at home to interact with them and they understood me'	p1.5 (Question 6, Appendix P)
16. 'however, I valued more the use of my own language, which means I paid more attention to if my partner understood what I said.'	p2.3 (Question 5, Appendix Q)
17. 'The useful thing is that their language errors showed their different thinking'	p2.2 (Question 6, Appendix Q)
18. 'With regard to Chinese, as it is my native language and I use it in daily life, I didn't feel any development'	p1.2 (Question 5, Appendix P)

Table 5.6 presents the findings related to participants' change in their own behaviour as well as the development of the will to be understood. Comments 11-13 indicate the participants' change in L1 writing in order to make their partners understand their language possibly as result of the bilingual approach used in the exchanges. This is clearly articulated in Comment 12. Comment 14 is related to the participant's will to make the other understand her/his culture through the considered use of the L1. Participant in Comment 15 shows her/his will to be understood and also her/his L[C]2 awareness. Comment 16 also indicates the will to be understood while testing the quality of prior formal learning of the L2. Participant in Comment 17 seems to gain a better understanding of the partner and her/his difficulty with the L2, while Comment 18 is an example of no change of behaviour in L1 use.

5.2.3 A Third Space Facilitated by the E-tandem Project

5.2.3.1 The Dialogic Space: Different Viewpoints Co-exist

According to Helm *et al.* (2012), the third space is a dialogic space where different viewpoints are ‘acknowledged and respected’ during participants’ mutual engagement in communication.

In Table 4.5 (p. 110), the equal viability of the ways of other cultures despite their differences is acknowledged by a majority of 74% (N=28) of 38 respondents. Understanding of the [L]C2 gleans higher ratings than [L]C1 understanding. Figure 4.21 (p. 110) shows that 27 respondents (69%) discuss cultural similarities and differences with partners and that most of them admit that comparing cultures helps to create a better understanding of one’s own and the partner’s culture (Figures 4.19 and 4.20, p. 109). The important role that comparing cultures plays in the development of IC awareness, has been recognised by Fantini (2005) and Chen (1997). The comparative and contrastive process contributes to participants recognising cultural differences and accepting that differences exist, which, in turn helps to increase their intercultural awareness. In particular, the development of IC awareness is manifest through participants’ self-awareness on discovering differences in behaviour and in values. In addition, when facing different cultures participants are able to find common ground, to advance their communication within this third space.

Awareness of differences in behaviour and values

With regard to the comparison of behaviour, in Example 4 (p. 158), two participants discovered their own differences in how they like to spend their holiday time. The Irish student goes to nightclubs while the Chinese student does not. As they can see and respect each other’s differences, one of the partners also identifies a hobby in common: swimming. Example 5 (p. 159) suggests differences in eating practices on campus where the Irish student does not have the cooking facilities she/he is accustomed to in Ireland because in China, students share dormitories and eat in the canteen. In Example 6 (p. 159), it is interesting for the Irish participant to see that although KTV is a typical venue for students in China, singing (and drinking) all night is not typical behaviour among Chinese university students. The Chinese participant shares information on the type of activities students engage in outside university studies (eating, playing and shopping) and also

wants to know more about typical extra-curricular activities in Ireland. Through mutual interaction in the virtual space created by e-mail, these two participants begin to discover differences in behaviour. This helps to promote self-awareness of one's own and the other's culture.

In building this third space, not only do participants acknowledge differences in behaviour but also a discussion on values emerges. In Example 7 (p. 159), the nature of the exchange is interesting: the Irish student refers to high educational standards in China and seeks clarification on this; however, the Chinese student proposes a different perspective on the issue and emphasises pressure on students as opposed to high standards alone. Hence, the discussion progresses from factual information - high standards - to the perceived reality for Chinese students - high pressure and competition. The Irish participant concludes on a positive note by referring to the 'great work ethic' of Chinese students. Different attitudes towards drinking alcohol (Example 8, p. 160) also make the two partners realise that they do have different perceptions on the topic of alcohol. The Chinese partner discovers that the Irish national day is mainly associated with drinking alcohol. Thus, when the Chinese partner wants to persuade the Irish student to drink less, the discussion on the topic stops and the two partners implicitly acknowledge each other's cultural differences. Here, different viewpoints help this dyad to be aware of and to learn to respect each other's perspectives. The idea of difference and perspective achieved through comparison is clearly identified by one of the participants who states: '*It is the big difference and sharp comparison between our different thinking*' (Comment 10 in Table 5.5, p. 185); this contrastive approach suggests that this is how [L]C1 and [L]C2 awareness is brought about.

Finding commonalities in spite of the existence of differences

On the other hand, although participants express and explain their different viewpoints and experiences during interaction, they also try to find common ground to move on their communication and to build a third space. In Example 16 (p. 165), the Irish partner cannot sing and notices that the Chinese partner likes singing; they find common ground by discussing Western music which is presumably familiar to both of them, while both agreeing on the benefits of listening to Western songs to learn English. In Example 17 (p. 165), the interaction is driven by a series of questions in an attempt to find common

ground. University studies, Chinese and Western food, adapting to China, hobbies are all broached and finally lead to a shared appreciation of musical instruments and eating *jiaozi*. Travelling (the Chinese partner to Guilin and the Irish partner to Thailand) is also discussed in Example 18 (p. 166), leading the Irish partner to explicitly state that they have one thing in common: their dreams for the future. The three examples indicate that participants' communication is driven by questions with the objective of revealing more personal information while finding commonalities. In this way, they show their interest in each other's perspectives and build a good relationship during e-mail exchange. This finding is similar to Liaw's (2007) observation that participants in a virtual 'third space' show 'interest in other people's way of life'. Results from Examples 16, 17 and 18 contribute to confirming Bretag's (2006) finding that the search for commonalities during e-mail exchanges helps to build a third space. What's more, evidence of establishing a good relationship is found in Extract 6 (p. 171) and Extract 12 (p. 175). Participant C2-CN10 in Extract 6 first shows her/his empathy with her partner in order to build a good relationship:

Saying the United States, you naturally think of home,“身在异乡为异客” [A lonely stranger in a strange place], it is natural, you must miss your home so much, especially in [sic] Thanksgiving day, “每逢佳节倍思亲”啊 [I miss my family all the more on every festive day]

Another participant C2-IR5 tries to build a good relationship through negotiating a topic that is of interest to both of them: *'Your e-mail is very interesting. You mentioned the sin of money, which is one of the courses I am interested in. I study economics in university, especially Chinese economy, so I knew something about it'* (Extract 12). Interestingly, the importance and time given to the establishment of a good relationship is a feature of this study and possibly reflects cultural imperatives on the part of Chinese students. Chen (2011) alludes to this and additional examples appear in the later stages of this discussion.

5.2.3.2 A Site of Struggle: Difficulties, Disagreements and Conflicts

In a virtual third space created by e-mail exchanges, participants' difficulties, disagreements and even conflicts emerge. Thus, this space is also called 'a site of struggle' (Helm *et al.*, 2012).

Discussion of personal and difficult issues

Evidence of discussion of personal and difficult issues is found in 4 Dyads (Examples 10, 11, 12 and 13). In the first three examples, the Chinese participants mention their own personal difficulties first, apart from Example 13. The reason may be that most of the Chinese participants' motivation to make friends is higher than their partners, so they tend to exchange personal issues more readily. The motivation to make friends with tandem partners was stated directly by 3 Chinese participants during focus group interviews when asked if their tandem partner was a friend or a study instrument in the exchanges: 1) '*I really wanted to make a foreign friend, so I was always eager to interact*' (p2.4, Question 6, Appendix Q); 2) '*I had intended to make a friend with my partner, but we did not exchange to that extent*' (p6.4, Question 6, Appendix U); 3) '*Although I tried to make a friend, but I failed*' (p6.5, Question 6, Appendix U). However, none of the Irish/American participants in the interviews mention this. The reason is probably related to the fact that they have the chance to make Chinese friends while studying in China.

In Example 10 (p. 161), the Chinese participant first asks the Irish partner if he has a girlfriend and if he can introduce Irish girls to him. This makes the Irish partner uncomfortable as explained in his diary (Table 5.3, p. 183): '*It's also rather awkward for a Westerner to answer negatively to a question about whether or not they have a girlfriend without bringing down the mood*'; '*Him asking for the address of girls that I know was an awkward problem*'. Thus, this difficulty arises because of perceived inappropriate and intrusive questions. On the other hand, it is the intrusive nature of the dialogue that made the Irish participant think about LC1 and LC2 values: '*While this may be perfectly acceptable in China, to a Western girl this might seem like an odd request, or an unwelcome advance*' (Table 5.3).

The Chinese participant in Example 11 (p. 161) seems to be bothered by the problem of a bad teacher. She/he first asks whether Irish students can choose to attend classes with a favourite teacher and then shares her/his own experience of an unpopular teacher. In response, the Irish participant first answers the question and suggests that students can usually complain anonymously. Finally, the Irish participant expresses her/his surprise at the manner in which the Chinese teacher interacts with her/his students. Although the problem appears unsolved in the end (the Chinese participant questions the usefulness of

‘complaining’ and the Irish partner does not give further response), the Chinese student is able to see the similarity and difference of [L]C1 and [L]C2 in students’ ways of dealing with complaints about teachers in China and in Ireland. The Chinese participant expressed her/his emotions and frustrations in this conversation and through communication with the partner a new subject space is opened in the Chinese student’s consciousness where shared student-related difficulties can be aired, compared and individually reflected upon – e.g. *but does complaining work?*. The exchange also helps to build a friendly relationship between the two participants. Example 12 (p. 162) is similar. Through exchanging their personal experiences of learning a language and reciprocating suggestions, the two participants, in this example, seem to confirm their identity as language learners: *‘I will do whatever to help you. so, don't hesitate to ask for help because you (would) give me a helping hand if I was trapped in a similar situation, I think.’* (C1-CN10, Example 12); *‘The best advice I can give...’, ‘you can also...’, ‘you should focus on...’, ‘it is better to say...’* (C1-IR10, Example 12).

Both participants mention their personal issues in Example 13 (p. 163). However, nobody responds to their interlocutor’s problems. Reasons for this situation could be that participants are writing their postings independently of what the partner writes or that they can only write within the limitations of their L2 knowledge. With regard to L2 use, participants refer to the problem in their learning diaries (Table 5.4, p. 186); they mention their limited vocabulary in English as an L2 or the discovery that errors in typing Chinese characters cannot be considered as mere typos as well as the time it takes to write in the L2.

Dealing with disagreements and conflicts of opinions

The questionnaire survey responses in Figure 4.15 (p. 108) suggest that 23 respondents (59%) admit that they sometimes had different opinions. Figure 4.18 (p. 108) indicates that 22 respondents (57%) respondents declared that it was somewhat easy for them to accept their tandem partner’s opinions. There are two examples indicating how participants dealt with disagreement. In Example 14 (p. 164), although two e-tandem partners disagree with each other’s food preferences, they use positive remarks to build a friendly environment to express dislike of Chinese food *‘I like the picture you sent me very much’* or they express concern for the partner *‘Can you eat your favorite food in*

Shanghai?'. In such a natural third space, their awareness of the difficulty of changing one's eating habits is also developed. Two participants communicate their different opinions on a singer in Example 15 (p. 165). When the Chinese student notices the American partner's dislike of the singer, she/he turns to discuss Korean music which both of them are interested in. Thus, so far, disagreement does not become an obstacle during the e-tandem exchange; instead, disagreement helps participants to clarify and to become aware of differences; participants usually have positive ways of leaving the disagreement behind and of finding commonality in order to deal with the situation.

Apart from difficulties and disagreement, participants must sometimes face conflicts or a clash of opinions (Extracts 2 and 3, p. 170). Extracts 2 and 3 are discussions on words associated with 'individualism'. When reading their partners' reactions to the word 'individualism', both Chinese participants from Extracts 2 and 3 express strong opinions: '*I don't consider it is a word that have [sic] good meaning*'; '*I don't need individualism*' (the participant believes that there is no room for individualism because of the necessity to cooperate with others in the work situation). The Irish partner in Extract 2 responds to the Chinese partner (C2-CN9) by explaining:

As for individualism I took the meaning to describe a person as independent. This does not imply that a person is arrogant or selfish, rather that a person can work productively on their own and does not always need the support of other people.

In Extract 3, the Irish participant interprets 'individualism' to mean being '*who you want to be. Unique*'. Although the Chinese participant in Extract 2 does not respond in the discussion to the Irish partner's explanation, she/he posts one comment on the online forum when discussing 'Individualism': '*As for the understanding of the word 'Individualism', there is some differences between us and the Irish students. I think the reason is that words can have different meanings in different languages*' (Dec 10, 2012, Table 4.21, p. 142). Thus, through written communication on word associations and meaning, participants become aware of multiple cultural interpretations of a single word. This leads to a growth in awareness of LC1 and LC2, confirming O'Dowd's view (2003).

Clearing misunderstandings

E-mail exchange provides a virtual place for the participants to understand, to compare

and to evaluate. However, misunderstandings often happen and these have to be dealt with. Participants struggle through this third space and reach a balance between what they think and what they acknowledge. In Example 19 (p. 167), the Chinese participant clears a misunderstanding on the Irish participant's part by sharing a personal story about basketball, which makes it easier for the Irish partner to accept her/his mistake. The Chinese participant in Example 20 (p. 167) tries to save face by referring to a possible misunderstanding and her/his own limitation associated with L2 use and/or different worldviews and perceptions due to different cultural contexts. In Example 21 (p. 168), the Irish participant is eager to dispel the idea that Ireland is bound in old rural and romantic traditions as portrayed in an American directed movie seen by her Chinese partner. The Irish partner also provides a more up-to-date source of information for her/his partner. It is interesting to note awareness of multiple perspectives in people's understanding of culture, as mentioned by the Chinese partner.

In Example 22 (p. 169), the two participants compare Chinese and American high school life in a very detailed manner showing great care in avoiding misunderstandings conveyed by either movies or by their own L2 limitations: *'Is high school life as colourful as we see in the movies?'*; *'my high school life was not like what you see in the movies'*; *'if you study every day, are you happy?'*; *'however, American students also have pressure'*; *'do you think I am right?'*. They also confirm their understanding and re-iterate what was said:

You said that students in China have more pressure than America, yes you are right, so Chinese students have few activities, studies are the most important things for them, nobody wants to wait another year, and a prom is nearly impossible for a high school to hold

Thus, participants' viewpoints and stereotypes are challenged, mutually explored and confirmed in this space through first-hand accounts. Misunderstandings and/or stereotypes are re-thought through partners' authentic information. It is in this way that the participants' IC awareness is increased in the virtual space. This echoes O'Dowd's (2003) finding of participants' growth in awareness of the inaccuracies of national stereotyping through telecollaboration.

5.2.3.3 An Evolving Space: Growth in Awareness

Self-reported awareness development

The third space facilitated by e-mail tandem exchanges is also an evolving space where participants' growth in awareness takes place. Figures 4.10 to 4.14 focus on participants' reflection on e-tandem for intercultural learning. Figures 4.11, 4.13, 4.12 and 4.14 (p. 104-106) are based on questions 29, 32, 33 and 36 of the questionnaire investigating participants' perceived awareness of their own and their partner's cultures. Figure 4.10 (for question 37) is a more general question on the relationship between e-tandem and the development of intercultural awareness. 16 respondents declare that e-tandem contributes to their development of intercultural awareness *very much*. However, when responding to more specific questions, the responses are not as categorical: development of awareness of their own culture - 9 out of 39 respondents (Figure 4.11); change of perspectives on partners' culture - 2 out of 39 respondents (Figure 4.13); change of perspectives on one's own culture - none respondents choosing *very much* (Figure 4.12); understanding of their partner's culture - 5 out of 39 respondents (Figure 4.14). It seems that gains are made in self-awareness of LC1 (9) but not so much in change of perspective on LC1 (0). It also appears that some additional understanding of [L]C2 happens but that a change in perspective of the [L]C2 is reported to happen to a lesser extent. One can speculate that the exchange did not last long enough for an actual change of perspective on the [L]C1 and [L]C2 to happen and that more time and sustained communication is probably required for this to emerge.

Table 4.5 (p. 111) shows participants' reported benefit on awareness development after the e-tandem exchanges in such a third space. For the statements, such as '*I am more interested in the similarities/differences between cultures*', the highest number of respondents is always in the scale of 3, 4, and 5 (1 = the least important and 5 = the most important). Overall, interest in differences is reportedly higher than interest in similarities. However, examples of e-mail exchanges indicate that interest in similarities becomes manifest when establishing good relationships between partners (see Examples 17-20 above). In addition, awareness of how behaviour is influenced by culture is rated at 4 and 5 for 34% (13 out of 38) and 26% (10 out of 38) of respondents respectively.

In addition, results from focus group interviews suggest that most of the Chinese and

Irish/American respondents report an increase in their cultural awareness (see answers to Question 4 in Appendices P-V). For example, one Irish participant from focus group 3 states:

Yes, definitely (my awareness of my own and my partner's culture increased), I was just more aware of, like, Chinese students and how their lives even for Ireland and China differ so greatly. Like we live and study here... So I realise how different like even in Ireland our life is even better than life here. (p3.3 Question 4, Appendix R)

another Chinese participant from focus group 5 reports:

I think my cultural awareness developed a lot. Take the word association task for example, I learned that we had different explanations to words because of our different languages. We also had different understandings of some numbers and other things. (p5.6 Question 4, Appendix T)

one more example is also from a Chinese participant:

My cultural awareness developed. I learned about how my partner understands China. For example, she/he asked if we do communism like Hitler in his time. I was astonished about hearing this and I found that communism is new and mysterious to foreigners. But I don't understand how they would relate it to Hitler and how they would think that our president oppressed our people and that our life was very bad. (see p6.1 Question 4, Appendix U)

Development of LC1 and LC2 awareness

To complement the quantitative findings of self-reported awareness development, the following qualitative results further indicate the participants' intercultural awareness development, including awareness of culture as a relative construct; awareness of possible differences in perspective; increased understanding of both LC1 and LC2; awareness of [L]C1 and/or [L]C2; awareness of socio-cultural context for language learning; willingness to modify behaviour; awareness of the inseparability of language and culture.

First, awareness of culture as a relative construct emerges from both e-mail communication (Examples 1-3, p. 159-160) and learning diaries (Items 1-7, p. 183-184). 3 dyads in Examples 1-3 attempt to link two cultural items together: Qingming Festival and Halloween; Chinese flower tea and Irish black tea; rice and potatoes. During their interaction, participants give explanations to express their understanding of their own and the other's culture (Example 1) and also appreciate the other's culture (tea culture in

Example 2). Through these activities during e-mail interaction, there is evidence of a change in participants' perspective on both their own and the other culture. In this regard, one participant displays her/his awareness of possible differences in perspective: *'because I want to be sure if what I learned was the same as theirs'* (Comment 8 in Table 5.5, p. 187). Items 1-7 are taken from learning diaries. Observations from the 7 items suggest an increased understanding of both [L]C1 and [L]C2. They recognise that culture influences people's behaviours (Items 1-3), social problems (Items 4 and 5), language learning (Item 6) and viewpoints (Item 7).

Comments 1-7 in Table 5.5 (p. 187) are related to [L]C1 and/or [L]C2 awareness. Participant p7.2 in Comment 1 admits that e-tandem is *'a kind of development in culture'* and she/he learned both American and Chinese culture. Comments 2 and 6 indicate participants' development of [L]C1 awareness: *'I had to learn more about my own culture'* (Comment 2); *'The exchanges made me think about my own culture'* (Comment 6). In addition, Comments 3-5 are related to [L]C1 perspective - their partner's views on their own culture, such as *'I learned about how my partner understands China'* (Comment 3). It is interesting to see that one participant p1.2 in Comment 6 is an exception in that she/he did separate language and culture learning, but her/his [L]C1 awareness still developed, as stated above.

Table 5. 7: Comments related to awareness of language and culture

Comment	Participant
19. 'I think that it is helpful to raise this awareness, because learning about cultural backgrounds helps to understand language'	p1.5 (Question 4, Appendix P)
20. 'She/he told me about some festivals in English, so my English also improved'	p5.2 (Question 4, Appendix T)
21. 'learning English aims to communicate, so if you don't understand their daily life and customs, how can you learn this language well? It is like studying our native language, we should know what the customs are, what should we say at a certain time and the context for the words'	p5.1 (Question 4, Appendix T)
22. 'there are several words for one meaning in the dictionary and I used one of them to make sentences and I believed that it was correct. However, my partner corrected me and then I realised that using those words were their habits'	p7.1 (Question 5, Appendix V)
23. 'It is meaningful to raise cultural awareness, because I want to learn the real English'	p6.4 (Question4, Appendix U)

5 comments in Table 5.7 are about participants' awareness of language and culture.

Comments 19 to 21 show participants' awareness of learning language through culture and Comment 22 indicates the awareness of learning culture through language. In Comment 23, the participant realises the need of a context for learning English.

In contrast to the participant in Comment 6, it is noted that 5 additional participants report their awareness of a socio-cultural context for language learning (Table 5.7). Participants in Comments 19-21 report on their awareness of the inseparability of culture learning and language learning: *'I think that it is helpful to raise this awareness, because learning about cultural backgrounds helps to understand language'* (Comment 19); *'She/he told me about some festivals in English, so my English also improved'* (Comment 20). These confirm Witte's view (2011) on learning language through culture and its socio-cultural context as suggested by the participants' additional comments:

learning English aims to communicate, so if you don't understand their daily life and customs, how can you learn this language well? It is like studying our native language, we should know what the customs are, what should we say at a certain time and the context for the words (Comment 21)

On the other hand, participant in Comment 22 realises that the dictionary separates the culture from the language and, as a result, the participant links language and behaviour, for example:

those words were their habits'; 'there are several words for one meaning in the dictionary and I used one of them to make sentences and I believed that it was correct. However, my partner corrected me and then I realised that using those words were their habits.

Next, 'cultural awareness' is directly linked to 'real English' implying that cultural awareness means more authentic use of the language in its socio-cultural context: *'It is meaningful to raise cultural awareness, because I want to learn the real English'* (Comment 23).

In addition, participants' awareness development is also reflected in their apparent willingness to modify their behaviour. In Example 9 (p. 162), the Chinese participant who never went abroad finally expresses her/his willingness to travel following the Irish partner's interest in visiting China in the near future. The Chinese participant in Item 8 realises that he should call his partner by his first name instead of his middle name

following corrections by his partner during e-mail interaction. In Item 9 (p. 185), the Chinese participant expresses a willingness to learn more from the partner about other cultures. Overall, it is clear that change in awareness is happening to a certain degree because of participants' mutual influence through discussion and negotiation in a virtual space.

Finally, Examples 25-29 (p. 200-201) serve as an indication of how the participants mutually engaged and how the dialogue became a learning dialogue about self and other within two particular situations: how participants dealt with not understanding their partner; and how participants coped when not able to express ideas in L2. Strategies participants used when they did not understand their partners include: (a) asking for an explanation; (b) ignoring the utterance. When participants did not know how to use the L2 to express their ideas, they used the following strategies: (a) borrowing a word from L1; (b) using L1 for the whole sentence; (c) asking for a translation for a whole word. Examples for these strategies are displayed as follows.

When not understanding their partners

(a) Asking for an explanation in e-mails

Example 25 (p. 109, Appendix W)

C1-IR4: '对不起我不明白一些你的汉字：邮件，激动，互?' [*Sorry that I don't understand some of your characters: 邮件, 激动, 互.*]

C1-CN4: '...the word "邮件" means e-mail and "激动" is 'excite' and "互相" is "each other", can you understand?'

In Example 25, when the Irish participant in Dy4 of Cohort 1 mentioned the Chinese characters she/he did not understand, her/his Chinese partner explained in English.

(b) Ignoring the utterance in e-mails (page?)

Example 26 (p. 148-150, Appendix X)

C2-CN4: 'I like sports, too. Such as table tennis, badminton, especially running.... Do your school have a sport meeting? How about you feel it?'

C2-IR4: '我也喜欢体育，特别爱尔兰**体悟**。你知道吗?' [*I like sports too, especially Irish sports. Do you know it?*]

C2-CN4: '我没有听说过爱尔兰**体格**，是一种与人搏斗的武术吗？你可以给我介绍一下爱尔兰**体格**吗?' [*I never heard about Irish '体格'. Is it a kind of boxing? Can you introduce it?*]

(no response to this question from C2-IR4 anymore)

In Example 26, because the Irish participant typed the wrong Chinese character ‘体悟’ (should be ‘体育’ for sports), the Chinese partner misunderstood it as a new type of sports and asked for more information on it. However, the Irish participant ignored it and did not respond any more.

When not able to express ideas in L2 in e-mails

(a) Borrowing a word from L1

Example 27 (p. 146, Appendix X)

C2-IR3: ‘在我的宿舍我们是三个人,但各人有各人的房间。我们 share 厕所/shower。不好意思,我不知道 share or shower 汉语怎么说!’ [There are 3 people in my dormitory, but we have our own bedrooms. We share toilet and shower. Sorry How do you say share or shower in Chinese?]

In Example 27, the Irish participant in Dy3 of Cohort 2 used her/his L1 for the two words ‘share’ and ‘shower’, because she/he did not know the Chinese characters for them.

(b) Using L1 for the whole sentence in e-mails

Example 28 (p. 148, Appendix X)

C2-CN4: ‘This month, I am training to run for our school sport meeting. It will (be) held on this weekend. All students will compete together in that time. Many students collect in ground track field [sic]. 那个场景很热闹,每个学生都为属于自己学院的运动员加油。 [The scene will be very busy as every student cheers for their athletes from their department.] Do your school have a sport meeting? How about you feel it?’

In Example 28, the Chinese was trying to write this paragraph in English (the second paragraph in this e-mail is written in Mandarin). However, she/he could not express the sentence underlined in red, so she/he used her/his L1 (Chinese).

(c) Asking for a translation for a whole word in e-mails

Example 29 (p. 124, Appendix W)

C1-IR8: ‘For St. Patrick’s Day, 我们有了一天的假期 [we got one day off] (汉语怎么说?)’ [How to say St. Patrick’s Day in Mandarin?]

In the Example 29, the Irish participant of Dy8 in Cohort 1 asked her/his partner for the Mandarin translation of the Patrick’s Day.

In Example 25, the Irish participant notices the new L2 vocabulary and asks her/his Chinese partner to further explain new words; the Chinese partner responds by using

English (L2) to help the Irish participant. Obviously, by switching between L1 and L2, their awareness of self and other develops. There are two strategies used by participants in the study to deal with not being able to express ideas in the L2: using the L1 for the whole sentence as well as asking for the translation of a single word (Examples 27, 28 and 29). In these situations, participants switch between their understanding of L[C]1/L[C]2 and their awareness develops through mutual negotiation of meaning.

5.3 L1-L2 Specific Exchanges and the Development of Language Awareness

The second research question in this study investigates the relationship between telecollaboration and participants' language awareness development: 'Do L1-L2 specific exchanges contribute to the development of language awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?'. Based on the activities related to language learning during this e-tandem exchange, this section considers the research question from 3 perspectives -participants' noticing and imitating L1, L2 correction and feedback from e-tandem partners and participants' self-reflection on exchanges between L1 and L2.

5.3.1 Noticing and Imitating

5.3.1.1 Excerpts of Participants' Noticing and Imitating the L2

Participants during e-tandem exchanges were required to write their emails half in Mandarin and half in English. During the analysis of their e-mails, changes in participants' L2 use were observed. These changes indicate the participants' noticing occurrences of L2, which may be interpreted as the emergence of L[C]2 awareness.

Extracts 20 to 23 present participants' noticing of their partners' L1 and how this impacts on their L2 writing. All extracts focus on participants' noticing of their partners' e-mail opening and concluding formulae as they subsequently used or modified their L2 output (without being corrected by their partners).

Both Extracts 20 and 21 are from Dyad 1 of Cohort 1. Participants are S (Irish) and H (Chinese), whose initials are used for purpose of anonymity. In Extract 21, 黄高 X is the Chinese participant, and 高雅 is the Irish participant's Chinese name. Extract 20 deals with the English part of their exchanges while Extract 20 presents the Mandarin interaction.

Extract 20

C1-IR1	C1-CN1
1. 'Hello!!...Best regards, S'	2. 'S,... Yours sincerely, H'
3. 'Hello there! ...Regards, S'	4. 'Hello there! ...Regard, H'
5. 'Dear H ... Yours sincerely, S'	6. 'S,...Regards, H'
7. 'Hello there H, ...All the best, S'	8. 'Hello there S,...Yours, H'
9. 'Hello there H, ... Yours sincerely, S'	10. 'Hi S,...Yours sincerely, H'
11. 'Hello there H, ... Yours sincerely, S'	12. 'Hello S,...Yours sincerely, H'
-----	13. 'Hello there S,...Yours, H'
14. 'Dear H ... Regards, S :)'	15. 'Dear S,...Yours, H'

Extract 20 indicates that in the 15 e-mails between the Irish and Chinese participants, S and H, the Chinese participant imitated her/his Irish partner's greeting 'hello there' in her/his e-mails (see No. 4, 8 and 13) together with the parting remark 'Regards' in e-mails No. 4 and 6 - note that the error in No. 4 was corrected in No. 6. Interestingly, the Irish participant in No. 9 seemed to also modify her/his parting remark, possibly to help her/his Chinese partner to use the more appropriate, yet formal expression 'Yours sincerely'; this was noticed by the Chinese partner in 10 and 12. However, in 13 and 15 the Chinese student reverted to 'Yours' and the Irish student repeated the less formal 'Regards'.

Extract 21

C1-IR1	C1-CN1
1. '您好!!... 高雅'	2. '高雅: 你好,... 期待你的回信。黄高 X'
3. '你好黄高 X ...期待你的回信。高雅'	4. '高雅: 你好...还有期待你的回信。黄高 X'
5. '你好黄高 X ... 高雅'	6. '高雅: 你好, 给你回信这么晚真不好意思。...期待你的回信...黄高 X'
7. '黄高 X, 你好! 也给你回信这么晚真不好意思。...我期待你的回信。高雅'	8. '高雅: 你好,...期待你的回信。黄高 X'
9. '黄高 X, 你好吗?... 期待你的回信。高雅'	10. 'S,你好! ...期待你的回信。黄高 X'
11. '黄高 X, 你好! ,... 高雅'	12. '高雅: 你好!...期待你的回信。黄高 X'
-----	13. '高雅: 你好。...黄高 X'
14. '你好黄高 X!! ... 我期待着你的答复。高雅'	15. '高雅: 你好。...黄高 X'

In Extract 21, noticing her/his Chinese partner's L1, the Irish participant modified her/his greeting '您好' to '你好' in her/his second email - No. 3 (both mean 'hello', but the latter is more appropriate). After seeing the Chinese partner use '期待你的回信' which means looking forward to your reply, the Irish participant also used this expression in her/his e-mails 3, 7, 9 and 14. In addition, in this interaction, there is one more expression the Irish participant learned from her/his partner: '给你回信这么晚真不好意思' which

means ‘I am very sorry to reply to you late’ (the Chinese student used this in e-mail 6 and the Irish student used it in e-mail 7).

Extract 22

C2-IR3	C2-CN3
	1. ‘Dear A. O., ...Waiting for your letter! Thank you! yours, S m’
2. ‘S M, 你好!! [<i>hello</i>] ...I look forward to hearing from you, A. :)’	3. ‘Dear A, ...I look forward to hearing from you! Best wishes to you! S M :)’
4. ‘Hi S!... Talk to you soon, A’	5. ‘Dear A, ...Waiting for your reply! Yours, S m’
6. ‘Snow Moon!, ...Talk soon, A!’	7. ‘Dear A, ...Talk soon! S m’
8. ‘Hi S! ...Talk soon, A. :)’	9. ‘Dear A, ...Waiting for your letter! :) S’

In Extract 22, taken from Dyad 3 of Cohort 2, Irish participant A. O. and her/his Chinese partner S. M. exchanged 9 e-mails in total. After noticing that the Irish partner had used her/his first name A to sign off, the Chinese participant began to use A instead of the full name A. O. when addressing herself/himself to her/him from e-mail No. 3. In addition, the Chinese participant learned from the Irish partner to use ‘I look forward to hearing from you’ in e-mail No. 3 and ‘talk soon’ in e-mail No. 7.

Extract 23

C2-IR9	C2-CN9
	1. ‘Dear K, ... 祝你学习愉快! Best wishes, Chen X’
2. ‘Dear Chen X, ...期待收到您的回复. 祝你也学习生活愉快. Kind Regards K’	3. ‘Dear K, ... Best wishes for you. Looking forward to your reply. Yours sincerely Chen X’
4. ‘Dear X ... Looking forward to your reply, K’	5. ‘Dear K, ... 祝你天天开心! Looking forward to your reply. Yours sincerely, Chen X’
6. ‘Hello Chen, ... Kind Regards, K’	7. ‘Dear K, ... 祝天天开心, 学习进步! Yours sincerely, X’
8. ‘Hello, ... Kind Regards, K’	9. ‘Dear K, ... Looking forward to your reply. Kind regards X’
10. ‘Hello Li, ... Kind Regards, K’	11. ‘Dear K, ... The best wishes to you. kind regards, X’
12. ‘Hello X, ... Kind Regards, K’	13. ‘Dear K, ... Best wishes to you. Look forward to your reply. Yours, X’
	14. ‘Hello K, ... Look forward to your reply. Yours sincerely, X’
	15. ‘Hello K, ... Kind Regards, X’

Extract 23 above is from Dyad 9 of Cohort 2. In this extract, when the Chinese participant wrote ‘祝你学习愉快!’ (‘wishing that you enjoy your study’) in the first e-mail, the Irish partner responded and expanded the expression ‘祝你也学习生活愉快’ in the second e-mail (‘also wishing that you enjoy your study and life’). However, when the Chinese partner used another Chinese expression ‘祝你天天开心!’ (‘wishing that you are happy

every day) in e-mails No. 5 and 7, the Irish student did not re-use the expression in her/his subsequent e-mails.

5.3.1.2 Discussion on More Findings of L[C]1/L[C]2 Awareness

Appel (1999), Vinagre (2005) and Dooly (2007) report L2 gains in e-tandem learning. In Figure 4.23 (p. 114), responses to the questionnaire indicate that 23 respondents (59%) report that e-tandem (e-mail exchange in this study) is *somewhat* helpful in learning an L2; Chinese partners report more gains than Irish/American students with an additional 11 (28%) stating that e-tandem helps them *very much* to learn English. During the e-mail exchanges, participants were required to write half in the L1 and half in the L2. Figure 4.53 (p. 130) indicates that the majority of respondents complied with this requirement (31- 20+11-respondents). One Chinese participant states positively that ‘*the most useful thing (of this exchange) is writing half in the L1 and half in the L2*’ (p1.1, Question 6, Appendix P). Thus, we may ask how this approach in particular promotes L[C]2 learning and the development of language awareness.

First, reflections emerging from focus group interviews reveal participants’ L[C]1/L[C]2 awareness development (see answers to Question 5 in Appendices P-V): ‘*during exchanges I found that we had different word order and I often had an idea that my English word order was as bad as theirs*’ (p2.1 Question 5, Appendix Q). With regard to the Irish/American participants’ thoughts, two participants declare that their language awareness increased and their comments focus on their awareness of L1:

yes (my language awareness increased), like when I write in my English to Lanlan, I had a rule it should be 100% correct. ... I have to correct the grammar, so I have to really concentrate on what I have to write. It’s too informal too casual - some phrases I used and I was afraid that Lanlan couldn’t understand. (p3.2 question 5, Appendix R)

The participant notices her/his own informal expressions in e-mails which leads to more careful writing on her/his part when communicating with the Chinese partner; hence, the Irish/American participant’s L1 awareness develops. Similarly, another Irish/American participant notices the differences of English writing between her/his Chinese partner and her/his own:

I think that it may be good for them to see how a 21-year-old European and American person speaks, because sometimes I find that she says something that is completely correct but no one speaks like that. It's like 100% correct, but it just doesn't feel right. (p3.1 question 5, Appendix R)

Second, Comments 24-33 in Table 5.8 demonstrate participants' awareness of L[C]1/L[C]2.

Table 5. 8: Comments related to awareness of L[C]1/L[C]2

Comment	Participant
24. 'I really enjoyed reading my partner's e-mail, especially her/his Chinese part, because I wanted to see if they had the 'English Chinese'. As you know, we Chinese often use Chinglish'	p1.4 (Question 6, Appendix P)
25. 'The most enjoyable was to find out their language errors and then relate them to my own errors'	p2.1 (Question 6, Appendix Q)
26. 'My partner corrected my English errors and I corrected her/his Chinese errors, which developed the awareness of two languages. I wouldn't write a wrong Chinese sentence to my partner. (<i>so did you usually think carefully about your Chinese sentences?</i>) yes'	p5.2 (Question 5, Appendix T)
27. 'From this exchange, I can also see my weakness in my own language'	p5.4 (Question 5, Appendix T)
28. 'For example, sometimes my partner expressed two meanings in one sentence and I had to correct it into one, which is difficult. Another situation is that I didn't see any mistakes in this sentence, but it sounded strange'	p5.3 (Question 6, Appendix T)
29. 'The most enjoyable part was to correct her/him, finding out her/his errors'	p1.3 (Question 6, Appendix P)
30. 'sometimes I felt what I wrote was correct, but after my partner's correction for me I knew that I had those weaknesses and later I gradually corrected those errors'	p7.1 (Question 5, Appendix V)
31. 'I could maintain my language sense during writing...my sense of English improved'	p1.5 (Question 6, Appendix P)
32. 'You can learn about your own errors from others' errors, which is helpful'	p2.3 (Question 5, Appendix Q)
33. 'Another example is her/his translation of 'it's great' into '今天很伟大', here 'great' means '很好(fine)', but she/he translated into '伟大(grandeur)'. I was surprised and understood the language difference between us. My awareness of the transfer between Chinese and English developed, Sometimes my partner's words should be understood as the meaning which I couldn't find in the dictionary'	p5.1 (Question 5, Appendix T)

10 statements in Table 5.8 indicate the development of L[C]1/L[C]2 awareness through reading partners' e-mails, writing to the partner or errors correction. Comments 24-26 illustrate the awareness of both L[C]1 and L[C]2 and Comment 24 also shows the

participant's motivation to exchange and her/his expectation from it. Comments 27-29 and Comments 30-33 relate to L[C]1 awareness and L[C]2 awareness, respectively. Comment 32 also points out a way of increasing L[C]2 awareness. The last comment demonstrates L[C]1 awareness leading to L[C]2 awareness.

Specifically, Comments 24-26 indicate awareness of both L[C]1 and L[C]2. It is noted that the exchange triggers curiosity about the use of the L1 by the partner, for example, *'The most enjoyable part was to correct her/him, finding out her/his errors'* (Comment 29). In addition, one Chinese participant reflects: *'I really enjoyed reading my partner's e-mail, especially her/his Chinese part, because I wanted to see if they had the 'English Chinese'. As you know, we Chinese often use Chinglish'* (Comment 24). This also indicates the participant's curiosity about the L[C]2, and its use. This curiosity about the L1 and L2 use is a manifestation of the development of participants' language awareness. Comments 27-29 are related to L[C]1 awareness: *'From this exchange, I can also see my weakness in my own language'* (Comment 27); *'For example, sometimes my partner expressed two meanings in one sentence and I had to correct it into one, which is difficult. Another situation is that I didn't see any mistakes in this sentence, but it sounded strange'* (Comment 28). Participants' L[C]2 awareness development is also reported in Comments 30-33: *'I could maintain my language sense during writing...my sense of English improved'* (Comment 31). This illustrates that writing in e-tandem provides this focus. Another interesting finding in Comment 33 suggests that a particular depth in language awareness *per se* is achieved: *'Another example is her/his translation of 'it's great' into '今天很伟大', here 'great' means '很好 (fine)', but she/he translated into '伟大 (grandeur)'. I was surprised and understood the language difference between us. My awareness of the transfer between Chinese and English developed. Sometimes my partner's words should be understood as the meaning which I couldn't find in the dictionary'*. This example is a good illustration of how participants' growing L[C]1 awareness can lead to L[C]2 awareness.

In addition, according to Schmidt (1990), noticing is a necessary condition for language awareness and 4 comments in Table 5.9 confirm this.

Table 5. 9: Comments related to L[C]1/L[C]2 noticing

Comment	Participant
34. 'My partner couldn't distinguish common words we seldom noticed, such as 公共厕所 (public toilet), 卫生间 (bathroom) and she/he asked me about these. If she/he didn't ask me, I would not notice them'	p5.2 (Question 5, Appendix T)
35. 'Through e-mail exchanges I found that my partner used punctuation incorrectly. I didn't notice this problem and but later I did'	p5.3 (Question 5, Appendix T)
36. 'From this exchange, I can also see my weakness in my own language...I found it was funny that I would write in Chinese like that...'	p5.4 (Question 5, Appendix T)
37. 'What I usually learned from textbooks was some formal English, but my partner's e-mails would have idioms or new words which I had never seen, or even, which were not easy to find through searching the Internet. From my partner's e-mails, I found that some words she/he used were seldom seen in my daily life. She/he usually used some informal expressions. As for the foreigners, I found that they usually organised their Chinese sentences word by word, which read funny.'	p1.5 (Question 5, Appendix P)

Comments in Table 5.9 mainly deal with participants' noticing of language use and language in context. Comments 34-37 indicate participants' development of L[C]1 awareness through *noticing* while Comment 37 involves both L[C]1 and L[C]2 awareness.

Comments 34-36 are related to the awareness of L[C]1: '*My partner couldn't distinguish common words we seldom noticed, such as 公共厕所 (public toilet), 卫生间 (bathroom) and she/he asked me about these. If she/he didn't ask me, I would not notice them*';

Through e-mail exchanges I found that my partner used punctuation incorrectly. I didn't notice this problem and but later I did'; 'From this exchange, I can also see my weakness in my own language...I found it was funny that I would write in Chinese like that...

In these examples, the participants' L[C]1 awareness is triggered by noticing as a result of the mirroring effect created by her/his e-tandem partner's contributions. Hence, awareness emerges not only because of comparison and contrast but also because of a change of perspective on the L[C]1. Responses displayed in Figure 4.31 (p. 118) indicate that 20 respondents (51%) respondents often notice their partners' use of L1 expressions as being different from their own. This result corroborates Darhower's (2008) finding from a post-chat questionnaire where the majority of participants in both groups reported frequently noticing the correct way to say things in their L2 as they noticed it in the NS

(native speaker) discourse. In Figure 4.33 (p. 119), the vast majority of respondents (33 of 39 - 85%) report awareness of the differences between their partners' L1 and their L2 use of language learned from textbooks, such as Comment 37 on both L[C]1 and L[C]2 awareness (Table 5.9 above):

What I usually learned from textbooks was some formal English, but my partner's e-mails would have idioms or new words which I had never seen, or even, which were not easy to find through searching the Internet. From my partner's e-mails, I found that some words she/he used were seldom seen in my daily life. She/he usually used some informal expressions. As for the foreigners, I found that they usually organised their Chinese sentences word by word, which read funny.

Another Chinese participant from focus group 5 also agrees that '*my partner's spoken English and writing are different from what I learned in class*' (p5.1 question 5, Appendix T). Since participants report comparing what they see from their partners' L1 use and what they usually learn in traditional classes or textbooks, their perspective on L2 use gains an additional dimension. This finding confirms the influence that comparing input and output has on learners' noticing processes (Schmidt, 1990).

Table 4.35 (p. 152) calculates the number of L2 features most often reported in learning diaries. In total, 69 L2 features are reported and include L2 expressions (29 accounting for 42%) which are the most frequently reported feature followed by vocabulary and sentence structures (16 out of 69 - for each) while grammar (8 out of 69) is the least reported L2 feature. This partly confirms Simard's *et al.* (2007) study that participants significantly improved both their grammar and their vocabulary. These results indicate that the e-tandem participants in this study tend to notice more L2 gains through new words and phrases. This result is in line with Darhower's (2008, p. 62) finding that both groups in his study noticed new words in the L2 more frequently than they noticed grammatical structures.

Last, following noticing of the language input from their tandem partners, participants appear to enter another stage as they imitate their partner's L1. In Figure 4.32, a majority of respondents (74% - 28 out of 38) report imitating their partner's use of L1 expressions. 4 extracts (Extracts 20 to 23, p. 203-204) present participants' noticing of their partners' L1 and how this impacts on their L2 writing. All extracts focus on participants' noticing their partners' e-mail opening and concluding formulae as they subsequently use or

modify their L2 output (without being corrected by their partners). Mindful of the basic nature of these linguistic items, we find echoes of Schmidt's (1990) finding that when a language feature appears more frequently in the input, an item will be more likely to be noticed. Moreover, Witte (2011) states that development of intercultural competence relies on 'learning a foreign language and its sociocultural context' (p. 90). In the above extracts, imitating the partner's language of e-mail greetings is placed in a sociocultural context, thus this imitation is rooted in both intercultural and language awareness, even at the early stages of exposure to authentic use of the L2.

5.3.2 L2 Correction and Feedback

This section first categories and deals with examples of participants' L2 errors, and then further discuss the findings relating to participants' L2 correction experience.

5.3.2.1 Examples of Participants' L2 Errors

Based on the reviews conducted in Chapter 3 and the examination of the corrections made by participants as well as the content of their learning diaries, 7 categories of errors were identified for Mandarin as an L2: (1) wrong noun/verb/adverb, (2) missing subject/predicate, (3) word order error, (4) wrong sentence structure, (5) redundant adverb/verb, (6) uncompleted sentence, (7) wrong punctuation. In respect of English as an L2, 7 categories of errors were also identified: (1) misuse of words, (2) wrong tense, (3) wrong spelling, (4) wrong word order, (5) missing conjunction/verb/article, (6) wrong preposition, (7) wrong sentence structure. Table 4.22 presents the examples of these errors.

Table 5. 10: Types and examples of participants' L2 errors in this study

	Types of error	Examples
English speakers' Mandarin errors	(1) wrong noun/verb/adverb	a. '你觉得我的 声明 准确吗' should be '你觉得我的 说明 准确吗' b. '因为最近忙 及 了' should be '因为最近忙 极 了'
	(2) missing subject/predicate	a. '...很激动' should be '... 我 很激动'
	(3) word order error	a. '我们都要吃饭 每天 ' should be '我们 每天 都要吃饭'
	(4) wrong sentence structure	a. '我很忙跟我的学习和我的工作' should be '我很忙 于 我的工作和学习'
	(5) redundant adverb/verb	a. ' 如何 你的考试考得好不好' should be '你的考试考得好不好'
	(6) uncompleted sentence	a. '是最漂亮的岛, 而且有最高的度' should be ' 它是 我见过最漂亮的岛, 而且 它 的温度最高'
	(7) wrong punctuation	a. '您好好久不见确实. 对不起,' should be '你好! ! 好久不见, 确实对不起.'
Chinese students' English errors	(1) misuse of words	a. 'Haven't you fit for it?'
	(2) wrong tense	a. ' Do you have watched it?'
	(3) wrong spelling	a. 'It will have a bed effect on my academic.'
	(4) wrong word order	a. 'Can you tell me what is your part-time job?'
	(5) missing conjunction/verb/article	a. 'I think playing football (is) more interesting than (playing) basketball.'
	(6) wrong preposition	a. 'I learn English in 11 years old.'
	(7) wrong sentence structure	a. 'do you feel difficult to learn Chinese?'

5.3.2.2 L2 Correction and Development of Language Awareness

E-tandem partners provide feedback to each other by correcting their partner's language errors. The majority of responses in Figure 4.26 (p. 115) indicate a positive disposition to being corrected by a peer, such as '*the exercise was helpful*'; '*the process made me think*'. On the other hand, several respondents report embarrassment (Chinese participants); however, 1 Irish participant (C1-IR8) writes '*I just had to get used to the fact that I will have to correct someone's language usage, and I myself will be corrected*' (see Table 5.11 in Section 5.4.1). A few participants suggest that the exercise was meaningless or of little help; however, this may be due to the limited number of interactions that took place between these tandem partners. When investigating the factors helping to achieve language awareness (Figure 4.38 and Figure 4.39, p. 122), '*being corrected by partners*' is rated as the second most popular choice while the factor '*interaction with my partner*' is rated 5 - *the most helpful* by both Chinese and Irish/American participants.

Attitudes to correcting their tandem partners are also positive for the majority of respondents (Figure 4.27, p. 116), as '*the process made participants think*', it '*benefited*' them and they '*learned a lot*'. However, negative responses, reporting the process to be

'time-consuming', 'tiring', 'not very useful', also appear. Tables 4.25, 4.26, and 4.27 (p. 145-146) indicate the participants' instances of noticing their partner's L[C]2 errors in each cohort. Among the 12 participants in the 3 tables, only 2 participants, CN1 (Table 4.25) and CN12 (Table 4.26), show a steady increase in noticing errors. In addition, participant CN1 is the only one who corrected her/his partner's errors more regularly than others and the percentage of errors noticed by this participant increased over time as follows: 8%, 25%, 33% and 36%. According to Wali and Blin (2009), the increase in the noticing of errors illustrates students' awareness and knowledge of correct L2 forms. However, it appears that few participants are able to sustain correcting their partners' errors for three months, although most of them recognise the benefits of doing so. This is possibly due to a decline in participants' motivation in the later stages of the exchange as not only does error correction frequency decline but so do exchanges. Presumably both are closely related: the more one exchanges, the more one engages with content and form; the less one exchanges, the less one engages with content and form. The loss of motivation and its impact on the participants' experience is specifically discussed in Section 5.5.1.

On the other hand, Chinese participants report that error correction can help to develop their L[C]1/L[C]2 awareness. For example, *'when I wrote Chinese, I had to check if there were any errors and I paid attention to my grammar'* (p1.3 question 5, Appendix P); *'Now that I helped my partner to correct errors, I had to consider carefully the places of these elements in order to point out her/his errors.'* (p2.1 question 5, Appendix Q);

I felt that my knowledge of Chinese grammar was not enough, because almost every Chinese sentence written by my partner was wrong. I didn't know how to correct her/him, because I didn't know how to explain to her/him about the subject, predicate and object and as a result I think my Chinese knowledge is limited. (p7.3 question 5, Appendix V)

My partner corrected my English errors and I corrected her/his Chinese errors, which developed the awareness of two languages. I wouldn't write a wrong Chinese sentence to my partner. (so did you usually think carefully about your Chinese sentences?) yes (Comment 34, Table 5.9 - p. 206)

'For example, sometimes my partner expressed two meanings in one sentence and I had to correct it into one, which is difficult. Another situation is that I didn't see any mistakes in this sentence, but it sounded strange' (Comment 28, Table 5.8 - p. 206). To further illustrate, a Chinese respondent in the focus group interview states: *'Sometimes I felt what*

I wrote was correct, but after my partner's correction for me I knew that I had those weaknesses and later I gradually corrected those errors.' (Comment 30, Table 5.8). Overall, L[C]2 awareness development is expressed more readily and in varying ways by the Chinese participants of this study: the mirroring effect mentioned above emerges once more in the three following comments *'you can learn about your own errors from others' errors, which is helpful*' (Comment 32, Table 5.8); *'The most enjoyable was to find out their language errors and then relate them to my own errors'* (Comment 25, Table 5.8); *'I enjoyed my partner correcting my language errors and I also liked to see her/his errors'* (p2.3 question 6, Appendix Q). The noticed errors are also interpreted as giving a window into the partner's mind and perhaps into the difficulties encountered with L2 learning: *'The useful thing is that their language errors showed their different thinking'* (Comment 17, Table 5.6 - p. 188). This understanding is likely to lead to a change of behaviour and awareness. With regard to the Irish/American participants, only one comment related to the usefulness of error correction: *'The most useful is when she corrects my grammar mistakes'* (p3.1 question 6, Appendix R).

Figure 4.59 (p. 147) and Figure 4.60 (p. 148) indicate the type of errors corrected by Chinese and NS of English. The top error pointed out by both sides is the misuse of Chinese/English words. The second most commonly corrected error, according to Chinese participants is their partners' incorrect word order. This confirms the findings of Yu and Chen (2012) who list word ordering errors as the number 1 error among Chinese learners. However, redundant adverb is found as the third most common error in this study while it is ranked as in 10th place in Yu and Chen's study (2012). With regard to the Irish/American participants, they often focus on their partner's wrong spelling. It is interesting to find that word order is the least noticed error by the English speakers in this study which contradicts Heydari and Bagheri's (2012) finding that word order is the second most common error made by EFL learners. To illustrate these findings, a response from the focus group interviews provides a concrete example: one Chinese respondent mentioned one of her/his partner's errors *'我来读书在上海'* which means *'I study in Shanghai'*; however, in Chinese, *'in Shanghai'* should appear before the verb. With regard to wrong spellings corrected by the Irish/American participants for their Chinese partners, one notes that they tend to be typos that change the meaning of the word or sentence (for example, *'bad'* instead of *'bed'* as corrected by Brett for Lanlan in the e-mail on Nov 7,

2012). However, one Irish participant (C1-IR8) in Table 4.34 (p. 150) notes:

I found that typos are a bit more serious when typing in characters, as it could change the meaning of a sentence entirely. As such, I realized that I need to proof-read my letters more carefully before sending them off.

It also indicates that Irish/American participants do not appear to focus on their partner's language errors, but seem to be more interested in sentence meaning, which confirms Chen's (2008) observation related to feedback from partners that American students paid more attention to message content while Taiwanese students expected to get more feedback from American students on sentence structure or correction of their grammatical errors. One Chinese participant reflects in the focus group interview: '*I corrected her/his Chinese errors, but my English errors were not corrected*' (p5.1 Question 5, Appendix T). The absence of or limited corrections performed by the Irish/American students is common in this study.

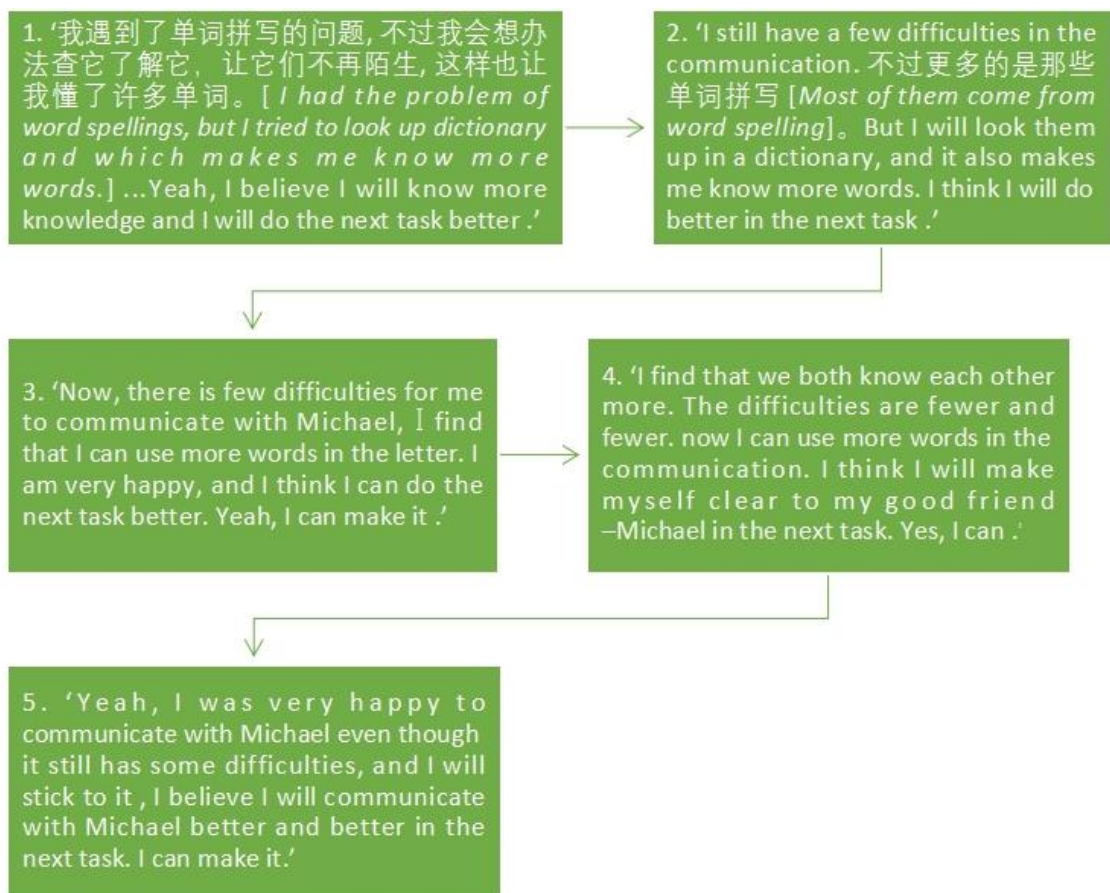
5.3.3 Self-reflection on L1-L2 Specific Skills

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are the 4 language skills in language learning. Self-reports in Figure 4.36 (p. 120) indicate that, predictably, *writing* and *reading* skills benefited the most from the e-tandem exchange. Interestingly, the e-tandem exchange appears to have also impacted positively on *speaking* for Chinese respondents. However, one must note that these skills were not pre-and post-tested. This echoes Chen's (2008) finding when investigating the effect of e-mail exchange between Taiwanese and American students on college English writing: both participants' reading and writing skills benefited from this online communication with NS with the additional advantage in oral practice because of 'the "chatting-like" nature of e-mail correspondence' (p. 151). However, both from the questionnaires and the focus group interviews, respondents recommend adding oral exchanges to this text-based communication: '*It (e-tandem exchange) provides no opportunity to practice oral Chinese...It might work better if used with instant messaging software such as QQ*' (p1.4, Appendix J); '*The limitations are limited time for interaction and lack of oral practice*' (p2.9, Appendix J); '*limitation is that we couldn't practice listening and speaking*' (p2.17, Appendix J). Such limitations could be overcome by the integration of face-to-face interaction in line with Lightfoot's (2006) list of the advantages associated with face-to-face communication.

In spite of the absence of oral and aural interaction, Figure 4.34 (p. 120) illustrates that a majority of respondents report an increase in L2 vocabulary use as a result of the exchange. However, Table 5.4 (p. 186) also presents some challenges related to participants' ability to use the L2, such as challenges in L2 spelling and limited L2 vocabulary.

Extract 24 is from the Chinese participant in Dyad 8 of Cohort 1. This student submitted learning diaries five times, in which the entries about the difficulties she/he met are reported in Extract 24.

Extract 24 (C1-CN8)



Extract 24 from a learning diary tracks the difficulties and progress made by participant CN8 from the initial diary entry where numerous spelling errors are made to relying on a dictionary to avoid repeating these errors and also to learn new words. It shows the difficulties and progress made by participant CN8 in Cohort 1 spanning 5 learning diary submissions. In the first entry, word spelling and lack of vocabulary appear to be the main

difficulty; this is reiterated in the second entry. However, from the third entry onwards, progress is reported, particularly in the increase in vocabulary which seems to improve her/his communication with her/his partner. In the 4th entry, fewer and fewer difficulties with perceived clarity in communication appear to be achieved. In the last entry, participant CN8 concluded that she/he was happy to communicate with her/his partner although there were still some difficulties.

Moreover, in the final 3 entries the participant chooses to rely more and more on the L2 to express her/his thoughts as she/he gains confidence over time. Hence, the diary also becomes an additional learning strategy for this learner.

Reflection on language learning helps to raise language awareness, especially reflection on linguistic features (Simard and Wong, 2004). In participants' reflection on L1-L2 exchanges in their learning diaries, they usually report on the linguistic features they notice from their tandem partner. In Table 4.34 (p. 150), 3 out of the 4 participants who have three or more submissions report a steady increase in L2 gains. The reported L2 features in learning diaries, include: vocabulary, expressions, sentence structures, and grammar. For example, one American participant writes in her/his diary:

Often Lan Lan would explain specific vocabulary words and phrases that she would use throughout the e-mails she exchanged with me. Vocabulary and phrases such as 团圆饭 [family reunion dinner], 生活节节高 [life is better and better], 压岁钱 [pocket money], etc. I found this information to be very useful because it's wonderful to know these kinds of words and expressions, but they are seldom taught in a classroom environment. (Item 15, p. 249)

Further reflection from this American participant suggests growth in language awareness and the need to adopt an ethno-relative perspective in her/his L2 use:

I should work on breaking my habits of thinking in English and focus harder on thinking more like an average Chinese. I think what Lan Lan means is when I write to her I'm mostly just translating my English sentences to Chinese, but I also need to think about how the average Chinese would say these sentences and translate accordingly. (Item 14, p. 248)

Thus, the reflection activity helps to develop participants' LC1 and LC2 awareness in the e-tandem virtual space, which confirms the importance of reflection as this can promote learner's awareness of developing in such a third space (Witte, 2015).

There is some evidence (Comments 11-18 in Table 5.6 - p. 188) that reveals participants' change in communication behaviour and the development of the will to be understood (self-awareness), which indicates their LC1/LC2 awareness development. For example, one comment:

so when I wrote Chinese, I had to check if there were any errors and I paid attention to my grammar. As for the English part, I usually thought that if I did not write correctly, how can I communicate with my partner. Thus, my language awareness developed a little. (Comment 11).

The other comment is similar:

As we wrote half in English half in Chinese. I needed to consider if my partner could understand me when I wrote in English and also consider if she/he can accept my Chinese, for example, I would ask myself if she/he could understand certain idioms. (Comment 12)

The will to be understood becomes a priority for this participant: *'however, I valued more the use of my own language, which means I paid more attention to if my partner understood what I said'* (Comment 16). In addition, being understood by others becomes a source of satisfaction: *'This exchange is like providing an opportunity for me to practise what I learned from textbooks, to use what I learned at home to interact with them and they understood me'* (Comment 15). The following example indicates that the will to be understood is not just limited to language as a cultural dimension becomes manifest. *'(what, do you think, helps you to develop this awareness?) I think it is my desire to make my partner understand my culture'* (Comment 14). Only one American participant reports on her/his change of behaviour and the will to be understood:

but when I write to Lanlan, I have to correct the grammar, so I have to really concentrate on what I have to write. It's too informal too casual- some phrases I used and I was afraid that Lanlan couldn't understand. (Comment 13)

However, one participant reports no change of her/his behaviour: *'With regard to Chinese, as it is my native language and I use it in daily life, I didn't feel any development'* (Comment 18), in contrast with those who did change the way they wrote in Chinese to be understood more easily.

In summary, a third space facilitated by the e-tandem exchange promotes participants' intercultural language learning as their LC1 and LC2 awareness appear to develop. In

particular, L[C]1 and L[C]2 awareness seems to grow during the exchange and even precede [L]C1 and [L]C2 awareness. This is not surprising, as the exchange is in written form. On the other hand, many of the focus group comments emanating from Chinese students also suggest the development of a third space where they report new LC1 awareness. This is achieved not simply by a compare-and-contrast process, but by a mirroring effect produced by the partner's use of the L2. Moreover, the will to be understood becomes a priority in the communication pattern of these participants, who seem to display a heightened sense of the self.

5.4 Telecollaboration Tasks in the Development of Awareness

The third research question guiding this study investigates the role and impact of informal exchanges and tasks on the development of awareness. This section focuses on the function of tasks in e-tandem exchanges followed by the role of tasks in awareness development.

5.4.1 Function of Tasks in E-tandem

In Figure 4.24 (p. 114), interaction with the partner combined with spontaneous exchanges and corrections by the partner are rated highly by participants. However, tasks are also reported to play a notable role in achieving IC awareness. While 16 out of 31 dyads only managed to complete only one task and 3 dyads did not complete any task, Figure 4.42 indicates that 6+24 (77%) respondents declare that tasks are either very or somewhat important in developing [L]C1 and [L]C2 awareness. More specifically, Figures 4.40-4.44 (p. 122-124) explore task functions from different perspectives. When asked whether tasks increase L[C]1 (Figure 4.40) and L[C]2 (Figure 4.41) awareness, 18 (46%) and 14 (36%) respondents choose *somewhat* or *very much* respectively for L[C]1 awareness development; however, 18 (46%) and 14 (36%) respondents report the development of L[C]2 awareness *very much* and *somewhat*, respectively. This suggests that more participants report higher levels of L[C]2 awareness than L[C]1 awareness; this may be due to participants putting more effort into noticing L2 features than into correcting their partners' contributions. Figures 4.43 and 4.44 investigate whether tasks promote the comparison of L[C]1 and L[C]2, [L]C1 and [L]C2. The results suggest that 6 more respondents think that tasks help to compare [L]C1 and [L]C2. This is not surprising as the e-tandem tasks in this study are not form-focused tasks and the main

activity is about exchanging and discussing worldviews through word associations and situations. In contrast, Chun's (2011) word association task includes 4 language-related words (language, dialect, slang, Denglish) and appears to yield better LC2 awareness results. However, we should also note that in the focus group interviews, 2 Irish participants declare directly that tasks are the least useful part of the exchange (p3.1, p3.3, Appendix R). Moreover, overall, tasks for the development of L[C]2 awareness appear to be favoured by more Chinese than by Irish/American participants. This is also illustrated in Figure 4.38 and Figure 4.39 (p. 122). Although participants from both sides have different attitudes toward the usefulness of tasks, they all tend to prefer unstructured and spontaneous exchanges.

Participants had to keep learning diaries during the exchange; this activity can also be interpreted as an additional task for the promotion of LC1 and LC2 self-awareness. Figure 4.47 (p. 127) illustrates participants' attitudes toward such an activity. 15+12 (69%) respondents report that the exercise helped them to reflect *somewhat* or *very much*. However, 22 (56%) respondents express their unhappiness on keeping learning diaries in Figure 4.46 (p. 126). Interestingly, no Irish/American participant reports positive sentiments on keeping diaries. In spite of the different perceptions, we recall Dooly's (2007) findings that journal entries are a useful exercise for recording of students' metalinguistic reflections on linguistic features.

Another function of using tasks in e-tandem addresses the difficulty partners have in finding discussion topics. In Figure 4.54 (p. 131), 11+6 (43%) respondents report high levels of difficulty in finding topics to discuss, which is higher than the other two categories '*keeping my motivation to interact*' and '*writing regularly to my e-tandem partner*'. Results from Figure 4.57 (p. 132) indicate that more than half (56%) of the Irish group express difficulty in finding topics; with regard to Chinese respondents, 14 (47%) do not report such difficulty against 12 (40%) who do. In respect of the rules of e-tandem, there are three difficulties which participants met during the exchanges (Table 5.11 below). One Irish participant said she/he had to get used to the rule of correcting and being corrected. 2 Chinese participants reflected that it was difficult for them to find a proper topic to communicate on as they were not familiar with their partner. The third difficulty pertained to the tandem tasks in this project. According to one participant, the task limited

their communication.

Table 5. 11: Difficulties with the rules of e-tandem

E-tandem	The rule of correcting each other	1. C1-IR8: ‘I just had to get used to the fact that I will have to correct someone’s language usage, and I myself will be corrected.’
	Finding a topic	1. C2-CN1: ‘可能是我们文化和思想的不同，我发现很难能跟搭档交流，不懂用什么话题，对两个生活环境大不相同的人，望老师指点。’ [<i>Probably because of different culture and thinking, I found it very difficult to communicate with my partner. I don’t know what kind of topics can be discussed between two persons from different cultural backgrounds. Please give me some advice.</i>] 2. C2-CN10: ‘发邮件有时话题不太多，不知道怎样找到一个共同话题可以深聊...交流话题少，不知道说些什么，如果能面对面交流会更好。’ [<i>There are not many topics to discuss by e-mail because I don’t know how to find a topic which can make us discuss more...Because of a lack of topics, I don’t know what to say in the e-mail. Maybe it would be better to talk face-to-face.</i>]
	Task limits communication	1. C2-CN12: ‘感觉我们的交谈都受到了局限，有时候都不知道跟对方说些什么话题，总感觉是格式化的问题，这样觉得没什么意义。希望在日后的交谈老师能放松交谈的范围。’ [<i>I feel that our talk has been limited and then we don’t know what to talk about to each other, which is boring. Hope the teacher won’t limit the topic for our chat in the future.</i>]

Two Chinese participants report this difficulty in their learning diaries (Table 5.11): ‘*Probably because of different culture and thinking, I found it very difficult to communicate with my partner. I don’t know what kind of topics can be discussed between two persons from different cultural backgrounds.*’; ‘*There are not many topics to discuss by e-mail because I don’t know how to find a topic which can make us discuss more...Because of a lack of topics, I don’t know what to say in the e-mail*’. Since the participants are from different cultural backgrounds and have never known each other, the establishment of a good relationship in such a short time through e-mails is not easy. Considering this, the distribution of tasks to e-tandem participants is likely to provide a focus for the exchange and help to overcome the difficulty in finding topics to discuss. However, one Chinese participant (C2-CN12) states that tasks limit communication: ‘*I feel that our talk has been limited and then we don’t know what to talk about to each other, which is boring. Hope the teacher won’t limit the topic for our chat in the future*’

(Table 5.11). This participant seems to confuse tasks discussion and free e-mail exchanges. These two activities should not be in conflict and perhaps clearer instructions and preparation for e-tandem exchange would help to overcome the problem. Another comment on the limitation of this e-tandem exchange from a Chinese participant: *'The tasks involve topics that are too broad. Learning their culture should start from appreciating their daily activities'* (p3.3, Appendix J). This reveals that the topic and content of tasks should perhaps be related to participants' daily lives, to facilitate the completion of tasks.

In addition, Figure 4.45 (p. 126) shows that opinions on tasks are divided with respondents stating that it was somewhat difficult (15-39%) and somewhat easy (13-33%) to discuss the tasks with their partners. Possible reasons for this difficulty may be linked to a lack of understanding of the task requirements or no cooperation from the partner. One of the Chinese participant reflects during the focus group interview: *'Another thing is that my partner said she/he didn't understand how to do one of the tasks, so we didn't discuss it'* (p5.4 Question 4, Appendix T). This finding raises the question on the role of the teacher in such exchanges.

Finding a topic to discuss is difficult, especially a topic of interest to both partners as reported by a Chinese participant:

In the second semester, my partner seldom replied to me and the content of her e-mails was very simple. She/he didn't ask me any questions. I think it took time to find a topic which both of us felt interested in. (p5.6 Question 2, Appendix T)

From the questionnaire, findings from Table 4.7 (p. 133) indicate that food/eating habits and festivals are the most popular topics mentioned by Chinese respondents and most of Irish/American emphasised that they like to discuss 'cultural things'. Table 5.13 below lists the 16 topics discussed by participants in e-mail exchanges; the most popular choices among all the dyads include hobbies (especially music and sports), college life, hometown, travel, language study, food and the Spring Festival. This appears to be a little different from the findings in Table 4.7 and may inform the design of future e-tandem tasks. It also echoes a student's quote in O'Dowd and Ritter (2006): 'I know that talking about culture could be useful for increasing our knowledge of the world, but neither Germans or

Spanish ones will be totally close to one another if we don't talk about hobbies and personal interests.' (p. 631).

Table 5. 12: Number of dyads per topic discussed via e-mail

Topic	No. of dyads	Topic	No. of dyads
hobbies (music/sports)	27	summer/winter vacation	10
college life	24	part-time job	10
hometown	21	career plan	8
travelling	16	movie	7
language study	15	Christmas/ St. Patrick Day	6
food	14	weather	5
Spring Festival	11	education systems	4
family	10	marriage/divorce	4

5.4.2 Tasks or Informal Exchange for Awareness Development

This sub-section first discusses the evidence collected from e-mails and online forum entries with regard to awareness development when completing tasks. This is followed by the comparison of awareness development in informal exchange.

In respect of the words chosen for discussion in the word association task, Table 4.13 (p. 139) indicates that not all of the proposed words were chosen by the dyads; the word *individualism* which accounts for 11 of the total 31 dyads appears to be the preferred choice. It seems that the words offered to the participants did not arouse active discussion. One American participant was more specific and stated: '*a topic like alcohol is good, but others like money, recycling are not as some comments from them are very general*' (p3.2 Question 3, Appendix R).

22 examples from informal interactions in e-mails also illustrate participants' development of IC awareness under 5 different themes of awareness of self and other: culture as a relative construct; self-awareness - discovering differences in behaviour; developing awareness - differences in values; willingness to modify behaviour; discussion of personal and difficult issues. With regard to language awareness, in Item 15 (p. 251), the American participant admits that, from her/his partner's e-mails, she/he learned vocabulary and phrases which seldom appear in class. This indicates that language gains can also be obtained through informal learning. However, 19 extracts of Task 1 discussions with a total of 95 comments were categorised under 7 categories of

awareness development in the following order, from the most to the least (Table 4.15, p. 140): understanding [L]C1/[L]C2, evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2, interest in [L]C1/[L]C2, speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2, comparison of differences between [L]C1/[L]C2, comparison of similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2 and discussion on a clash of opinion. However, when asking about concrete examples of their awareness development, only 2 of the Chinese participants (see the following paragraph) mentioned tasks as a useful means of raising LC1 awareness; for other participants, the discussion of topics in informal exchanges is reported as being more effective. Thus, it appears that while tasks seem to promote LC1 and LC2 awareness, few participants are able to actually report this awareness.

In addition, based on the 5 online forums, Table 5.13 indicates the occurrences of the 7 categories, from the most to the least, as understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2, speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2, evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 and comparison of the differences between [L]C1 and [L]C2, interest in [L]C1/[L]C2, discussion on a clash of opinions and then the comparison of the similarities between [L]C1 and [L]C2.

Table 5. 13: Number of categories emerging from the participants' forum comments

Categories	Occurrence in the forum
understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2	10
speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2	6
evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2	5
[L]C1/[L]C2 differences comparison	5
interest in [L]C1/[L]C2	4
discussion on a clash of opinions	1
[L]C1/[L]C2 similarities comparison	0
Total	31

Combining the findings in both Tables 5.1 (p. 181) and 5.13, the categories 'understanding [L]C1/[L]C2' (N=44) and 'evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2' (N=29) emerge most frequently in participants' interactions. This is a little different from Liaw's (2007) calculation of online forum entries with regard to the discussions of word associations: most of the entries demonstrated 'knowledge about another country and culture' and then 'interest in other people's way of life' as the primary concerns of e-tandem participants. One Chinese participant in the focus group interview reports:

I think my cultural awareness developed a lot. Take the word association task for example, I learned that we had different explanations to words because of our different languages. We also

had different understandings of some numbers and other things. (see p5.6 Question 4, Appendix T)

Another Chinese participant recalls one example of her/his cultural awareness development: *‘For example, we had a task about bribing teachers. In our country, giving gifts is a habit showing respect. However, they didn’t think it was suitable. Thus, we can see the differences from our behaviour and culture’* (see p5.1 Question 4, Appendix T).

5.5 Challenges Met by Chinese and Irish/American Participants in E-tandem Exchanges

The fourth research question is ‘What are the challenges that may arise during the e-tandem exchanges and how do the participants meet them?’. In order to answer this question, findings from this study are discussed under the following 3 headings: motivation, the role of the partner and e-mail/online forum tools.

5.5.1 Motivation

Table 4.2 (p. 99), totaling the number of returned questionnaires, indicates that almost all Chinese participants responded to the questionnaire except for 1 participant from Cohort 1, however, fewer than 50% of Irish/American participants submitted responses to the questionnaire in Cohorts 1 and 2 and no Irish/American participant responded in Cohort 3. In addition, from the total number of participants’ exchanged e-mails in Table 4.12 (p. 138), Chinese participants consistently sent more e-mails than their tandem partners in the 3 cohorts. This is surprising as one might have expected the number of e-mails from both sides to be the same. What’s more, Tables 4.25-27 (p. 145-146) indicate that fewer Irish/American participants than Chinese participants continued to correct their partners’ errors beyond a period of three months from start of the exchange. The trend is similar for the submitted learning diaries in Table 4.30 (p. 148) where 11 participants in total have two or more submissions with only just 2 Irish/American participants among the contributors. Finally, participation in the focus group interviews is similarly unbalanced with 24 Chinese participants (83%) and 5 Irish/American (17%) (Table 4.38, p. 155). The results seem to violate the e-tandem principle of reciprocity and suggest unequal levels of motivation and/or engagement between these participants. Findings from focus group interviews are categorised in Table 5.14.

Table 5. 14: Comments related to reciprocity and motivation

Comment	Participant
38. 'we often asked each other about our own confusions'	p5.4 (Question 4, Appendix T)
39. 'it's a pity that my partner's replies were always too short. I believe that we should be equal, but... so I didn't write anymore later'	p6.2 (Question 2, Appendix U)
40. 'There is a Chinese old saying: 'courtesy demands reciprocity.', so it is polite that you write to me and I reply to you. However, our partners did not seem to realise that. It's a pity. Is it a cultural difference? Do they have a different viewpoint from ours?..'	p6.2 (Question 7, Appendix U)
41. 'I would study English harder than before and learn more about their culture'	p1.4 (Question 6, Appendix P)
42. 'I really want to send e-mails, but I felt it meaningless that I couldn't get reply'	p5.5 (Question 2, Appendix T)
43. 'I think if we want to have a successful exchange, participants should be very interested in this exchange. Interest is very important'	p6.3 (Question 7, Appendix U)

In Table 5.14, Comments 38-43 are related to the principle of reciprocity and Comments 41-43 are about motivation. Participant in Comment 38 reports her/his mutual engagement in the exchanges while Comment 39 and 40 report the absence of engagement. Participant in Comment 41 reports her/his increase in motivation while Comment 42 indicates a loss of motivation. The last comment deals with the importance of interest in exchange.

In Table 5.14, two participants report on their perceived lack of equality and reciprocity: '*it's a pity that my partner's replies were always too short. I believe that we should be equal, but... so I didn't write anymore later*' (Comment 39); '*There is a Chinese old saying: 'courtesy demands reciprocity.', so it is polite that you write to me and I reply to you. However, our partners did not seem to realise that. It's a pity*' (Comment 40). Nevertheless, evidence of reciprocity was found in one participant's comment: '*we often asked each other about our own confusions*' (Comment 38). This also suggests that individual motivation in autonomous activity is key to successful telecollaborative exchanges as pointed out by Bretag (2006). For example, one participant's motivation during focus group interview is implied in the following comment: '*I really enjoyed reading my partner's e-mail, especially her/his Chinese part, because I wanted to see if they had the 'English Chinese'. As you know, we Chinese often use Chinglish*' (Comment 16, Table 5.6- p. 188). It indicates that this participant was motivated by her/his own

curiosity about the L[C]2 and its use. The same participant, reported an increase in motivation: *'I would study English harder than before and learn more about their culture'* (Comment 41).

However, the differing trends between Chinese and Irish/American participants suggest that specific cultural and/or circumstantial factors may be at work. The Irish/American students' lower level of participation may be due to the non-integration of the project into their curriculum and reliance on participants' good will. Thus, as volunteers, these participants were not under any pressure to participate in the exchanges as no marks were awarded for their effort. In contrast, the Chinese participants, were contacted and encouraged by the researcher while the supervision of the Irish/American participants mainly depended on their own language teacher; furthermore, the timely feedback from the researcher may not have been as consistent. Another reason for Irish/American participants' lower participation may stem from the fact that these Cohorts 1 and 2 students were studying in Shanghai University at the time of the exchange (Cohort 1 for the second semester and Cohort 2 for a year); as a result, their motivation to exchange with their partners was not as high as their Chinese counterparts because they were already in a stimulating environment defined by authentic interaction and exchange. This is confirmed by one of the comments from an Irish/American participant in the questionnaire: *'It was a great way to practise before I went to China. Once I was there, being surrounded by opportunities to practise at any time killed my desire to continue e-mails.'* (see p1.4, Appendix K). Figure 4.2 (p. 100) shows that all the Irish/American respondents had been staying in China for at least 9 months at the end of this project, none of the Chinese respondents had ever been to an English-speaking country. Thus, the Chinese participants may have had higher motivation to communicate with their tandem partners - native English speakers.

In addition, Figure 4.54 (p. 130) indicates that 13 (33%) questionnaire respondents declare that keeping their motivation to interact was the most difficult thing. Figure 4.56 (p. 132) suggests that 6 of the Irish/American participants rated keeping their motivation to interact at 5 - *the most difficult* while most of the Chinese respondents (19) rated this aspect of their experience at 1 and 2. This is confirmed when examining participants' exchange frequency. Writing regularly or once per week to their partner is reported as

most difficult by 6 Irish/American respondents. In contrast, 17 Chinese respondents did not perceive that writing regularly was particularly difficult (Figure 4.55, p. 131). Findings from Figure 4.24 (p. 114) reveal that 14 respondents believe that the biggest source of motivation is their partner against 8 who report self-motivation. Thus, understandably, most of the Chinese participants' decline in motivation is possibly due to their tandem partners' slow reply (see answers to Question 2 in the focus group interview). One example illustrates the loss of motivation because the exchange becomes meaningless without the partner's response: *'I really want to send e-mails, but I felt it meaningless that I couldn't get reply from my partner and then I gave up writing'* (Comment 42, Table 5.14 - p. 223). Here are several observations gleaned from Chinese participants' comments: *'Suggestion: hope our partners can be more active during exchange'* (see p2.6, Appendix K); *'I think interest is the first thing and the participants should keep their interests in interaction'* (see p2.12, Appendix K); *'Suggestion: provide more opportunities for interaction and increase individual motivation'* (see p3.6, Appendix K). One Chinese participant proposes a suggestion to increase motivation *'I think oral exchange can increase my interest in learning English'* (p3.7, Appendix J); these comments can inform the future design of e-tandem projects. Interest in e-tandem exchange seems to be a crucial factor mentioned by participants: *'I think if we want to have a successful exchange, participants should be very interested in this exchange. Interest is very important'* (Comment 43, Table 5.14). This confirms the findings of Ushioda (2000) and Appel and Gilabert (2002) who emphasises the role of 'interest and enjoyment of personal interaction with a native speaker' and 'interest in the meaning to be exchanged' in a successful exchange.

5.5.2 The Role of the Partner

The role of the partner in helping participant develop LC1 and LC2 awareness has been proved, not only through partner's error correction, but also through the content of their replies. In this example - *'we can see the differences from our behaviour and culture. (what helps you to develop this awareness?) it is through my partner's reply'* (Comment 9, Table 5.5 - p. 187) - the partner's reply helps to put things in perspective. Overall, in this study, Chinese respondents appear to complain more frequently about their partners than Irish or American participants do.

Figure 4.1 (p. 99) indicates that all the Chinese participants have much longer exposure time to the L2 (varying from 3 to 12 years) than their Irish/American partners. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the Chinese participants' level in English was higher than their Irish/American participants' level in Chinese at the time of the exchange. Consequently, the difference in L2 levels constitutes an additional difficulty in the communication between these participants. In the focus group interview - Group 4, one of the Irish respondents declares:

because my Chinese is terrible, ...what I do is just google translate from English to Chinese. So I just learn from Google. My sentence is very simple; I didn't learn much from my partner's correction. Maybe in the second semester, our Chinese would be better, we can speak more. But at the start, it is very hard (p4.1 Question 5, Appendix S).

The other Irish respondent also mentions that '*Their English is very good. The gap between Chinese and English was big, maybe closer is better, we can increase our awareness better and can do more*' (p4.2 Question 5, Appendix S). One of the Chinese respondents from Group 5 adds: '*I think the most difficult thing is that I totally couldn't understand my partner's Chinese, which is very important*' (p5.1 Question 6, Appendix T).

Participants' L2 learning in this study is similar to that in Kan's *et al.* (2013) study, in which 10 participants from the Open University in UK had just completed a beginner's course (1 year's study of Chinese); they were paired with 10 Chinese partners from Beijing who had at least 8 years' study of English. However, in Kan's *et al.* (2013) e-tandem project, participants were supervised and encouraged during the whole exchange in order to overcome the L[C]2 differences between participants. The fact that this particular project continues to run suggests that L[C]2 discrepancies can be successfully addressed given adequate supervision and encouragement. O'Rourke (2007) also states that one of the difficulties in e-tandem could be mismatch in proficiency, which may influence the achievement of reciprocity. However, the finding of Kan *et al.* (2013) confirms O'Rourke's (2007) declaration, elsewhere, that to match learners randomly should not be a big problem.

It is impossible to find two partners with the same L2 level because of the different cultural setting of the participants' universities. However, according to O'Dowd (2006),

three aspects need to be considered when pairing tandem partners: matching of expectations on both sides, time structure and student commitment. In this study, 7 more Chinese respondents than Irish/American respondents were not satisfied with their tandem partners (Figure 4.51, p. 129). One Chinese participant commented on this e-tandem exchange in the focus group interview:

But all the dyads did not seem that successful except for her/his dyad (p6.3). I think this is probably due to the participants. I don't know how our partners were chosen for this exchange. I felt that they were not as passionate as us. I think if we want to have a successful exchange, participants should be very interested in this exchange. Interest is very important, otherwise at the later stage of the exchange, this activity seems to become their burden. I think it is not a problem of being busy or not, it is an issue of attitude. (see p6.3 Question 7, Appendix U)

This participant doubts her/his partner's commitment and suggests that they do not share the same expectation as her/his partner's interest in the exchange is questioned. Figure 4.49 (p. 128) investigating participants' willingness to interact indicates the absence of Irish/American participants among the 11 (28%) respondents who selected '*always willing to interact with your partner*'. This result echoes the Chinese participant's speculation on their partners' lack of interest in this e-tandem exchange. 9 displays the number of topics that participants liked to discuss. The Irish students appear to be more limited in the number of topics they are able/willing to discuss; however, this may also be due to the difference in L2 proficiency.

In addition, one response from a Chinese participant relates the time structure of the exchange:

I think one of the reasons could be the time differences. For example, we had a break and we usually went to play. I am not sure if they have the same break, but after the break I didn't know how to continue our exchanges because it was already interrupted and we didn't know where to start. (see p5.4 Question 2, Appendix T)

Another comment is also from a Chinese participant '*time is a big problem. My partner couldn't reply to me on time, which made us miss good opportunities for discussion*' (p3.6, Appendix J). Breakdown in e-tandem communication, is also clearly reported by this Chinese participant: '*I didn't receive in-time reply from my partner, which sounds like an interruption during exchange. As my partner didn't reply to me in time and then I really*

didn't know how to continue' (Comment 50, Table 5.15 below). Such comments also indicate that participants were not equipped with strategies to overcome this communication breakdown. Student commitment seems to be a recurring issue proposed by Chinese respondents during focus group interviews.

Table 5. 15: Comments related to recommendations, limitations and strength of e-tandem

Comment	Participant
44. 'I think if there were oral/video exchanges, it would be more meaningful, because language is for communication. Interact more and understand deeper.'	p1.4 (Question 5, Appendix P)
45. 'I think we should have a fixed frequency for exchanging, which should be a must, then we can spare some time to reply to e-mails even at a busy time.'	p2.1 (Question 7, Appendix Q)
46. 'we would forget what we discussed before and the discussion had to stop.'	p1.4 (Question 6, Appendix P)
47. 'Waiting for an e-mail is hard. Cultural difference is the biggest challenge.'	p6.2 (Question 6, Appendix U)
48. 'the weakness is that the English I wrote is not my real English level because I usually corrected it before sending it out.'	p1.2 (Question 6, Appendix P)
49. 'what we wrote cannot reveal our problems as they were carefully considered.'	p6.4 (Question 6, Appendix U)
50. 'The most difficult thing is that I didn't receive in-time reply from my partner, which sounds like an interruption during exchange. As my partner didn't reply to me in time and then I really didn't know how to continue.'	p5.4 (Question 6, Appendix T)
51. 'The most useful thing is writing half in the L1 and half in the L2.'	p1.1 (Question 6, Appendix P)
52. 'Another thing is that my partner said she/he didn't understand how to do one of the tasks, so we didn't discuss it, but later I logged in the forum to have a look at comments on this task and then I saw the different views between two groups of participants.'	p5.4 (Question 4, Appendix T)

Comments 44 and 45 in Table 5.15 are recommendations from participants. One suggests integrating oral exchanges into the e-tandem project and the other advises to determine the frequency of exchange and to adhere to it strictly. Comments 46-50 are about the limitations of e-tandem, which include: the interruption of a discussion on a topic (46), cultural difference (47), the masking of real language problems (48 and 49), breakdown of communication (50). On the other hand, positive comments on e-tandem can be found (51 and 52). One is about the rule of writing in L1/L2 and the other is the additional support from online forums. Table 5.16 is a summary of the difficulties raised by the partners' performance.

Table 5. 16: Challenges from the partners' performance

Partner	Quite different levels of languages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C1-IR8: 'I found that I didn't gain much in the way of vocab in this lesson, as his level of Chinese was still too advanced for me, and therefore I was forced to rely more on Google Translate.' 2. C1-IR8: 'Due to my poor level of Chinese, I was forced to rely on Google Translate for much of the Chinese part of his letter.'
	Long delays in replying between exchanges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C1-CN5: '要说到交流之间的困难，还是得说我们的时间都不相同，因为我们和爱尔兰的作息时间或者是放假学习时间都不同，往往我们回了一封信他们很久才能恢复，或者是我们都在忙着考试，有时又没事时间去回复。' [<i>As for the difficulties, because of time difference we have different daily schedule or vacation time, so it took a very long time for my partner to write back to me and when I was busy in preparing my exams, I also had no time to reply in time.</i>] 2. C3-CN4: '交流中我的搭档似乎没时间回我的邮件，我们很少交流。' [<i>It seems that my partner had no time to reply to my e-mails, so we communicated very little.</i>]
	Short e-mails	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C2-CN1: '...在交流中我发现我的搭档的邮件非常短，我是很少写邮件的，我不知道是否是我本人的问题...' [<i>I found that e-mails from my partner are very short. I am not sure if it is my problem because I did not write e-mails very often.</i>] 2. C2-CN9: '在交流和完成布置的任务中，有时候一个话题想不出怎么写很多内容，导致我们写的邮件都不是很长...' [<i>During the exchanges and completing the tasks, it's hard to write more about this topic which made our e-mails short...</i>]

In Table 5.16, there are three kinds of challenges related to e-tandem partners' performance. One participant said she/he could not learn any L2 vocabulary directly from her/his tandem partner's letter because of the discrepancy in communication between L1 and L2 levels. The second challenge comes from the delay of reply. The long gap between their exchanges usually made the participants lose interests. Partners' e-mails were too short, partly because of the time gap in replying and partly because much had already been exchanged and said in other forms of communication. The brevity of e-mail content may explain why one participant stated in response to Question 55 of the questionnaire: '*We couldn't have a deep understanding of each other as the interaction is superficial and it is also inconvenient*' (p2.16).

Table 5. 17: Attitudes toward the frequency of writing one e-mail per week

	Opinions	No.
Chinese	1. It's not difficult if I am not too busy in that week or if I can find the topic to talk.	7
	2. It's acceptable if my partner can reply to me in time.	11
	3. Once a week is not enough and we can even do 2 or 3 times a week, but it depends on if my partner replies to me.	5
	4. My partner and I were active and we exchanged more than once a week.	1
Irish/ American	5. It's difficult because we had a lot homework, activities, etc.	2
	6. Every week we don't have much to say...Maybe in two weeks.	1
	7. It's very difficult.	1
	8. If at home or in Ireland, it's easier.	1

Table 5.17 provides 8 different responses to question 1 in focus group interview. Among the Chinese respondents, 7 out of 24 (29%) admitted that writing one e-mail per week is not difficult except sometimes if they are busy or feel it is difficult to find a topic of conversation. 11 respondents accounting for 46%, declared that this frequency is completely acceptable provided their partners reply to them in time. In addition, 5 participants suggest that they can write more than once a week, but it also depends on their partners' ability to respond. 1 Chinese respondent also said that she/he and her/his partner actually exchanged more than once a week. On the other hand, the Irish/American participants appear to be negative. They all admitted that they could not exchange e-mails on a weekly basis because of homework requirements or other activities (2 participants), or too little in common with the Chinese partner (1 participant). 1 Irish respondent stated that it was very difficult while another participant also mentioned that if they were in Ireland and not in Shanghai (China) it would have been easier to meet the requirement.

Findings from responses to the attitude towards the frequency of writing one e-mail per week in Table 5.17 indicate that most of the Chinese participants' Irish/American partners did not provide equal commitment during e-tandem exchanges in this study. Results from Figure 4.55 (p. 131) also corroborate the finding, as 6 Irish/American respondents (67%) declared that writing regularly to their tandem partners was the most difficult; in contrast, 17 (57%) of 30 Chinese respondents reported that writing regularly was not so difficult. This imbalance in commitment during the e-tandem exchange led to large gaps in their exchanges and overall, broken communication. The imbalance confirms the challenges in respecting the principle of reciprocity in tandem exchanges.

3 comments from Table 5.18 are related to participants' reflection where e-tandem exchanges are seen as an opportunity to make a friend.

Table 5. 18: Comments related to making a friend in e-tandem

Comment	Participant
53. 'E-mail exchange is more like a process to make a friend.'	p2.4 (Question 6, Appendix Q)
54. 'My partner, to me, is a teacher and a friend as well because I learned the culture and language from her/him. Besides, we also interacted as friends freely. I think this learning environment was good.'	p5.1 (Question 6, Appendix T)
55. 'I prefer that she/he was my friend though I also learned from her/him.'	p5.2 (Question 6, Appendix T)

3 comments in Table 5.18 are participants' reflection on making a friend during e-tandem. Comment 53 places a particular emphasis on the word: a process, indicating that it takes time to make a friend and e-mail can facilitate this process: '*E-mail exchange is more like a process to make a friend.*'. Participants in Comments 54 and 55 state the role of a tandem partner as a teaching friend and that e-tandem can also provide a favourable space for establishing new friendships: '*My partner, to me, is a teacher and a friend as well because I learned the culture and language from her/him. Besides, we also interacted as friends freely. I think this learning environment was good*' (Comment 54); '*I prefer that she/he was my friend though I also learned from her/him.*' (Comment 55). As mentioned by Jackson (2014), the understanding of culture is now described as a dynamic phenomenon (as opposed to static). This dynamism becomes manifest through communication with people and partners. For many of the Chinese participants this communication is not perceived separately from the affective engagement of the speakers. It is possibly in this way that expectations of friendship become manifest as they are perceived to be intrinsic to the development of good relationships. The development of friendship through telecollaboration is mentioned by O'Rourke (2007). Similarly, Sercu (2002), in the context of the development of intercultural competence, Helm et al (2012), in the context of what a third space is about, highlight the fact that learners and people must become personally engaged and invested in exchange. With regard to Chinese interlocutors in particular, Chen (2011) mentions the establishment of good relationships as a priority. These findings highlight the importance of the affective dimension of intercultural communication, particularly from the perspective of Chinese participants.

5.5.3 Tools: E-mail, Online Forum

Communication tools used in this study include e-mail and online discussion forums. These tools are used in this study to promote participants' intercultural language learning. Figure 4.3 (p. 101) indicates that 38 out of 39 (97%) respondents declare that this tandem exchange was very or somewhat effective for their language and culture exchange. This finding corroborates participants' positive evaluation of the e-tandem project in Kan's *et al.* (2013) study. More specifically, participants in this study point out 7 advantages of e-mail communication (see Table 5.19). The main advantage of e-mail exchanges is related to more effective time and content management (you can write the message in your own time, think about the content in more detail and review older contributions) without being bound to a particular place. These findings are similar to those of Little *et al.* (1999) and Lightfoot (2006). Interestingly, one comment, in this study, alludes to the emotive aspect of the exchanges when referring to the expectation of receiving a response: '*e-mail can give us an expectation of receiving a reply from partners*' (comment g) in Table 5.19).

The advantages and disadvantages of using e-mail to communicate under Question 6 of focus group interview are listed in Table 5.19. There 7 advantages and 10 disadvantages in total.

Table 5. 19: Advantages and disadvantages of E-tandem

Advantages	Disadvantages
a) You have time to think over and rewrite your e-mail until you are satisfied before sending it out.	h) You don't know immediately if your partner receives the message or not;
b) E-mail contains much more information than conversation.	i) You can't receive a reply from your partner in real time.
c) It's good for improving writing skills.	j) Interaction is not convenient through e-mail.
d) I can write it when I am free.	k) You can't discuss a topic thoroughly through e-mail.
e) You can keep your e-mails and read them again after a long time.	l) We just have text-based interaction and can't practise speaking
f) You can use e-mail wherever you are, especially for distant exchange.	m) It is hard to learn from each other well and to exchange sincerely through e-mail.
g) E-mail can give us an expectation of receiving a reply from partners.	n) Since you think about your e-mail, it may not expose your real language problems.
	o) You need to get a computer and internet.
	p) It lacks face-to-face interaction.
	q) It's boring to write e-mails.

The main advantage of e-mail exchanges is related to more effective time and content management (you can write the message in your own time, think about the content in

more detail and review older contributions) without being bound to a particular place. Interestingly, one comment alludes to the emotive aspect of the exchanges when referring to the expectation of receiving a response - g). The main disadvantages are also related to time and content issues (the absence of real-time communication, the focus on written communication alone); however, an interesting finding suggests that e-mail exchanges lack spontaneity, sincerity and honesty - m), which suggests a need for specific human dimensions which cannot be provided by the computer alone in order to make the communication process more complete.

With regard to participants' opinions on the disadvantages of e-mail exchanges, 3 more disadvantages (10) than advantages (7) are pointed out (see Table 5.19). The main disadvantages in this study, similar to Little's *et al.* (1999) observations, are related to time and content issues (the absence of real-time communication, the focus on written communication alone). Comment 46 in Table 5.15 (p. 230) suggests that sustaining a topic of discussion is also difficult over e-mail: *'we would forget what we discussed before and the discussion had to stop.'* One additional disadvantage in Table 5.19 is that e-mail may mask participant's real language problems, an observation seldom reported in telecollaboration studies. Two participants remark on this phenomenon: *'the weakness is that the English I wrote is not my real English level because I usually corrected it before sending it out'* (Comment 48, Table 5.15); *'What we wrote cannot reveal our problems as they were carefully considered'* (Comment 49, Table 5.15). However, a disadvantage such as *'It is hard to learn from each other well and exchange sincerely through e-mail'* also exposes the problem of distant communication: e-mail exchanges lack spontaneity, sincerity and honesty. This is highlighted by a Chinese participant in the questionnaire *'Yes, it seems that we couldn't exchange freely and there is something between us. We interacted as a task instead of exchanging with a friend'* (p2.6, Appendix J). Similar responses also come from Irish/American participant:

E-mails are very formal and messaging, but we have to arrange a time to talk, ... but on WeChat, you can have pictures, and so on, it's personal, but emails you can send to everyone, but WeChat, you have to be friends and you can send voice messages. (p3.1 Question 6, Appendix R)

I don't think it is really a free discussion, I think it's difficult when it's over a computer because you can't see the person, so they can't be open more to you about their opinions, because they don't know you. (p3.1 Question 3, Appendix R)

This suggests a need for specific human dimensions which the computer alone cannot provide in order to make the communication process more complete and satisfactory.

Participants' opinions on the online discussion forums are different and more positive (see answers to Question 3 in Appendices P-V). One of the Chinese respondents in the focus group interview states:

I think we can learn more from the forums than just from our partner, because it's simple to exchange with the partner and the response from them may be not in time. However, if we go to the forum to read others' viewpoints and we may learn more information. (see p5.4 Question 3, Appendix T)

This confirms Chen's (2005, p. 2) declaration that the benefit of using this medium is 'to have learners' reflective practice take place in a more interactive language learning environment and shared by multiple participants'. What's more, other participants believe that an online forum is a good way to communicate as it helps to further understand the target culture through other participants' comments, which suggests a more effective way of learning and developing intercultural awareness. This is similar to Liaw's (2007) results where analysis of students' forum entries shows evidence of growth in linguistic competence and intercultural awareness. One additional comment from a Chinese participant indicates the role of the forum as additional support when the task is not initially understood by the two partners:

Another thing is that my partner said she/he didn't understand how to do one of the tasks, so we didn't discuss it, but later I logged in the forum to have a look at comments on this task and then I saw the different views between two groups of participants. (Comment 52, Table 5.15)

On the other hand, not all participants enjoy the forums, as 1 Irish participant mentions:

Because in the forum if you say something, everybody can see and has to face something stupid, if it is on a one-to-one chat, we can become friends. It's not so bad. People are more and more into expressing their opinions. (see p3.3 Question 3, Appendix R)

In the same focus group, another Irish participant expresses her/his dislike of online forums:

I don't think it is really a free discussion, I think it's difficult when it's over a computer because you can't see the person, so they can't be open more to you about their opinions, because they don't know you, you know? So it's a little difficult. (see p3.1 Question 3, Appendix R)

This comment also suggests a preference for face-to-face interaction and this is echoed by p3.3 who suggests the use of alternative technologies such as Skype or instant messaging for interaction (Question 3, Appendix R). An American participant (p3.2 Question 3, Appendix R) points out that '*It's a reference but it's not a communication on the forum.*' One reason may be that the interaction between participants in the forums is presented in the form of sequential posts, so participants just read participants' views without exchanging their opinions.

5.5.4 Unexpected Challenges in E-tandem

There are two additional findings in this study come to light although they are unexpected and possibly overlooked in the literature.

First, comments from focus group interviews in Table 5.20 reveal one of the challenges related to the emotional impact that this learning experience has on participants.

Table 5. 20: Comments related to the emotional impact of e-tandem on participants

Comment	Participant
56. 'Sometimes when I logged in my mail box and found no response, I did not feel good'	p2.1 (Question 7, Appendix Q)
57. 'But if my partner didn't reply, I would feel...ALAS'	p5.3 (Question 1, Appendix T)
58. 'nobody respond to you, you will feel very cold there.'	p5.3 (Question 3, Appendix T)
59. 'She/he didn't respond to me and I had to write to her/him again, which made me unhappy'	p5.2 (Question 5, Appendix T)
60. 'my partner's attitude influenced mine'	p6.2 (Question 1, Appendix U)
61. 'it made me worried that I did not hear from my partner'	p6.5 (Question 1, Appendix U)
62. 'I put my heart into writing my e-mails, but it's a pity that my partner's replies were always too short'	p6.2 (Question 2, Appendix U)
63. 'When my partner didn't reply to me, I would think that perhaps there was something I didn't do well'	p6.4 (Question 6, Appendix U)
64. 'Waiting for an e-mail is hard.'	p6.2 (Question 6, Appendix U)
65. 'Waiting for an e-mail is difficult... I had intended to make a friend with my partner, but we did not exchange to that extent'	p6.4 (Question 6, Appendix U)
66. 'The most difficult is that my partner is a black girl and her mind was a little bit extreme. Thus I had to consider how to write my e-mails and I gave her some positive influence and made her happier'	p7.4 (Question 6, Appendix V)

10 comments in Table 5.20 reveal that the absence of response from the Irish/American partners affects the mood and emotions of the Chinese participant except for Comment 66. Comment 58 seems to show the participant's need for the humane dimension in communication. It is noted that not receiving her/his partner's reply also leads to one participant's self-blame (Comment 63). Both participants in Comments 64 and 65 mention the difficulty of waiting for a reply. In Comment 66, the Chinese participant tries to change her/his partner's negative perspective on life.

Findings indicate how absence of response affects the mood and emotions of the participant and shows a need for the humane dimension of communication: '*Sometimes when I logged in my mail box and found no response, I did not feel good*' (Comment 56); '*She/he didn't respond to me and I had to write to her/him again, which made me unhappy*' (Comment 59); '*nobody respond to you, you will feel very cold there.*' (Comment 58). What's more, investigation of participants' attitude toward the frequency of writing once a week also reveals that participants' performance was also tied to the affect: '*But if my*

partner didn't reply, I would feel...ALAS (Comment 57); *'my partner's attitude influenced mine'* (Comment 60); *'it made me worried that I did not hear from my partner'* (Comment 61); *'I put my heart into writing my e-mails, but it's a pity that my partner...'* (Comment 62); *'Waiting for an e-mail is hard/difficult'* (Comment 64/65). Such comments indicate that the affect factor becomes a barrier in exchange. This impact of the affect also leads to a participant's self-blame: *'When my partner didn't reply to me, I would think that perhaps there was something I didn't do well'* (Comment 63). It is noted that participants' expectations were also unfulfilled: *'I had intended to make a friend with my partner, but we did not exchange to that extent'* (p6.4 Question 6, Appendix U). The affect dimension emerging from this study implies that all participants should be made aware of the humane dimension of the exchange during the pre-exchange training phase in order to make sure that the exchange runs smoothly. Perhaps, a focus on reciprocity and cultural values would help to overcome this problem, as pointed out by one of the Chinese participants: *'There is a Chinese old saying: 'courtesy demands reciprocity.', so it is polite that you write to me and I reply to you. However, our partners did not seem to realise that'* (Comment 40, Table 5.14 - p. 225).

The second unexpected difficulty suggests that more Chinese respondents than Irish/American respondents mention cultural differences as a barrier to their communication, for example, *'yes, the limitation is that we are two strangers, especially we have different cultural backgrounds, which made our communication difficult'* (p2.15, Appendix J); *'probably because of different culture and thinking, I found it very difficult to communicate with my partner'* (participant C2-CN1, Table 5.11 - p. 220). Comment 47 appears to link the affect with perceived cultural differences: *'Waiting for an e-mail is hard. Cultural difference is the biggest challenge'* (Table 5.15 - p. 230). Comparison of cultural differences is one of the aspects of IC awareness; however, according to these comments, cultural differences become a tangible barrier to participants' communication.

In summary, challenges faced by the Chinese and Irish/American participants in this e-tandem exchange come from their motivation which may be dependent on the matching of partners and in particular, the matching of L2 levels as well as different academic calendars and the limitations of the communication tools. The Chinese students' motivation to interact appears to be higher than their Irish/American partners'. This may

be due to different contextual circumstances where Irish/American participants were *in situ* and surrounded by an authentic, varied and stimulating environment leading to a lesser need to communicate online with Chinese partners; on the other hand, Chinese participants, while having studied English for a substantially longer period, had never had any opportunity to visit an English-speaking country (see Figure 4.2, p. 100), thereby increasing their motivation to interact with English speakers. According to previous studies (O'Rourke, 2007; Kan *et al.*, 2013), and with regard to L2 discrepancies between partners, adequate supervision and encouragement should prove sufficient to overcome difference in L2 levels. Different academic calendars (exams, homework and holiday times) also appear to have an impact on quality of the experience. While e-mail and online discussion forums do appear to provide participants with opportunities for genuine intercultural communication related to LC1 and LC2, participants recommend more synchronous tools, such as Skype or instant messaging for a more meaningful and authentic exchange. In addition, the affect and cultural differences also emerge as challenges in this e-tandem study.

5.6 Discussion of Three Case Studies

In this section, findings from the 3 cases studies in Chapter 4 are discussed in order to further understand how awareness develops between Chinese and Irish/American participants through their LC1-LC2 tandem interactions. The three cases were chosen according to the differences between participants' high, moderate and low levels of engagement. This section discusses the processes of the 3 dyads' mutual engagement as well as their IC and language awareness development.

5.6.1 Differences between High, Moderate and Low Levels of Engagement

Performances of the 3 cases are categorised as high level of engagement (C2-Dy10), moderate level of engagement (C1-Dy1) and low level of engagement (C2-Dy13). Their different performances during the exchanges are based on the number of e-mails and learning diaries submitted, the balance of using L1 and L2 in their e-mails and also the length of their e-mails.

Table 5.21 is based on Figures 4.63, 4.64, 4.65 (p. 153-154) and on Table 4.30 (p. 148), which inform the comparison of the number of e-mails exchanged and learning diaries submitted within the 3 dyads, as shown below.

Table 5. 21: Number of e-mails and learning diaries in the 3 cases

Dyad	Content	IR/US	CN	Total
Case 1: C2-Dy10 (high)	e-mails	11	12	23
	diaries	4	3	7
Case 2: C1-Dy1 (moderate)	e-mails	7	8	15
	diaries	0	2	2
Case 3: C2-Dy13 (low)	e-mails	4	7	11
	diaries	0	1	1

From Table 5.21, Dy10 of Cohort 2 exchanged the highest number of e-mails - 23 as opposed to Dy13 of Cohort 2 where only less than half of e-mails - 11 were exchanged. In the diary submissions, Dyad 10 of Cohort 2 also outperformed the other two dyads with 7 diaries in total compared to 2 and 1, respectively. Interestingly, dyads with high and moderate levels of engagement share a roughly equal number of exchanged e-mails within their dyad (11-12 and 7-8, respectively), suggesting that similar levels of contributions between partners helped to build a steady relationship which is the basis for the second principle of e-tandem, ‘reciprocity’, as pointed out by Little *et al.* (1999). However, the difference between the two dyads emerges more specifically from the number of diaries submitted (7 and 2 respectively). Hence, so far, the higher level of engagement here seems to be characterised by higher levels of self-reflection manifest in diary submissions and entries. The dyad characterised by its low level of engagement displays a discrepancy in the number of exchanges between the Chinese participant who sent 3 more e-mails than the Irish participant, suggesting irregular responses from the Irish participant, thereby creating an imbalance in the communication.

As mentioned above, the second principle at the core of successful e-tandem exchanges is reciprocity which according to Penman (2002), also refers to a mutual contribution to L1/L2 input. In the 23 e-mails of Case 1, both participants perform well as they communicate half in the L1 and half in the L2, apart from 4 e-mails on Dec 5, 2012; Dec 16, 2012; April 9, 2013 and April 13, 2013 (see Appendix L). However, the two participants in this case sometimes mix the L1 and the L2 even within a short paragraph (for example, e-mails on 6Nov 24, 2012 and Nov 28, 2012, Appendix L). Participants in Case 2 also split all their e-mails into two paragraphs, one written in Chinese and the other in English. Case 3 does not achieve this balance where only 4 out of the 11 e-mails

are bilingual (e-mails on Oct 20, 2012; Nov 2/Nov 3, 2012; Mar 10, 2013, Appendix N). The first e-mail (on Oct 20, 2012), from the Chinese participant, suggests good intentions, as this e-mail is informative and written in L1 and L2 respectively. However, the reply (on Oct 30, 2012) from the Irish partner is only in the L1 (English) and Chinese *pinyin* without any Chinese characters. Surprisingly, the 3rd e-mail (on Oct 30, 2012) from the Chinese partner's response is also in the L1 (Chinese) only. Thus, if there is no balance between the L1 and the L2, the quality of the communication is likely to be impoverished and the motivation to remain engaged in this exchange is likely to be affected.

The length of e-mails is another factor revealing e-tandem participants' level of engagement. Participants in Case 1 always write their e-mails in great detail. Among the 23 e-mails, the shortest one is the first e-mail from the American participant's self-introduction and greeting to her/his Chinese partner, with 160 words in total. All the subsequent e-mails are above 200 words except for two e-mails on Nov 22, 2012 and Nov 26, 2012 (Appendix L) informing of the participant's inability to open attached files. In fact, most of e-mails are between 400 and 600 words and the longest contribution is from the American participant on Nov 28, 2012 (2861 words) following her/his partner's e-mail on Nov 24, 2012 containing 1116 words. The length of each e-mail from Case 2 is relatively consistent (about 400 words each on average). The longest e-mail is 750 words. In respect of Case 3, the average number of words is about 270 and e-mails are sometimes very short as on Mar 10, 2013, with only 70 words (Irish partner, Appendix N). Perhaps, as in Case 2, an average of 400 to 500 words is appropriate for e-mail exchanges, as anything above may lead to loss of interest and hard work and anything below may lead to the recipient's disappointment. In this regard, we recall the sense of expectation expressed by a Chinese participant when evaluating e-mail as a means of communication.

5.6.2 Awareness Development in 3 Dyads: 3 Case Studies

In addition to the quantitative review, a qualitative analysis of the 3 dyads reveals different levels of mutual engagement, task completion, error correction and their own reflection on this e-tandem exchange. Such differences are likely to influence participants' IC and language awareness development.

5.6.2.1 Case 1

In this case, Dyad 10 in Cohort 2 showed their *linguaculture* exchanges frequently. Some

examples and extracts have been reported. For example, in Example 22 (presented in Section 5.2.1.1), high school life is discussed. After comparing and explaining life in high school, the partners finally understood each other and reached a conclusion about the differences between Chinese and American high school life. The American partner's response is very detailed and both partners were eager to check one another's comprehension and sought or provided confirmation that they had understood correctly at the end of the exchange. The American partner was also concerned with stereotyping derived from American movies, namely that students in America do not experience pressure. Extracts 6, 8, 11, 16 and 19 are related to the discussion in Task 1 - word associations, which also have been reported in Section 5.2.1.2.

Extract 25 (p. 30, Appendix L)

C2-US10: '我八月二十九号到上海。我现在的的生活跟以前的生活都不一样了。我老家的人口特别少，只有三百五十个人以上。我真的是农村人！哈哈！ [(25-1) arrived in Shanghai on 29th August. Now my life is different from before. There are very few people in my hometown – about 350. I am a real country man! Ha-ha!] However, I'm getting used to living in a city.' (Oct 20, 2012)

C2-CN10: '...(25-2) I find that you are so humorous and lovely! 哈哈 [Ha-ha] ...I live in country, too, 哈哈[Ha-ha]...你说你在上海，那是一个现代化的大都市，初到中国，不知道在你的印象中那是怎样的呢？...上海只是偌大的中国的一角，还有很多值得去的地方，有更多的美景与文化，比如历史文化底蕴身后的西安，圣洁天堂般的西藏，等等' [You said you are in Shanghai now and Shanghai is a modern city. (25-3) As this is the first time you come to China, what impression do you have?... (25-4) Shanghai is only a small part of China and there are many other places, beautiful scenery and culture worth visiting in China, such as Xian with a long history, Holy Tibet, etc.] (Oct 20, 2012)

This dyad displays IC awareness from the very beginning to the end of their exchange. For example, Extract 25 taken from their first contact after her/his self-introduction to her/his tandem partner, the Chinese participant shows her/his interest in the other's view on [L]C1 by asking the American partner's impression of China. In addition, the American participant shows her/his awareness of different cultures by making a comparison of the differences between [L]C1 and [L]C2 (the city of Shanghai in China and his hometown in the USA). As a response, the Chinese participant gives her/his partner more information about Shanghai which develops her/his understanding of her/his own culture - [L]C1. This type of evidence is found in almost every e-mail exchange. In Extract 26 below, participants' discussions involve different topics: exams, music, Chinese language, Halloween, and American life. Their awareness of [L]C1 and [L]C2

develops during interaction by looking for the commonalities: being busy and feeling nervous with exams; by understanding, explaining and clarifying - 'pure music'; by giving an explanation and relating it to [L]C1 - as well as seeking confirmation for mutual understanding. Example 22 (p. 170) displays how the participants deal with stereotypes. The American partner is concerned with stereotyping derived from American movies. She/he corrected it: 'my high school life was not like what you see in the movies' and gave more details about high school life in America. This helps the Chinese partner to compare what she/he knows about [L]C1 and the reality of [L]C1 in an authentic communication, and, in this manner, her/his cultural awareness develops.

Example 23 below discusses LC2 learning.

Example 23 (p. 30-32, Appendix L)

C2-US10: '哦，对了，我很好奇。当你是小，你怎么学英文？老师们怎么教你？我觉得我很幸运，因为英文是我的第一个语言。如果情况不一样和我现在学英文，一定比较难。'[*Oh, yes, I am curious that when you were young, how did you learn English? How did your teacher teach you? I think I am lucky because English is my first language. Otherwise, it would be very difficult for me to learn English now.*] (Oct 29, 2012)

C2-CN10: 'You asked me how I study English, oh, you must know that we start learning English from Grade 3, it last 12 years, it means I have learned English 12 years!...你说英语难，对我而言，相比之下，中文却更难，但我和你一样热爱汉语，'[*You said English is difficult, but for me, I believe studying Chinese should be more difficult. But you and me have the same passion for Chinese.*] (Oct 30, 2012)

C2-US10: 'I think learning Chinese is much more interesting than learning English. The Chinese language has a wealth of history behind it. I believe when you learn Chinese you learn so much more than just a language. You also learn a lot about China's history and the Chinese way of thinking.' (Nov 7, 2012)

Extract 26 (p. 30-33, Appendix L)

C2-US10: '嘿 LANLAN，对不起，因为最近忙及了，所以现在才发电子邮件给你。...我们快要考第一个试了。我平时考试的时候不会紧张，可是第一个考试我紧及张了！'[*Hi Lanlan, I am sorry that I didn't reply to you until now as (26-1) I have been so busy recently. ...I am going to have my first exam. I usually don't feel nervous for any exam, however, this is my first one and I am very very nervous!*] ...

'I'm not sure what you mean by "pure music". I have never heard anyone describe a genre of music like this. (26-2) Could you tell me what kind of music is "pure music"?' (Oct 29, 2012)

C2-CN10: '...(26-3) You said you were so busy that you did not have much spare time, so were I, I have two part-time jobs, ...by the way, I have an exam in two weeks, I am nervous (nervous) too, just like you, haha, '...

'...纯音乐就是纯粹的音乐，不加任何歌词，我给你发了一首。...我和你一

样热爱汉语，汉语有古汉语和现代汉语，不知道你接触到没有，汉语博大精深，古汉语更是魅力无穷，…你们开始准备万圣节了吗，在美国，这是一个盛大的节日吧，你以前在美国是怎么过的呢，是不是很有趣？你在学校，会不会想家，中国有句古诗“独在异乡为异客，每逢佳节倍思亲”，你是不是这样呢？’ [...(4)pure music is music only without singing any lyric. I already sent you one. ...you and I have the same passion for Chinese. (5) Chinese can be divided into Ancient Chinese and Modern Chinese, not sure if you have learned them? (6)Chinese is broad and profound and Ancient Chinese is much more charming...Do you start to prepare for Halloween? (7)In America, it should be a big festival. (8)How did you celebrate it in America? Is it fun? Since you are in China now, will you miss your home? (9)There is an old Chinese saying ‘A lonely stranger in a strange land I am cast, I miss my family all the more on every festival day’. Do you agree?] (Oct 30, 2012)

C2-US10: ‘…哦，我明白 PURE MUSIC 的意思了。英文有一个单词叫 instrumental。乐师奏乐的时候，就弹钢琴，拉小提琴，吹笛子，等等。没有唱歌，对不对？我很喜欢一边学习一边听 instrumental 音乐。’ [...(10)oh, I see what pure music means now. There is one word in English - instrumental. When musicians play music, they just play piano, violin, flute, etc. not singing, right? I like listening to instrumental music very much while studying] ...

‘Oh, last time you wrote me about Halloween. (11)Halloween in the U.S. is great. A lot of people decorate their house to look very spooky. My uncle really loves this holiday. He loves it more than Christmas! We have this thing called trick-or-treating. When you are a kid you go trick-or-treating. …I’m really missing home now. (12)Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years are the three biggest holidays for people in the U.S. My family always gets together with family and friends.’ (Nov 7, 2012)

C2-CN10: ‘...Actually, I am so curious about American lifestyle. ...You know, (13)America is the most known country in China. We watch Hollywood movies and they are so popular with a lot of people, moreover, (14)there are KFC, McDonalds’ everywhere ...

‘你在上海会吃上海菜吗，中国人都知道，上海菜偏甜，你尝过了吗？你说你在农村，美国的农村是什么样的，你们每家每户是不是有很多土地，你家有没有牧场，可以挤牛奶，吃烤全羊呢？…’[(15)All Chinese know that Shanghai cuisine is sweet. Did you taste it? You said you live in country. (16)What does American country look like? (17)Do every family in country have a lot of land? (18)Do your family have a farm where you milk the cow and roast whole lamb?] (Nov 11, 2012)

In Extract 26, participant CN10 and participant US10 first discussed their feelings of exams and then talked about ‘pure music’. The two participants also discussed Chinese language, Halloween, and American life.

In Extract 27, the American participant cleared her/his tandem partner’s misunderstanding of American fast food culture.

Extract 27 (p. 33-35, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘...Actually, I am so curious about American lifestyle. ...You know, America is

the most known country in China. We watch Hollywood movies and they are so popular with a lot of people, moreover, there are KFC, McDonalds' everywhere ...' (Nov 11, 2012)

C2-US10: '...希望你有机会去美国。...但是，不要相信你在电影里看到的一切。你说的正确，大部分地方有麦当劳，可是不是每个美国人每天去这样的饭馆吃饭。比如我的妈妈和爸爸常常做晚餐。其实我们很少下馆子。但是如果妈妈需要加班她可以去 KFC 点菜，很方便。' [*Hope you can come to America....but please don't believe all you see from movies. You are right, there are MacDonald's in most places. However, not every American goes there to eat. For example, my parents often cook dinner. We seldom eat outside, but if my mother has to work overtime she will order food from KFC. It is convenient.*] (Nov 28, 2012)

In Extract 28, the Chinese participant dealt with her/his American partner's misunderstanding of communism in China. The comment mentioned by the American participant is quite shocking for the Chinese partner and for this researcher too.

Extract 28 (p. 37, Appendix L)

C2-US10: '...I do have one question for you to answer the next time you send an e-mail to me. In the U.S. we often hear about how China is a communist country. When Americans hear the word communism we often think of Hitler when he ruled over Germany. However, I would like to know if you feel a great pressure or oppressed by your government? I have been here three months and it appears to me that most people in China are very happy with their current situation. It doesn't appear to me that your government is oppressing the people of China. 你觉得呢? [*What do you think?*]' (Nov 28, 2012)

C2-CN10: '...You mentioned that China is a communist country, yes, you are correct, But I am shocked because you said you would think of Hilter, they are totally different, I do not know why you associate it, but you can just believe what appeal to you in China, communist is a very abstract word, it is hard for me to explain it for you, but you know that it is the most advanced, said (by)马克思 [*Marx*], and we love our chairman, we believe in our government, although China is a underdeveloped country, we believe that it will be better and better one day, and we are satisfied with our country....' (Dec 3, 2012)

Extract 29 discusses marriage and divorce between the two participants. The Chinese participant also asked about the problem of university students' employment, but there was no response from her/his partner.

Extract 29 (p. 37-39, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: '...(29-1)I learned that the divorce rate (rate) is very high in your country, is it right?...在美国，人们是怎么看待和对待婚姻的呢，怎么领结婚证呢和离婚证呢，你又是怎么看的呢？在中国，结婚时一件人生大事，...中国人对结婚很谨慎，一旦结婚，就基本不会想过离婚，...男女双方结婚时，男方要给女方彩礼，而女方则准备嫁妆，结婚证和离婚证的领取和办理手续都很

简单。’ [(29-2)In America, how do people see marriage? (29-3)How do they get their certificate of marriage and divorce and what do you think? (29-4)In China, getting married is a big thing, ...Chinese people are very careful for marriage. Once getting married, people don't want to get divorced.. (29-5)When preparing for marriage, a man becomes engaged to the bride's family and the woman should prepare her dowry. (29-6)It's simple to get the certificate of marriage or divorce.]

‘对了，我还想到当代大学生的就业问题，在中国，就业不简单，学历代表未来的薪水，学历越高的人，越容易找到工作。在前一段日子，在罗姆尼和奥巴马的辩论中，有一个美国大学生问到关于就业率的问题，看来美国的大学生也和我们一样担心就业问题，你呢，布雷德，你担心吗，你以后想做什么样的工作，在中国还是在美国？’ [Ye, I also think of the problem of university students' employment. (29-7)In China, getting a job is not easy. Education represents future salary. The higher the level of your education, the easier it is to find a job. Not long before, an American university student asked a question about the rate of employment in the debate between Romney and Obama. (29-8)It seems that the American university students also worry about their employment as Chinese University students. Brett, how about you? Do you worry? What do you want to do in the future? In China or America?] (Dec 3, 2012)

C2-US10: ‘You asked about marriage and divorce in the U.S. (29-9)In the U.S. I feel like too many young people jump into marriage too quickly. I don't know much about the process of getting divorced. My parents have been married for over 20 years. (29-10)I just know that the process is a bit more complicated than it is in China.’ (Dec 16, 2012)

In Extract 30, child-rearing values are discussed.

Extract 30 (p. 40-41, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘...美国的父母是怎样教育小孩的呢？是更多地培养小孩的独立意识和能力还是溺爱，以至于送礼给老师，只因害怕老师对自己的小孩不好...’ [(30-1)How do the American parents educate their children? Do they try to make their children more independent or spoil their children? Do they give teachers gifts just because they fear that the teacher cannot be good to their children?] (Jan 3, 2013)

C2-US10: ‘...Lastly, you asked about how parents treat their children in the U.S. (30-2)I believe as the child gets older our parents want us to become more independent. They let us experience the world and build our future. My parents were terrific. They gave me so much, but also let me be who I wanted to be. Although I have 2 younger brothers, my parents always gave me attention and told me I was the apple of their eye. (30-3)I feel like in China parents are always breathing down the neck of their child. Meaning that they always have to be involved in what their Child is doing. Kids don't get to be independent. They must listen to what their parents say. Do you think this is true?’ (Jan 3, 2013)

Extract 31 discusses mixed marriage.

Extract 31 (p. 43, Appendix L)

C2-US10: ‘...I do have a question I wanted to ask you. I know this will differ from family to family, but I want to know how parents in China would feel about their son or daughter marrying a foreigner. (31-1)In the U.S. there is an expression called “catching yellow fever”. This phrase means that a person has fallen in love with a person of Asian heritage and often winds up marrying an Asian man or woman. So (31-2)I’m just curious to know how parents in China would feel about their child marrying a foreigner. 在美国我有一个中国朋友。她告诉我 她的爸爸妈妈不愿意让她跟一个韩国男人结婚, [*In America, I have one Chinese friend. She told me that her parents were not happy that she got married to a Korean guy.*] but would be ok with her marrying another Chinese, an American or an ABC (American Born Chinese).’ **(March 10, 2013)**

C2-CN10: ‘...You asked me about how our Chinese parents feel if their son or daughter marry a foreigner, well, you are right, it will differ from family to family, in my opinion, it is not easy to live with a foreigner for holding a huge gap of cultural, it is the key problem, for example, 韩国男人的家庭的观念传统是男尊女卑, 妇女在韩国得遵从三从四德, 有人不一定受得了, 而父母多半也是从这方面考虑吧, 另一方面, 如果吧女儿嫁到国外, 想见一面又不容易, 心里舍不得吧, 这也是人之常情。不过也有一些 成功的例子, 在中国很常见有欧美人与终归女子结婚并定居在中国, 他们很幸福。....[(31-3)The traditional Korean culture is that women are inferior to men. In Korea, women have to obey ‘three obediences and four virtues’, so not all the people can accept these. Thus, maybe your friend’s parents think of this and don’t agree. In addition, if their daughter marries a foreigner and lives abroad, it will be not easy for them to see her, so the parents will feel unhappy. This is normal. However, mixed marriage can also be successful. In China, some women get married with people from America or Europe and settle down in China. They are very happy..]’ **(March 15, 2013)**

The following Item 10 is the American participant’s diary reflection on the discussion above (Extract 31).

Item 10

C2-US10: ‘we discussed the topic of marrying a foreigner. Many Chinese parents do not want their child to marry a foreigner. They would prefer they marry another Chinese and be closer to home. I thought this was an interesting topic of discussion because I feel that most parents in the United States wouldn’t mind if their child married a foreigner. The United States is such a melting pot of culture. So I feel we are more willing to allow our children to marry whoever they wish to.’

In Extract 32, the two participants discussed 2 topics in the third task - what is a good job and a student cheating on an exam.

Extract 32 (p. 45-46, Appendix L)

C2-CN10: ‘...Now we turn to the topic. I remember you said that a good job is that doesn’t feel like a job at all, but one that you are happy to go to. If you have this kind of job

you will never have to work a day in your life. Yes, you are right, when I watch your answer, I totally agree with you, but, you know, my first answer is just about the rage and welfare, I remember (in) my childhood, my teacher or my mother will ask me what do you want to be when you grow up, most of us will say I want to be a scientist or an engineer. why, because The scientist can invent things, they are intelligent and respected by people, moreover, they will earn money easy. 但我记得约翰·列侬说过，当他小的时候，老师同学们长大想做什么，他写了“快乐”，同学们笑他理解错了题目，他说，是他们理解错了人生，因为他妈妈从小就告诉他，人生最重要的是快乐。也许这是中外教育的不同。小时候，在路上看见乞丐，妈妈会说：“如果以后你不努力读书，长大就会变成那个样子”，所以，在中国，好工作就是体面地工作，福利好，工资高，干活不累。 [I remember what John Lennon said that when he was young, the teacher asked students what they want to do when grow up. John wrote 'being happy' and other students laughed and thought he misunderstood this question. But he said that it was they who misunderstood life, because his mother always told him that the most important thing in life is happiness. (32-1) Maybe this is the difference between Eastern and Western education. When I was young and saw a beggar, my mum would say: 'if you don't study hard in the future, you will be as this beggar'. (32-2) Thus in China, good job means decent job, good pay and not too much labor.] However, someone tell me that when you foreigners asked about what do you want to be, you may answer a dustman, a fireman or something, if a Chinese child say this, his or her mother will angry and tell him or her it is stupid to have this stupid ideal. 在中国人们还是会有对工作等级的观念，这是远古时代留下来的，现在已经改善很多了，但还是存在。例如，我们不会歧视任何一位清洁工或下水道工人，但人们认为这样的工作是不体面的，如果能开着车上班，工作环境好，能赚钱，那才是体面的，好的工作。...’ [(32-3) In China, people have the sense of hierarchy to jobs, which exists in the ancient time. (32-4) Now this situation has much improved, but still exists. For example, (32-5) we won't look down upon any dustman or drainer, but people will think this kind of job is not decent. A decent and good job for them is to drive to work, to have a good working environment and to earn money quickly.] ... 'Yes, (32-6) in China, there once be something like fraud, old people fall on the ground by intention, if you help him up, he will say you are the one who knock him down, and you must pay for him if you don't want to stuck in a lawsuit. 这是一种无耻的欺骗，利用人的善良，可恶至极。导致现在出现了一种现象，有时老人摔倒在地没人敢扶，这种境况让人十分尴尬’。 [(32-7) This is cheating and shameless, because it makes use of people's good heart and it is hateful. This leads to a phenomenon that sometimes no one dares to help a falling old man, which is embarrassing.] (April 24, 2013)

C2-US10: ‘...You see a student next to you cheating on an exam. Your answer: “I will be indifferent because teacher will catch him, if he doesn't care about himself, who can help him?” (32-8) I hope you will not be offended by this response, but I really do not agree with your answer. I feel that if a person didn't put forth the effort to study that he or she should suffer the consequences. This person does not deserve to pass an exam that he or she had to cheat on to pass. 我也觉得如果我花了很多时间准备考试，然后有某人看我的答案，我心里不舒服。可能有点生那个人的气。然而，这只是我的意见。 [I also think if I work very hard to prepare for exams and others look at my answer, I won't feel good and may feel angry. However, this is just my own opinion.]

你写了 [*you wrote*]: “However, someone tell me that when you foreigners asked about what do you want to be, you may answer a dustman, a fireman or something, if a Chinese child says this, his or her mother will angry and tell him or her it is stupid to have this stupid ideal.” 你说的没错。在美国当我们是孩子的时候，如果我们的老师或者爸妈问我：“当你长大了你想从事什么工作？”一般的孩子会说“我要当成消防队员，警察，老师，等等。 [*You are right. In America, when we were young, if our teachers or parents asked us: ‘What do you want to do when you grow up’, children usually answered: ‘I want to be a fireman, policeman, teacher, and so on.’*] (9) But when we are kids our parents don’t tell us these are stupid dreams. Our parents are very nurturing and tell us that you can be anything when you grow up. They also told us that we had plenty of time to decide what we wanted to be when we grew up. So there is no need to decide now. I think they know we will eventually pick jobs that are suitable to have a good life.’ (April 28, 2013)

Based on Extract 32 above, participants, C2-US10 and C2-CN10, reflected on this topic in their learning diaries, see below.

Item 11

C2-US10: ‘In the U.S. parents don’t put so much pressure on a child when they are young. Our parents let us figure things out on our own and most of us wind up doing something that not only makes us happy, but also helps us to raise a family. In China, however, it seems that parents start pressuring their children to do a certain job at a very young age. They almost oppress their children and don’t allow them to figure these things out on their own. I think this was one of the most shocking things I learned from Lan Lan.

Item 12

C2-CN10: ‘他们对于工作的态度不像中国人，他们选择自己喜欢的工作，没有什么高低贵贱的差别，不会为了工资区别选专业，而且比中国人懂得享受生活。’ [*They have a different attitude towards a career. They will choose the job they like and don’t think there is any lowliness and nobleness in a career. They won’t choose the subject to study only for money. They know better than Chinese how to enjoy their lives.*]

The American participant in Item 11 discovered the different values between American and Chinese cultures by comparing their parents’ attitude and behaviour in respect of their children’s life choices and education. In Item 12, the Chinese participant in Dy10 of Cohort 2 found and evaluated the different values in choosing jobs between American and Chinese cultures and reflected on her/his [L]C1.

Reflection on L2 gains in learning diaries

Participant US10 made 4 diary submissions and the Chinese participant CN10 made 3. In

their learning diaries, the Chinese participant reported L2 gains such as specific English expression, grammar, or sentences, however, the American participant reflected on her/his L2 learning more generally as displayed in Items 13, 14 and 15.

Item 13

C2-US10: ‘Lan Lan was very helpful in correcting the errors in my e-mails to her. She taught me that some expressions in English are not used in Chinese.... Overall Lan Lan has helped me fix a lot of just minor errors in my grammar.’

Item 14

C2-US10: ‘I was told my Chinese is pretty good, but I should work on breaking my habits of thinking in English and focus harder on thinking more like an average Chinese. I think what Lan Lan means is when I write to her I’m mostly just translating my English sentences to Chinese, but I also need to think about how the average Chinese would say these sentences and translate accordingly.’

In Item 13, the American participant admitted that she/he learned many L2 expressions and her/his grammar knowledge improved through her/his Chinese partner - Lanlan’s error correction. In Item 14, she/he declared that she/he learned the proper way to translate a thought from English to Chinese.

Item 15

C2-US10: During this month, I didn’t learn anything directly from Lan Lan as she didn’t correct any of the mistakes I made in the e-mails I sent to her. However, I was able to learn a great deal of new vocabularies and grammars through her writing style. Often Lan Lan would explain specific vocabulary words and phrases that she would use throughout the e-mails she exchanged with me. Vocabularies and phrases such as 团圆饭 [*family reunion dinner*], 生活节节高 [*life is better and better*], 压岁钱 [*pocket money*], etc. I found this information to be very useful because it’s wonderful to know these kinds of words and expressions, but they are seldom taught in a classroom environment.

In Item 15, although the Chinese partner did not correct any errors for the American participant in that month, the American participant said that she/he could learn vocabulary and phrases from Lanlan’s e-mails without any formal correction; and she/he also mentioned that these words and expressions seldom appear in class.

Moreover, these participants are able to find topics where their different perspectives can be explored; by asking questions, the tandem partners learn about [L]C1 and [L]C2, and compare their original assumptions with authentic input from their partner and then construct new perspectives. This is clear from the following discussion:

- *'Do you start to prepare for Halloween? In America, it should be a big festival. How did you celebrate it in America? Is it fun?'* (Extract 26);
- *'You said you live in country. What does American country look like? Do every family in country have a lot of land? Do your family have a farm where you milk the cow and roast whole lamb?'* (Extract 26);
- *'Is high school life as colourful as we see in the movies? Do your students often hold parties and have a lot of activities?'* (Example 22);
- *'I do have one question for you to answer the next time you send an e-mail to me. ...I would like to know if you feel a great pressure or oppressed by your government?'* (Extract 28);
- *'In America, how do people see marriage? How do they get their certificate of marriage and divorce and what do you think?'* (Extract 29);
- *'How do the American parents educate their children? Do they try to make their children more independent or spoil their children? Do they give teachers gifts just because they fear that teacher cannot be good to their children?'* (Extract 30);
- *'I do have a question I wanted to ask you. I know this will differ from family to family, but I want to know how parents in China would feel about their son or daughter marrying a foreigner.'* (Extract 31).

The Case 1 dyad completed the highest number of tasks when compared to other dyads: tasks 1, 2 and 3. In task 1- word association, 5 extracts (Extracts 6, 8, 11, 16 and 19, p. 173-180) are found in which participants' 39 comments are noted in 7 categories emerging from the intercultural awareness construct. Results indicate that although this dyad was active in each category of IC awareness, they were more inclined to display their understanding (17 comments) and evaluation (10 comments) of each other's culture than other categories. In Extract 6, the dyad discussed word associations with 'America' and focused on the differences between Chinese women and American women. Finally, the American participant pushed this interaction further by commenting: *'I think relationships between men and women are drastically different between our two*

countries'. This implies that participants in Case 1 are able to take responsibility for their exchange of their views; it also shows their ability to sustain the conversation as well as their learning autonomy (an important principle of e-tandem) and consistent with the autonomy definition of Stickler and Lewis (2008). In Extract 11, participants focus their discussion on the social problem related to the word 'money'. It is interesting to find that the American participant shared an LC1 joke about the economic and social classes of the United States to give her/his partner her/his perspective on the topic. Here this communication strategy helps to build a good atmosphere for further understanding of LC1 and LC2. These are clear indications of how the participants' IC awareness increases through task discussions.

From Table 4.36 (p. 153), the Chinese participant in Case 1 points out 15 errors in her/his partner's use of Chinese and the American participant reciprocates by correcting 27 English errors for his tandem partner. The American participant reflects on this activity in the learning diaries:

Lan Lan was very helpful in correcting the errors in my e-mails to her. She taught me that some expressions in English are not used in Chinese' (Item 13 above); 'but I should work on breaking my habits of thinking in English and focus harder on thinking more like an average Chinese. (Item 14 above)

These two items indicate that not only did this two-participant's noticing of the differences between her/his L1 (English) and L2 (Mandarin) use help the development of her/his L1 and L2 awareness, but also to a potential change in learning behaviour.

Often Lan Lan would explain specific vocabulary words and phrases that she would use throughout the e-mails she exchanged with me. Vocabulary and phrases such as 团圆饭 [family reunion dinner], 生活节节高 [life is better and better], 压岁钱 [pocket money], etc. I found this information to be very useful because it's wonderful to know these kinds of words and expressions, but they are seldom taught in a classroom environment. (Item 15 above)

This reflection shows that this participant's language awareness is developing and, in particular, illustrates what Svalberg (2007) declares, namely, that awareness makes people report what they are aware of.

In summary, Case 1 dyad displays a high level of engagement by showing their interest in each other's culture, taking responsibility for sustaining the learning experience and exchanging points of view, building a good relationship by helping the other to understand their culture appropriately and being conscious of L2 learning demands. Additional positive examples from this dyad (see examples a, b, c and d in case 1 volume 2) indicate these two participants' joy and happiness during exchanges and echo O'Rourke's (2007) declaration that a successful e-tandem partnership can be 'enjoyable and intellectually stimulating' (p. 59) and leads to friendships.

Additional findings for this dyad

The following four examples (a. and b. from e-mails; c. from focus group interview; d. from learning diary) are an indication that positive feelings and the establishment of friendly relations impact positively and tangibly on the person and the learning experience itself.

- a. **C2-CN10:** 'Hey, Brett, I hope I did not keep you waiting for my letter, I am so glad to receive your letter, your letter was great, I appreciate [*sic*] it a lot' (**December 3, 2012 - p. 37, Appendix L**)
- b. **C2-US10:** 'Dear LanLan, I'm looking forward to more e-mails this semester ^_^ last semester I learned so much from you ' (**March 10, 2013 -p. 42, Appendix L**)
- c. **C2-CN10:** 'I enjoyed free exchanges and I was happy when my partner shared something with me....I prefer to say that my partner is more like a friend than an instrument, because my partner said that we should keep in touch in the future' (**p6.3 Question 6, Appendix U**)
- d. **C2-US10:** 'I'm pleased with what I've been learning so far and I enjoy these e-mails between Lan Lan and myself' (**November 23, 2012**)

5.6.2.2 Case 2

In Case 2 a total of 5 pieces of evidence of IC awareness development are found (Examples 4 and 9, p. 160-162; Example 30 below; Extracts 34 and 35 below)- far fewer than the 18 occurrences in Case 1.

Extract 33 (p. 49-51, Appendix M)

C1-IR1: '你的城市大不大? 我的城市在爱尔兰是太小。我要喜欢住在城市很大。...告诉我一些你的嗜好。我认为中国嗜好是很有意思。你的大学大不大在柳州? 我的大学是不太大不过是很漂亮。[(1)*Is your city big?* (2)*My city in Ireland is too small and I like to live in a big city...Please tell me something about*

your hobby. (3)I think Chinese hobbies should be interesting. (4)Is your university in Liuzhou and big? (5)My university is not too big but very beautiful.]... (6)I have heard of Nanning city in the Guanxi province and I have heard it's very beautiful. (7)Are there a lot of things to do in Nanning? (8)The city where I'm from in Ireland, Cork, is very boring in my opinion.' (Mar 19, 2011)

C1-CN1: 'I'm very glad that you known [*sic*] the Nanning city. Nanning isn't a big city or small city. (9)Nanning is a developing city and it's become more and more beautiful and modern. There are many trees in the city. so Nanning is always called Green city.... my school (college) is also very beautiful, it's a little small in my opinion. Because (10)China is a high developing county, there are many building is under the construction, so my school do.' (Mar 20, 2011)

C1-IR1: '...(11)It must be quite exciting to live in a place that is developing so quickly, I am really looking forward to my trip to China to see this with my own eyes...' (April 11, 2011)

C1-CN1: '...(12)Nanning City is a modern city, what I mean is that there lack of a historic place but the building is beautiful!...南宁不算是一个大城市，不过她正在发展，不久后就会变成一个大城市了。 [(13)Nanning is not a big city, but it is developing. It will become a big city soon.]' (May 20, 2011)

C1-IR1: '...虽然你告诉我南宁城市是小。南宁比科克大很多 [(14)Although you told me that Nanning is small, but it is much bigger than Cork]。 ...' (June 3, 2011)

It is interesting to find that the discussion about their respective cities lasts from March to June. The Irish participant first showed her/his interest in the partner's hometown and university by asking questions - (1), (4) and (7). Sentences (2), (5) and (8) are the Irish participant's introducing her/his own university and city, which correspond to understanding of [L]C1. Sentence (3) is the speculation of [L]C2 and sentence (6) is the understanding of [L]C2. In response to the Irish partner, the Chinese participant introduced her/his hometown Nanning and China which also corresponds to understanding of [L]C1 - (9) and (10). Then, the Irish participant expressed her/his speculation of [L]C2 - (11). Sentences (12) and (13) are the Chinese participant's.

In Extract 33, the discussion on the topic of living in cities continues in 5 e-mails, a unique occurrence when considering other dyads. This indicates participants' desire to preserve some coherence in their interaction. The 5 comments in this extract suggest that the two participants develop their awareness of [L]C1 and [L]C2 step by step. They first show interest in each other and then respond by showing their understandings of [L]C1 and [L]C2. Speculation and evaluation of [L]C1 and [L]C2 are found and finally comparison of difference between [L]C1 and [L]C2 are referred to in the conclusion. In contrast and interestingly, the inability to sustain a coherent conversation beyond the topic of living in cities emerges as one of the limitations characterising Case 2.

In Extract 34, the Chinese participant sought her/his partner's impressions of living in Shanghai.

Extract 34 (p. 54-55, Appendix M)

C1-CN1: ‘中国的生活习惯和饮食都与你的国家不一样吧。不知道你现在适应了没有？现在你觉得中国的饮食和你们国家的区别最大是什么呢？希望你能很好的适应在上海的生活，希望你生活愉快。’ [(1)*Lifestyle and food in China should be quite different from your country. Right? Do you get used to it now?* (2)*Do you think what the biggest difference is between the food in China and in Ireland? I hope you can get used to the life in Shanghai and hope you be happy there.*] (**Oct 11, 2011**)

C1-IR1: ‘我要告诉你对我的经验在上海。我爱住在上海我不要回爱尔兰。上海大学比科克大学大及了。我认为学习在上海大学很难因为我的老师说话很快。现在在上海天气也不好。天气很冷和下雨。无论，我跟我最好的朋友一起去超市买很多东西。它们都很便宜了。[*Now I will tell you about my experience in Shanghai. I like living in Shanghai and don't want to go back Ireland. (3)Shanghai University is much bigger than UCC. (4)I think study in Shanghai is difficult because my teacher speaks very fast. Now the weather in Shanghai is not good, cold and raining. Anyway, (5)I also go shopping with my best friend in markets and they are very cheap.*] (6)*I would definitely recommend visiting Shanghai it is an amazing city. I love living here especially on campus in the dormitory's where you can make a lot of friends. :)*’ (**Nov 11, 2011**)

The 5 pieces of evidence from the Case 2 dyad involve certain aspects of IC awareness development: modifying behaviour - going abroad (Example 9); comparison of their home cities/colleges (Extract 33) and different experiences in Shanghai and Cork (Extract 34) as well as self-awareness of their different behavioural norms in respect of entertainment and study (Example 4 and 6). Interestingly, Extract 35 displays a common phenomenon in this dyad: breakdown of communication, as the Chinese participant often received no response to her/his questions from her/his Irish partner. This, obviously, influences the Chinese participant's motivation during exchanges.

The Chinese participant first made a speculation of [L]C1 and [L]C2 - (1) and then showed her/his interest in the differences of [L]C1 and [L]C2 - (2). When introducing her/his experience in China, the Irish participant made a comparison of differences between [L]C1 and [L]C2 - (3). Finally, the Irish participant shared her/his feeling and made an evaluation of [L]C2 - (4), (5) and (6).

Extract 35 lists questions articulated by the Chinese partner.

Extract 35 (p. 52-55, Appendix M)

- C1-CN1:** ‘...签证困难吗？据说在欧洲只要签证一次就可以去各个国家了，是吗？...’
[*Is it difficult to get visa? It is said that just one visa can make you visit all the countries in Europe. Is it true?*] (**June 13, 2011**)
- C1-CN1:** ‘中国的生活习惯和饮食都与你的国家不一样吧。不知道你现在适应了没有？现在你觉得中国的饮食和你们国家的区别最大是什么呢？’ [*Lifestyle and food in China should be quite different from your country. Right? Do you get used to it now? What do you think is the biggest difference between the food in China and in Ireland?*] (**Oct 11, 2011**)
- C1-CN1:** ‘I am learning to drive the car and I want to take a driving license. Did you have any driving experience? Hoping to share your experience. (**Nov 16, 2011**)

The exchanges above indicate that, often, the Irish participant did not answer questions from the Chinese partner.

The following Extract 36 is based on how the two participants helped each other correct language errors.

Extract 36 (p. 51-54, Appendix M)

- C1-CN1:** ‘下面我帮你纠正一下你犯了的一些错误吧。我可以看得出你想表达什么，但是有些句子不够通顺。...希望能够帮到你，期待你的回信。’ [*Now I come to correct some of your errors. I can guess what you want to express, (1)but some of sentences are not smooth...Hope this can help you, I am looking forward to your reply.*] (**May 20, 2011**)
- C1-IR1:** ‘I want to thank you sincerely for correcting my mistakes it was really appreciated and will help me to keep improving my Chinese level. There are just a few minor things I wanted to point out in relation to your English grammar, some of your prepositions are a little incorrect for example...but other than those few minor things your English is very good.’ (**June 3, 2011**)
- C1-CN1:** ‘说实话，你的汉语不太好，有些地方我实在不知道你想要表达什么。不过信中的大概内容我还是可以理解的。每一位中国人都可以理解。不过呢 你也不用担心，只要你来到中国一段时间，你会发现汉语是这么的好学和好玩。如果你在中国可以打电话给我，我们交流交流。’ [(2)*To be honest, your Chinese is not very good. I can't understand some of what you wrote but I can still get the general idea. On the other hand, don't worry. When you come to China and live there for a while, you will find that it is fun and not very difficult to learn Chinese. When you are in China, you can ring me and we can talk about this.*] (**July 14, 2011**)
- C1-IR1:** ‘I was actually reading over some of my past emails and the Chinese grammar is quite terrible, I am sorry about that, I will definitely improve when I go to Shanghai.’ (**August 16, 2011**)
- C1-CN1:** ‘你知道吗，你写中文的顺序很乱。不过不要紧这是很多外国人通常都会犯的错误。我想，如果你来到上海和中国人交流的话，这些顺序你会改正的。现在我给你一个建议，下次你写一句话如果里面包含有地名，你尝试把地名放在靠前一点试试。’ [(3)*Do you know that the word order in your Chinese sentences is a big problem. But it is the normal mistakes that many*

foreigners make. I believe that when you arrive in Shanghai and communicate with Chinese people, you will correct the order. Now I give you one suggestion. (4)If you write a Chinese sentence which includes place, you should try to put the place at the beginning of the sentence.] (August 28, 2011)

In the above extract, as the Irish participant's Chinese level was poorer than the Chinese partner's English, the Chinese participant had to point out the Irish partner's errors directly - (1), (2) and (3). Finally, the Chinese participant gave a specific suggestion on how to write a Chinese sentence - (4).

The biggest weakness in Case 2 comes from participants' inability to complete even one task. When the Irish participant exchanges her/his pre-activity answers with her/his Chinese partner, the Chinese partner does not respond to the task. However, in respect of the development of language awareness, the Chinese participant appears to gain a lot. First, she/he imitates her/his Irish partner's greeting and parting remarks: 'hello there' and 'regards' (Extracts 20 and 21 in p. 203). She/he also regularly corrects errors for her/his partner over four months. The percentage of errors noticed by the Chinese partner also increases steadily (Table 4.25, p. 145). Extract 36 above indicates the Chinese participant's engagement in error correction. Instead of simply listing the errors, the Chinese participant also explains the linguistic features to the Irish partner, such as '*Now I give you one suggestion. If you write a Chinese sentence which include place, you should try to put the place at the beginning of the sentence*' (August 28, 2011, Appendix M). Explaining L2 errors is the operation of metalinguistic knowledge and is undoubtedly helpful to the development of this participant's language awareness; this piece of evidence also supports Roehr's (2006) definition of language awareness.

To conclude, due to the moderate level of contributions of the Case 2 dyad during this tandem exchange, participants' development of awareness of LC1 and LC2 is limited. Influenced by the Irish partner's absence of acknowledgement of her/his comments and questions, the Chinese student's motivation diminishes at a later stage and the two participants miss opportunities to develop their LC1 and LC2 awareness. However, the focus on language appears to be sustained by both participants, implying that here the main purpose of the exchange is L2 learning which in itself, i.e., absence of cultural reflection does not appear to be sufficient to establish a rich and successful exchange.

5.6.2.3 Case 3

Due to the low level of engagement evidenced in Case 3- short e-mails and the infrequency of exchange, only 3 pieces of evidence are found suggesting participants' growth in IC awareness (Extract 37 below; Example 3 in p. 160 and Item 6 in p. 184). Although 5 categories of IC awareness emerge in Extract 37 (interest in [L]C2; understanding of [L]C1 and [L]C2; comparison of difference between [L]C1 and [L]C2; evaluation of [L]C2 and self-awareness of culture as a relative construct) as well as the fact that participants in Example 3 and Item 6 also show their perception of culture as a relative construct, the manifestation of IC awareness is at a very superficial level and cannot be taken to lead to a genuine growth in IC awareness.

Extract 37 shows how the Chinese participant expressed her/his interest in Ireland and how the Irish partner responded.

Extract 37 (p. 56, Appendix N)

C2-CN13: '(1)I am very interested in Ireland, (2)I hear that your country is very beautiful, and there are many famous cultural sites, like the newgrengre Boulders single rooms in County Meath, Beaghmore Stones in County Tyrone(泰隆郡) and so on. And the beautiful coast ...我想你来中国已经有一段时间了。现实中的中国给你的感觉是怎么样的啊? 或者是和你想象中的 China 有什么不同吗? 还有, 这里的人怎么样? 他们对你好不好? ' [You must have been in China for a while. (3)What impression do you have of China? Or Any difference from what you expect? How about the people in China? Are they friendly to you?] (Oct 20, 2012)

C2-IR13: '(4)It is true that Ireland is very beautiful. (5)Compared to China Ireland is tiny. (6)I like Shanghai a lot. The people of Shanghai are very friendly.' (Nov 2, 2012)

Sentence (1) reflects the Chinese partner's interest in [L]C2 and sentence (3) is the Chinese participant's interest in her/his Irish partner's perspective on China. Sentence (2) is the understanding of Ireland - [L]C2. Sentence (4) is the understanding of [L]C1 and sentence (5) is the comparison of differences between [L]C1 and [L]C2. The Irish participant also made evaluation of [L]C2 - (6).

With regard to error correction, the Chinese participant helps to correct her/his Irish partner's e-mail once where 6 mistakes are pointed out for the Irish partner within one e-mail (Nov. 3, 2012 in p. 59, Vol. 2), while the Irish partner never corrects any mistakes for the Chinese participant, in spite of the Chinese participant reminding her/him of the need to correct her/his mistakes (Extract 38 below). Thus, in the questionnaire survey,

this Chinese participant mentioned that her/his Irish partner appeared to be rude and impolite (p 2.17, Appendix K).

Extract 38 (p. 56-57, Appendix N)

C2-CN13: ‘前面我发的那封邮件，如果有哪里写得不对的，还请你帮我改正哦！收到请回我！！’ [*If there is anything wrong in my last e-mail, please correct them for me. Please reply to me when you get my e-mail.*] (**Oct 30, 2012**)

C2-IR13: ‘Could you please correct my Chinese? As my level of Chinese is not very high...’ (**Nov 2, 2012**)

C2-CN13: ‘I had corrected your email... maybe you were forgot to correct my last letter, so, this time, Could you please correct my English if I have make mistakes?...’ (**Nov 2, 2012**)

To summarise, it appears that the level of engagement within this dyad is characterised by an initial imbalance in the communication exchanges, an inability to sustain a topic of conversation as well as limited and superficial references to LC1 and LC2. Another feature of this exchange is that the word association task did not generate further communication and comparisons between the various values proposed in the task. Perhaps the intervention of the teacher at this point and general reminders to participants would encourage participants to react. This particular dyad shows the extent to which the Chinese partner attempted to communicate, unsuccessfully (see Appendix N: E-mail Transcripts of Dyad 13 in Cohort 2). The same participant recommends face-to-face interaction with international students on campus (Appendix J and K, p2.13)

5.7 Response Patterns among Chinese and Irish/American Participants

On analysing participants’ contributions, patterns in the responses of Chinese and Irish/American participants emerged. These different patterns seemed to define each group’s understanding of the role of the teacher in a tandem exchange; the interpretation of the e-tandem experience also sheds light on the groups’ perceptions. It should be noted that this part of the discussion reflects indicative trends manifest in this study; the patterns should not be considered as absolute as no significance statistical tests were performed due to the imbalance between the number of respondents in each of the two groups. However, these patterns provide an opportunity to reflect on the future design of tandem exchanges.

5.7.1 Different Perception of the Role of Teacher and Tandem Partner

Figure 4.25 (p. 115) displays participants’ perception of the role of teacher and it is noted

that most respondents agree that *a teacher should be responsible for giving feedback, providing models of exchange, reminding partners to reply and supervising the deadline*. One Chinese participant comments in interview: ‘*During exchanges, teachers can guide us to discuss topics which can arouse the two groups’ interests.*’ (p1.2 Question 7, Appendix P). However, it is interesting to note that 3 of 38 respondents believe that a teacher should never give feedback, provide models of exchange or supervise the deadline (Table 5.22 below shows who they are).

Table 5. 22: Different responses to the role of the teacher

	CN	IR/US
Teacher should never give feedback	0	3
Teacher should never provide models of exchange	0	3
Teacher should never supervise the deadline	2	1

Table 5.22 indicates that 3 of 38 respondents believe that a teacher should never be involved in these functions. The 3 respondents who believe that *a teacher should never give feedback nor provide models of exchange* are all Irish/American. This suggests a more independent approach to learning which may also be influenced by the fact that e-mail communication is often perceived to be a private activity, beyond the scrutiny of a teacher. It may also be due to different learning approaches at university level. In China, teacher-centered classes are still more common than student-centered classes. In addition, 2 Chinese respondents and 1 Irish/American believe that *a teacher should never supervise the deadline*, even though their own experience of the teacher in this study was the opposite, i.e. the teacher supervised the deadline. Thus, it is fair to assume that the responses represent opinions on what a teacher’s role should be as a result of their experience of the particular exchange.

Table 5. 23: Responses to the role of tandem partner

Response	CN	IR/US	Total
Friend (e-pal)	7	0	7
Instrument	6	2	8
Neither	7	1	8

With regard to the role of the tandem partner, Table 5.23 illustrates that more Chinese participants see their partner as a friend and none of the Irish/American participants do. This result probably relates to participants’ expectations and engagement in exchanges.

For example, several Chinese participants mentioned in the focus group interview that they had expected to make a friend but failed as they did not have much interaction. This is also mentioned by p2.6 in her/his response to the limitations of the exchange: ‘*We interacted as a task instead of exchanging with a friend*’ (Appendix J). This difference may be explained by a need to establish a good relationship before progressing to the actual ‘business’ of learning - references to sincerity in the communication was previously mentioned (disadvantage m) in Table 5.19, p. 234): ‘*It is hard to learn from each other well and to exchange sincerely through e-mail*’. It also echoes the ‘agreeable’ Chinese communication style, aiming to reach a harmonious state of human relationship (Chen, 2011). One comment also indicates the importance of keeping the harmony and balance in the exchange:

The most difficult is that my partner is a black girl and her mind was a little bit extreme. Thus I had to consider how to write my e-mails and I gave her some positive influence and made her happier. (Comment 66, Table 5.20 - p. 238)

5.7.2 Additional Different Perception of Tandem Experiences

Appendix K lists participants’ comments on their e-tandem experience from questionnaires. Figure 4.58 (p. 135) indicates more positive comments (19) from respondents than negative comments (12). On observing the specific comments made by the two groups of participants (Chinese and Irish/American), we gain additional insights in the two groups’ perceptions. Irish participants report their workload, time constraints while studying in China (Appendices R and S). For example, comment from p3.1 ‘*some weeks we had exams, and others we had a lot of homework to do, so it makes it difficult for me to do this once a week*’ (Question 1, Appendix R); ‘*But once a week is sometimes very difficult because you know, to sit down to write e-mail you feel that’s... for half an hour and it takes time*’ (p4.1 Question 1, Appendix S). One Irish participant refers to her/his own limitations: ‘*I should have known how to download and use a pinyin input programme. I usually had to rely on google translate to write characters*’ (p1.2); for their part, more Chinese participants refer to the cultural differences as a barrier for successful communication (p2.15 and p2.18, Appendix J; p6.2 Question 6, Appendix U), or the superficiality of the exchange (p2.16, Appendix J). References to their disappointment in their partner are also more frequent ‘*The partner’s attitude to life may be too free, so she/he didn’t continue to exchange. It would be better if there were some activities to*

increase our motivation' (p2.13); *'E-tandem exchange is very meaningful, but the participants in the later stage were not active'* (p2.14).

Although Chinese participants provide many suggestions as to how the exchanges might be improved, they seldom display self-critical analysis in relation to their own performance. The perceived differences between the two groups also emerge from the negative and positive comments on the tandem experience in the focus groups. In Table 5.24 below, from the Chinese participants' perspective, the responses suggest that the most difficult aspect of the exchange relates to their communication with their tandem partners, such as not receiving replies from their partners, the absence of topics to discuss because of cultural differences or their partner's poor Chinese. Only one Chinese participant finds poor English to be a barrier to communication with her/his partner (p1.5 Question 6, Appendix P). However, all the Irish/American participants relate this question to their circumstances (too busy to communicate), except for one who regards her/his partner's interest in asking questions as a burden (p3.2 Question6, Appendix R). With regard to the most enjoyable aspect of the exchange, it is interesting to see one Irish/American participant mentions the exchange of images and music (p3.2 Question6, Appendix R), while all the Chinese participants seem to focus more on the L[C]2 learning process, such as practising writing in English, reading the partner's e-mail, or correcting each other's language mistakes.

Table 5. 24: Reflection on experience of E-tandem

Question	Responses (CN)	Responses (IR/USA)
most difficult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is no reply from the partner and interaction stops. b. Cultural differences exist. c. It's difficult to find a topic to interact. d. I don't understand my partner's Chinese writing and I don't know how to correct it. e. Interaction between us is too little. f. We are not familiar with each other and there is not too much to talk about. g. It's not convenient to exchange by e-mail. h. My English is poor and it's hard to express what I want to say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to e-mail once a week j. finding the time to e-mail k. keeping up with the tasks l. My partner asked quite a lot questions and I have to write a lot.
most enjoyable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. sharing different things with my partner, such as college life, weather, social welfare freely b. receiving my partner's e-mail c. practising writing in English d. reading my partner's e-mail e. correcting each other's language errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. having someone that can talk and explain to you g. seeing the pictures and music from my partner
most useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. learning some native English b. leaning about each other's culture and cultural differences c. reading my partner's e-mails d. My writing skills have improved. e. correcting grammar errors for each other f. I see the differences between us from language errors. g. writing half in Mandarin half in English h. keeping interaction with my partner in e-mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Google j. We can see how they construct English and they also see how we learn Chinese. k. My partner corrects my grammar and errors. l. culture things m. My partner can tell me how to say some words in Chinese.
least useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. no development in my own language b. the online forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. the tasks

Table 5.24, the summary of participants' answers to question 6 in focus group interviews, which suggests that all the Irish/American respondents were too busy to conduct the exchange and could not cope with the number of questions asked by their partner nor the task requirements. Most of the answers from the Chinese participants seem to be related to the nature of their communication with the tandem partners, such as not receiving replies from their partners, the absence of topics to discuss because of cultural differences or their partner's poor Chinese. Additionally, 1 participant mentioned e-mail itself as an unsuitable means of communication and another participant referred to her/his own poor level of English as adding to the difficulty of e-tandem exchanges. With regard to the most enjoyable thing, both the Chinese and Irish/American respondents declared that it

was enjoyable to share information with their tandem partners. In addition, the Chinese responses also include receiving and reading partner's e-mails, practising writing in English and correcting each other's language errors. Both the Chinese and Irish/American groups mentioned language correction and learning about their cultural items as being most useful. 3 items are proposed as being the least useful things: the tasks (IR/US), the online forum and the absence of personal language development (CN).

Among the 18 suggestions made by participants in Appendix K, 6 suggest combining synchronous or audio/video exchange with e-mail exchanges by using instant tools such as Skype, WeChat, QQ (respondents p2.2, p1.9, p1.11, p.2.8, p2.9, p3.1 in Appendix K). Obviously, Skype and WeChat are popular for Irish/ American participants and QQ is typically Chinese. Chinese participants also make several suggestions, to overcome the imbalance of engagement that may occur if one of the partners does not engage as expected. *'The number of e-tandem partner can be increased, which means we can have more than one partner'* (p1.10). Another is *'We can record our input and send it to our partner'* (p2.9). The comment, *'the interaction can happen between foreign students and local students in the same college which may arouse more deep feeling and thinking'* (p2.13), indicates the need for face-to-face interaction and once more the need to establish a sound relationship with the partner. This view also attempts to make use of the existing resources within this student's university. The following comment is interesting because it does not appear to consider that from a Western point of view, a journal is private: *'I think we can keep diaries in English and then show them to our partner. Then we could discuss the diaries during e-mail exchanges'* (p3.3); yet, one could argue that diary keeping in this research and/or learning context may be perceived to be contrived; hence, it is quite possible that diary extracts, chosen by participants, could be exchanged.

To summarise, the patterns emerging from this exchange suggest the need for more personal forms of communication to establish new friendships on the part of the Chinese participants. The pressure and stimulus of studying in a new environment such as Shanghai is invoked by the Irish/American participants as a reason for not engaging fully with the exchange.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter proposed a discussion of the findings arising from this study with reference

to the 4 research questions and also to the body of literature in this area.

To answer the first research question: ‘How can telecollaboration create and/or develop intercultural awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?’ This chapter first presented the categories which emerged from participants’ online exchanges. With regard to intercultural awareness and mutual engagement in free e-mail exchanges, 5 themes of awareness of self and other based on previous studies were first considered: culture as a relative construct (N=3); self-awareness - discovering differences in behavior (N=3); developing awareness - differences in values (N=2); willingness to modify behavior (N=1); discussion of personal and difficult issues (N=4). 3 categories based on researcher’s observations in the study entitled dealing with disagreement (N=2), finding commonalities (N=3) and dealing with misunderstanding (N=4) were also identified. 7 categories (a and b are based on the researcher’s study and others are from previous studies) were also created to analyse task discussions in e-mails and online forum discussions: (a) understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2; (b) evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2; (c) comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2; (d) comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2; (e) speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2; (f) interest in [L]C1/[L]C2; (g) discussion on a clash of opinions. The number of the occurrences of these 7 categories (Table 5.1, p. 182) indicates that the most frequent dimension in the task discussion is understanding of [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=34), the second and the third most frequently reported dimensions are evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=24) and interest in [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=15), followed by speculation about [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=9) and comparison of the differences between [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=6). On the other hand, comparison of the similarities between [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=4) and discussion on a clash of [L]C1/[L]C2 (N=3) were the least frequently reported. Although only 2 participants discussed task 1 both in e-mail and forum due to participants’ low engagement in online forum; evidence in Table 5.2 (p. 183) indicates the potential role of forum entries in providing opportunities for awareness development. In participants’ learning diaries, evidence of their intercultural awareness development was found in 9 items, as well as challenges related to their different cultures and L2 abilities during e-tandem exchanges. Comments from focus group interviews related to [L]C1/ [L]C2 awareness and change in communication behavior (Tables 5.5 and 5.6) further confirm the above findings.

In addition, the findings related to IC awareness development were discussed based on three indicators of the development of a third space which emerged in participants' subjectivity as a result of telecollaboration: a dialogic space, a site of struggle and an evolving space (Helm *et al.*, 2012). First, participants acknowledged their different cultures through dialogue in the virtual space, which made them notice their own and their partner's cultures. Findings also showed participants' ability to compare similarities and differences between them, a rich terrain for the development of cultural awareness. In addition, establishing commonalities in such a space became tandem participants' way of respecting different viewpoints and of building good partner relationships. Second, participants' exchanges of personal and difficult issues (asking for an Irish girlfriend or dealing with a bad teacher) helped to increase their LC1 and LC2 awareness. However, occasions where the partner's contribution was ignored also occurred as participants wrote their postings independently of what their interlocutor had written or because of the limitations of their L2 knowledge. Evidence of participants dealing with misunderstandings in the third space proved to be useful in balancing what participants believed to be true and acknowledging differences, thereby promoting an awareness of multiple perspectives in understanding. Apart from personal problems and misunderstandings, viewpoints and stereotypes were often challenged and disagreement did not prove to be an obstacle in their awareness development. Participants' conflicts demonstrated by written communication on word associations and meaning (e.g., 'individualism') made participants become aware of multiple cultural interpretations contained within a single word. What's more, both quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that in this study, telecollaboration provided an evolving space for participants' awareness of LC1 and LC2, as exemplified by these participants' communication and reflection in their learning diaries. From participants' reflection during focus group interviews, their awareness of the inseparability of language and culture learning emerged through their awareness of inseparability of language use from its socio-cultural context (Table 5.7, p. 198). Findings from how participants dealt with not understanding their partner and how participants coped when not able to express ideas in L2 also indicated participants' awareness development through their growing understanding of LC1 and LC2. The third space, while constructed through compare and contrast processes, became tangible in this study through the mirroring effect produced when participants were faced

with LC1 challenges. During this process, a change of perspective on their LC1, in use, emerged as they developed a will to be understood both linguistically - correct and better use of the L1 - and culturally - accurate reflection of the C1 to the partner. Finally, participants used strategies when they did not understand their partners and did not know how to use the L2 to express their ideas and these strategies revealed the development of their L[C]1 and L[C]2 awareness (Examples 25-29, p. 200-201).

In order to find the answer to the second research question: ‘Do L1-L2 specific exchanges contribute to the development of language awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants?’, excerpts of participants’ noticing and imitating L2 were first presented and then findings from participants’ reflection and comments were analysed to illustrate the development of L[C]1/L[C]2 awareness (e.g., Table 5.8 and 6.9). Findings related to L2 *noticing* in NS discourse indicate that participants not only noticed their partner’s casual use of L2 words seldom encountered in textbooks but also noticed the differences between the partner’s L[C]2 and those learned in traditional classes. Thus, participants’ language awareness developed through L2 *noticing* and also through the comparison of their input and output (Schmidt, 1990). Participants’ language awareness also developed through their curiosity about the use of the L1 and the L2 triggered by the written exchanges. In this way, e-tandem participants’ L[C]1 awareness led to L[C]2 awareness. Interestingly, participants’ learning diaries demonstrated that participants noticed more new words than other L2 features (such as grammar), confirming Darhower’s (2008) finding. Further evidence of *noticing* occurred through imitation of the partner’s opening and concluding formulae, for example, indicating that the participants’ awareness becomes part of the sociocultural context of the L2 (Witte, 2011). L2 correction and feedback from tandem partners is an important way of developing participants’ language awareness. Most of the tandem participants in this study expressed a positive attitude toward this activity; however, the activity was also described as time-consuming and tiring. Errors corrected by participants were always related to the misuse of Mandarin or English words. Incorrect word order exercised the Chinese participants more frequently while spelling seemed to be a particular concern of Irish/American participants. It may be due to the fact that Irish/American participants appear to pay more attention to message meaning than L2 forms. During the L[C]1-L[C]2 specific exchanges, participants’ reported development of their L2 skills - writing, reading as well as speaking and also an increase in their L2

vocabulary (see Extract 24, p. 215). With regard to speaking, it is proposed that the chat-like nature of the exchanges facilitated the improvement of speaking skills, particularly for Chinese participants; this confirms previous findings (Chen's 2008). *Noticing* and imitating the L1, L2 corrections, feedback and self-reflection on L[C]1-L[C]2 exchanges, all contributed to the activation of metalinguistic knowledge. However, one limitation of these L[C]1-L[C]2 e-mail exchanges was also revealed, as participants called for verbal exchanges to be included in this study. Finally, participants' change in their own behaviour happened as the will to be understood by others both in L1 and L2 use developed. The same process was at work for culture as the participants expressed a strong desire for their culture to be accurately understood by their partner. They felt responsible for doing this correctly.

With regard to the third research question 'In e-tandem partnerships, is awareness more likely to emerge from informal exchanges or task-based discussions?', participants' attitude towards tasks and their completion seemed to be negative because findings indicate that, overall, participants prefer unstructured and spontaneous exchanges to the tasks; however, evidence has shown that tasks do help participants to increase their awareness of both LC1 and LC2 in promoting comparison of [L]C1/[L]C2 and L[C]1/L[C]2 (see the word association task in Chun's 2011 study for example). As an additional task, keeping learning diaries seemed to be perceived negatively by participants who viewed the exercise as an additional chore; however, its usefulness as a record of metalinguistic reflection on linguistic features was pointed out and proven by Dooly (2007). Tasks can play an important role when participants experience difficulty in finding topics to discuss, as reported in this study; however, tasks were perceived to limit communication (Table 5.11) between partners by some while others suggested that careful consideration should be given to the choice of topics and content of each task. Although language gains appeared to be obtained through informal learning, evidence of participants' development of LC1 and LC2 awareness was found both in their informal e-mail exchanges and task discussions. However and more specifically, more comments suggesting IC awareness were found in the task completion exchanges than in informal exchanges. On this basis, it appears that tasks, once completed, appear to promote LC1 and LC2 awareness development to a greater degree than free e-mail exchanges alone.

The last research question is ‘What are the challenges that may arise during the e-tandem exchanges and how do the participants meet them?’. This study has demonstrated that challenges related to participants’ motivation, to their partner and that exchange tools should be carefully considered. Chinese participants appeared to have higher levels of motivation in the exchanges when compared to the Irish/American participants (Table 5.14). However, reasons for Irish/American participants’ lower level of engagement include the possible non-integration of the project into the curriculum and the learning context of Irish/American participants who were already studying in Shanghai at the time of exchange - an authentic, demanding, and stimulating environment. The Chinese participants’ L2 proficiency level was higher than their Irish/American partners’ level in Chinese. Consequently, the difference in L2 levels constituted an additional difficulty in the communication between these participants. This influenced the achievement of equality and reciprocity in e-tandem exchange. Issues of matching participants’ expectation, time structure and commitment proposed by O’Dowd (2006) also became the challenges for the participants in this study. Nevertheless, it is also noted that this e-tandem exchange provided conditions for partners to become teaching friends (Table 5.18). More participants reported disadvantages than advantages of e-mail and online forums (Table 5.19). The main advantage of e-mail exchanges was related to more effective time and content management (Lightfoot, 2006; Little *et al.*, 1999). However, e-mail exchanges lacking spontaneity, sincerity and honesty were reported by several Chinese participants, suggesting a need for specific human dimensions which could not be provided by the computer alone. Participants expressed a preference for online forums, however, due to the lack of interaction, online forums did not help participants in developing their LC1 and LC2 awareness to a significant degree. Further analysis of participants’ comments in focus group interviews revealed two unexpected findings. One related to the emotional impact of the exchange on participants (Table 5.20) and the other to perceived cultural differences on participants’ ability to communicate.

In order to further analyse the nature of participants’ exchange via e-tandem, 3 dyads engaging at different levels (high, moderate, low) were chosen as case studies. Quantitative findings focusing on exchange frequency, balance between L1/L2 and length of e-mail defined the levels of engagement within the principles of autonomy, equality and reciprocity. Case 1 dyad (C2-Dy10) appeared to have a successful exchange, as this

dyad displayed an IC awareness from the very beginning to the end of their exchange. The two participants in this dyad shared their different viewpoints and compared differences and similarities in LC1 and LC2 through asking questions and proposing new topics to push their communication forward. They also took responsibility for correcting their partner's L2 errors and became aware of the difference between L[C]1 and L[C]2. Compared with the Case 1 dyad, the dyad in Case 2 (C1-Dy1) was more moderate in the development of their IC awareness. Findings suggest that the two participants worked at preserving some coherence in their exchanges over a long period of time leading to a gradual development of their IC awareness: comparison of LC1 and LC2 and modification of their behaviours, took place during informal exchanges as opposed to the more formal work of task completion. Evidence of breakdown in their communication emerged as one of the participants seemed to ignore the other's questions. Hence, the principles of reciprocity and equality were flouted. The dyad in Case 3 showed very low levels of engagement: short e-mails and infrequency of exchanges. Although several findings from their e-mails illustrated their IC awareness (interest in [L]C2; understanding of [L]C1 and [L]C2; comparison of difference between [L]C1 and [L]C2; evaluation of [L]C2 and awareness of culture as a relative construct) and their perceptions of culture as a relative construct, the manifestation of their IC awareness remained at a very superficial level and could not be taken to lead to a genuine growth in IC awareness. With regard to error correction, the Irish partner in Case 3 never corrected the Chinese participant's mistakes, in spite of several reminders from the Chinese participant who then concluded that her/his Irish partner was rude and impolite. All these findings point to the dyad's failure to adhere to the principles of tandem exchanges and the inevitable absence of LC1 and LC2 awareness development. To conclude, the 3 cases illustrated the variety in the nature of tandem communication ranging from rich engagement to superficial and erratic communication.

Finally, patterns in the response of Chinese and Irish/American participants emerged and were found in each group's different perceptions of the role of teachers (Table 5.22) and tandem partners (Table 5.23). A majority of Chinese participants agreed that teachers should give feedback and provide models of exchange while several Irish/American participants did not agree; perhaps, different learning and teaching approaches in home universities led to a different understanding of the role of the teacher. Response patterns

from participants' perceptions of the role of their partner indicated that Chinese participants wished to establish good friendships with their tandem partner while Irish/American participants did not seem to view this as a priority. Chinese participants' tendency to focus on the harmony and balance in the exchange was also manifest. In addition, the Irish/American group reported time constraints and a decline in motivation due to the numerous learning opportunities surrounding these participants who were studying in Shanghai at the time of the exchange. Several Chinese participants in particular, also made suggestions for improvement, principally in the form of the introduction of synchronous communication tools (Table 5.24).

Chapter 6 now turns to the main conclusions and outcomes of this dissertation and suggests directions for future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter provides a conclusion to this study on the role of awareness in the development of LC1 and LC2 competence in Mandarin and English e-tandem exchanges. The chapter presents an overview of the findings in the context of the research aim and questions against the background of LC1 and LC2 telecollaboration research. It presents the conclusions in terms of the relationship between the development of IC awareness and telecollaboration, including task completion as well as the development of language awareness in Mandarin-English exchanges. The challenges faced by participants in the exchanges are also considered, with the inclusion of observations gleaned from 3 case studies and participants' response patterns. The contribution made by this study is also discussed from the perspective of the research methodology. Furthermore, the chapter proposes several recommendations in relation to the findings of the study. Finally, it suggests directions for future work in this area.

6.1 Conclusions and Outcomes

This section sets out the major findings and outcomes of this research in the context of the 4 research questions that were posed in Chapter 1. Conclusions are drawn from the analysis of e-mail exchanges from 62 participants (3 Cohorts), including participant contributions from 5 online forums, 53 submissions of learning diaries, 39 returned questionnaires, 7 focus group interviews and 3 case studies. First, the emergence of a third space provided by telecollaboration is discussed.

6.1.1 Intercultural Awareness Development in Third Space

In terms of the development of intercultural awareness in Chinese and Irish/American participants in telecollaborative exchanges, the literature suggests that it is an effective approach for intercultural language learning (Cappellini, 2016; Kan *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2012; Yamauchi and Jones, 2012; Lee, 2009; Chen, 2008; Darhower, 2008; Dooly, 2007; Belz and Vyatkina, 2005; O'Rourke, 2005;). According to Witte (2011) and Helm *et al.* (2012), the third space is a subjective and dynamic place in which culture is located and where participants may transform their perspectives through sharing personal experiences, negotiating identities or co-constructing meanings. It has also been defined as a dialogic space, a site of struggle and an evolving space by Helm *et al.* (2012). Evidence indicates that telecollaboration is a means of promoting such a third space (Angelova and Zhao, 2016; Chun, 2011; Liaw, 2007; Bretag, 2006; O'Dowd, 2003).

Findings in this study confirm these views and suggest that IC awareness developed in this third space.

First, findings from participants' 39 returned questionnaires and informal e-mail exchanges between 31 dyads (without including discussion of tasks and online forum discussions) as presented in Section 5.2.1 indicated that participants expressed their IC awareness by noticing aspects of their own and their partner's cultures; this awareness developed as participants compared and exchanged similarities and differences in behaviour and values where different viewpoints were respected; the relationships evolved through acknowledgment and negotiation while finding commonalities in the virtual space. Communication strategies in order to build good partner relationships became a priority for several participants who expressed empathy with partners while choosing discussion topics on the basis of shared interest.

Second, this study also suggests that participants' exchanges on personal and difficult issues, including dealing with misunderstandings, challenging different viewpoints and stereotypes in telecollaborative interactions helped to increase their LC1 and LC2 awareness and to promote ethnorelative perspectives. Discussing personal issues with partners indicated that Chinese participants were more eager to make a foreign friend than their Irish/American partners who were already availing of the opportunity to make Chinese friends while studying in China.

The third space provided an opportunity for reflection, in a mirroring effect, where participants gained a heightened sense of themselves as exponents of their language and culture. This awareness led to increased responsibility in dispelling potential stereotyping through more detailed explanations and a focus on L1 productions to ensure better understanding. The word association task generated an awareness of the multiple cultural interpretations contained in a single word. Overall, the growth in awareness appeared to impact meaningfully on the LC1, which suggests that a change of perspective took place. This was evidenced in participants' own reflections in the diary entries and focus group interviews as well as e-mail exchanges.

In this light, telecollaboration creates an evolving space for the emergence of participants' awareness of culture as a relative construct; awareness of possible differences in

perspective; increased understanding of both LC1 and LC2; awareness of [L]C1 and/or [L]C2; awareness of socio-cultural context for language learning; willingness to modify their own behavioural practices and in particular, the way in which L1 communication was articulated; and switching between the awareness of LC1 and LC2.

However, the exchange process was not successful for all participants as communication broke down due to L2 communicative limitations, the absence of responses and the inability to sustain a conversation on a particular topic.

6.1.2 Language Awareness Development in L1-L2 Specific Exchanges

The development of language awareness was examined in the following contexts: noticing and imitation of the L1, L2 correction and feedback from e-tandem partners and participants' self-reflection on exchanges between the L1 and the L2. Findings demonstrated that curiosity about the L1 and the L2 was triggered by the exchange led to the development of L[C]2 awareness. However, as mentioned above, a focus on the L1 and the development of the will to be understood became both a priority and a source of satisfaction in participants' communication. One participant clearly mentions that her/his desire to make the partner understand the culture led to paying greater attention to her/his written communication.

According to Schmidt (1990), noticing is a part of awareness which promotes learner's metalinguistic knowledge necessary for L2 learning. Findings revealed that tandem partners' language awareness increased through L2 noticing and the comparison of their partner's more authentic use of the L1 and L2 with content learned from classes or textbooks. Interestingly, findings from participants' learning diaries suggested that participants noticed L2 words and expressions more frequently than L2 grammar. As a result of noticing, participants began imitating their partner's opening and concluding formulae in e-mails, thereby becoming aware that their communication should occur within an appropriate socio-cultural context.

Although participants' self-reports on providing L2 correction and feedback are not all positive, it was found that participants' metalinguistic knowledge including learners' ability to correct, describe, and explain L2 errors (Roehr, 2006) had been activated during these activities thereby developing their language awareness. However, only a small

number of participants was able to sustain error correction for more than 3 months. The negative reports were principally related to affective factors (feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable around this activity). The type of errors corrected by participants revealed differences between Chinese and Irish/American participants. The top error pointed out by both sides was the misuse of Mandarin/English words. The second most commonly corrected error, according to Chinese participants was their partners' incorrect word order. With regard to the Irish/American participants, they often focused on their partner's wrong spelling while word order was the least corrected errors by English speakers. Perhaps meaning is impacted in different ways within each language, i.e., the correct word/character order for a better understanding of Mandarin and the correct spelling for English.

With regard to participants' L2 skills, findings from questionnaire indicated development of participants' writing, reading as well as speaking and their L2 vocabulary also increased. However, the limitation of the lack of oral exchange was also reported.

On the basis of the findings in this study, it is proposed that the development of awareness, both for language and culture, became manifest in: 1) The will to be understood by others, both in the L1 and the L2; 2) A change in one's communication behaviour: partners adapted their language and reflected on their own language and culture. However, these insights mainly came from Chinese participants.

Therefore, on this basis and to a certain extent, these L1-L2 specific exchanges appeared to contribute to several Chinese and Irish/American participants' development of language awareness.

6.1.3 Awareness Development through Task Completion

In respect of the development of awareness in informal exchanges or task-based discussions quantitative findings related to participants' attitude toward tasks in e-tandem exchanges seemed to be quite positive, as IC awareness through the comparison of LC1 and LC2 was reported. However, qualitative findings from focus group interviews suggested that participants tended to prefer unstructured and spontaneous exchanges (see discussion in Section 5.4.1). Keeping learning diaries was not favoured by more than half of the participants who perceived the exercise to be an additional task; however, most

participants agreed that keeping a diary was an opportunity for further reflection. Results also revealed that finding discussion topics was a challenge for participants who reported cultural differences as a reason for failing to communicate successfully. The importance of task -design came to the fore as the topic and content of the task appeared to influence the level of participants' exchange performance; the role of teacher as a source of encouragement and motivation during the exchanges was also mentioned by most participants. However, Irish/American participants did not share this view, believing that the teacher should not be involved in participants' communication.

Findings from participants' e-mail discussions and online forum discussions of Task 1 - word associations - indicated that while tasks seem to promote growth in LC1 and LC2 awareness, few participants are able to actually report this awareness. After comparison of the qualitative findings from participants' free e-mail exchanges and discussion of Task 1, the categories 'understanding [L]C1/[L]C2' (N=44) and 'evaluation of [L]C1/[L]C2' (N=29) emerged most frequently in participants' interactions. In addition, a combination of tasks and informal e-mail exchanges appeared to be more effective for promoting LC1 and LC2 awareness development than unstructured e-mail exchanges alone. However, tasks also appear to be an important stimulus in the development process.

6.1.4 Challenges in E-tandem Exchanges

Findings related to challenges met by participants were also discussed. These focused on participants' motivation, the role of their partner and the advantages and disadvantages associated with the exchange tools. The first challenge related to Irish/American participants who appeared to have lower levels of participation than the Chinese participants; however, it should be noted that, at the time of the exchange, these participants were attending a university in China and were surrounded by both challenges and opportunities associated with the new environment. Although Chinese students tried to encourage their partners to respond and participate, many were not able to overcome the difficulties they had in doing this. Second, different L2 levels between partners impacted on the principles of equality and reciprocity in e-tandem exchange; however, while these problems did exist in this study, they were not reported by all dyads. On the other hand, the role of the partner in e-tandem was described by several participants as that of a teaching friend, although breakdown in communication often happened. Finally,

challenges arising from the nature of e-mail and online forums were reported by participants who expressed a need for specific human dimensions in their communication (e.g., sincerity) as this is difficult to get across using asynchronous communication. Thus, while most participants suggested combining oral exchanges with e-mail tandem exchanges to provide a richer L2 learning experience, several participants also mentioned this combination to address the need for more personal and human-centered communication.

In addition, this study reported two unexpected findings. One is the challenge related to the emotional impact that this learning experience has on participants, for example, many participants reported their disappointment, unhappiness or even expressed self-blame when the tandem partners did not reply. This suggests that the role of the affect should not be under-estimated and that future e-tandem participants should be made aware of this dimension in advance of the exchange; the second unexpected finding relates to perceived cultural differences which became a barrier in several participants' communication; strategies to overcome breakdown in communication should be put in place during pre-exchange training. Future work to guide participants to face the differences appropriately between themselves and their partner is required within the principled tandem exchange framework of reciprocity, equality and autonomy.

6.1.5 Different Levels of Engagement and Response Patterns

In this study, 3 case studies were conducted quantitatively and qualitatively. The number of exchanged e-mails and submitted learning diaries, as well as the length of e-mails defined e-tandem participants' level of contribution in e-tandem exchanges. Case 1 dyad appeared to have a successful exchange in light of the two participants' sustained informal interaction, discussion of tasks and L2 correction, displaying their obvious LC1 and LC2 awareness development. The dyad in Case 2 characterised by a moderate level of engagement, appeared to gain an increase in their IC and language awareness; however, their breakdowns during the exchanges typified the flouting of the principles of reciprocity and equality. Case 3 dyad showed very low engagement or mutual interaction and seemed to fail to display any awareness development.

Different cultural patterns between Chinese and Irish/American participants were found with particular reference to their perception of the role of the teacher and the tandem

partner. The responses to whether teacher should be involved in giving feedback revealed a more independent learning approach, probably associated with a Western educational culture. More Chinese participants saw their tandem partner as a friend which may also have been a reflection of eastern values intent on building harmonious relationships in communication. Among the 12 negative comments on participants' tandem learning experience, Irish/American participants referred to workload and time constraints as a barrier for successful communication while more Chinese participants referred to cultural differences.

6.2 Research Contribution and Recommendations

This study makes a number of contributions and recommendations in respect of the methodology, theory and practice in e-tandem exchanges between Eastern and Western learners.

From a methodological perspective, the study combined the analysis of e-mails, online forums, learning diaries, a questionnaire survey and focus group interviews. Hence, the data provides multiple perspectives on the learning experience in order to overcome the limited timeframe of the exchanges. In addition, this study offered 3 case studies to illustrate different levels of engagement in LC1 and LC2 exchanges.

The research conducted in this study provides insights into telecollaboration between Chinese and Irish university students where little or no empirical evidence exists in this particular context. The different response patterns between Chinese and Irish/American participants need further investigation in order to provide references for future telecollaborative exchanges between Eastern and Western cultures. It also contributes to the understanding of the role of awareness in developing LC1 and LC2 competence and highlights the effect of *noticing* both in language and in inter/cultural learning. In this regard, much attention needs to be paid to this cognitive process through the elaboration of specifically designed tasks. The mirroring effect triggered by the exchange became central to the development of LC1 and LC2 awareness; communicatively, this was expressed through participants' determination to be understood. This deserves more attention in the research on telecollaboration; it should also be taken on board when designing telecollaborative tasks in order to enhance the affordances emerging from the virtual third space. In this regard, the role of the affect in LC1 and LC2 communication

should also be considered.

In respect of contribution to practice, a model based on Liddicoat's theoretical pathway for developing IC awareness (2002) was applied to the specific context of telecollaboration and e-tandem exchanges. As a result, this new model may be adapted for the design of more effective e-tandem tasks in order to develop LC1 and LC2 awareness not only among Mandarin and English-speaking participants (Figure 2.6), but may also be extended to tandem exchanges involving any combination of languages.

A number of recommendations for practice have emerged from this study on e-tandem. These recommendations include specific suggestions made by participants that may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of e-mail tandem exchanges. As such this study recommends:

- i. *A combination of synchronous and asynchronous communication with face-to-face interaction.* According to the participants' reflection in this study, they are eager to have sincere and honest friend-like exchanges with partners and also expected to improve their spoken language. Thus, synchronous interactions through media, such as Skype, can be used as well as e-mails. One participant suggests diversifying the ways of communicating to add more meaning and to understand better: '*I think if there were oral/video exchanges, it would be more meaningful, because language is for communication. Interact more and understand deeper*' (Comment 58, Table 4.57). The problem of time zone differences remains and careful consideration of these differences should be addressed in advance of the exchange between participants, with the additional support of a preparation session where various strategies can be articulated by the mentor and/or participants. In this regard, the recording of messages by video was proposed as a solution to confer immediacy and authenticity to the exchanged messages.
- ii. *Sustaining communication.* More time should be devoted to the exchange and sustained communication is required; perhaps focus groups or one-to-one interviews should be conducted in mid-exchange to collect and act on students' feedback relating to their difficulties.

- iii. *Introduction of various forms of activities during the exchanges, such as one-to-two partnership; keeping diaries in English/Chinese and then discussing the diary entries with partners.* These recommendations emanate from participants in this study as a way of overcoming the limited interaction experienced by several tandem partners; the suggestions also recognise the possibility of varying levels of motivation between partners. The possibility of discussing diary entries is interesting because, in this study, it is perceived to address the absence of personal and intimate exchanges characteristic of computer-based communication; however, from a western perspective, it also challenges notions of privacy. These dimensions would have to be addressed during a pre- exchange workshop.
- iv. *Stricter rules for exchanges: a word limit between 300 to 500 words for each e-mail; a fixed frequency for exchanging as a 'must' during the exchange.* Observations from participants' e-mail transcripts suggest that anything above 500 words in an e-mail may lead to loss of interest and engagement and anything below may trigger disappointment on the recipient's part. In respect of frequency of exchanges, one participant recommends: *'I think we should have a fixed frequency for exchanging, which should be a must, then we can spare some time to reply to e-mails even at a busy time'* (Comment 59, Table 4.57). This observation also addresses participants' unfulfilled expectations and brings a certain sense of predictability to the experience.
- v. *The location of partners at the time of the exchange should also be considered.* Two Irish/American participants in this study pointed out that one of the reasons for their gradual loss of motivation to exchange was that they were already in China, a source of multiple and varied learning opportunities. Another reason was related to limited access to the Internet in the host university in Shanghai.
- vi. *Finding suitable partners does not only apply to the students. Teachers also need equally motivated counterparts.* In this study, one possible reason for Chinese participants' more frequent contributions may be related to their teacher's regular feedback - the teacher was also the researcher in this study. However, the teacher's input for the Irish/American participants was voluntary and was not involved

to the same degree (except for the occasional deadline reminder) because the exchange required additional work beyond regular working hours.

- vii. *The telecollaborative exchange should be integrated into the participants' curriculum and assessment.* This was pointed out by an Irish/American participant and confirms previous recommendations in other studies. Furthermore, a detailed learning plan should be designed collaboratively and in advance between teachers from both sides where motivational strategies should be factored in.
- viii. *Tasks should be completed under the supervision of teachers and could be discussed before, in or even after the e-tandem exchange.* This suggestion is proposed because it is noted that in the study none of participants finished all tasks as expected, which were probably due to the number of tasks, the topic of tasks, or the lack of teacher's guide during task discussion.

6.3 Future Research and Development

As the researcher intends to establish more telecollaborative exchanges in her future professional practice, a number of areas deserving further research should be addressed.

First of all, students should be provided with workshops not only in 'how to engage in on-line telecollaboration and in training materials focusing on the skills of cross-cultural research and collaboration' (O'Dowd, 2004a, p. 376), but also in developing 'an awareness of the role of culture in language and behaviour' (ibid.). This probably can be achieved by using the examples of tandem exchanges in this study as authentic training materials. Students with less experience of the L2 (in this project, typically the Irish and American students) should be provided with scaffolding in the form of typical expressions used in such e-tandem exchanges. Common cultural norms from participants' culture should be introduced in the pre-exchange training phase and participants should also be reminded of the human and affective dimensions contained in communication. More specifically, the role of the affect in telecollaborative communication should be investigated.

A second area deserving further research concerns the assessment of such exchanges.

When telecollaborative exchanges are integrated into the curriculum, they should also be part of the assessment process. With regard to the LC2, pre- and post-project language tests could be used to evaluate the learning result.

Finally, the question of cultural patterns in behaviour and participant expectations in the context of telecollaborative exchanges, as suggested by this study, should not remain the concern of students alone; perhaps similar exchanges should be conducted between teachers in order to highlight cultural and academic characteristics in a more explicit manner in order to better inform the design of future telecollaborative exchanges.

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