



Tandem language learning through collaborative activities in Minecraft Education Edition

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This paper is a part of a project aiming to explore the potential for tandem language learning through in-game interaction. Tandem language learning entails that students with different native languages learn each other's languages through reciprocal collaboration and meaningful interaction (e.g., Karjalainen et al., 2013). One way to create circumstances for meaningful interaction is to engage the students in collaborative gaming activities. Playing video games engages children and youth also in a Finnish context (Kinnunen et al., 2022) and offers a potential for learning in general and language learning in particular (e.g., Gee, 2007). Employing video games for educational purposes corresponds with the Finnish National Core Curricula's emphasis on utilizing the learning possibilities provided by games and gamification (EDUFI, 2016).

The aim of the study is to explore how collaborative playing of Minecraft Education Edition can facilitate interaction as well as the language learning potential of the interaction. We focus on following research questions:

- 1) How do game-related activities facilitate interaction between the tandem partners?
- 2) Do the tandem partners orient to language and language learning in their interaction, and if so, how?

The primary data comprise video recordings of three tandem dyads during two lessons including gaming activities (altogether 6.5 h). The lessons were organized in collaboration between a Finnish-medium and a Swedish-medium school, in grade 6. The recorded data was transcribed for the content analysis supported by secondary data comprising individual questionnaires in the end in both tandem lessons and group interviews with the student after the latter lesson.

The results show potential for using gaming to engage the students in collaborating and interacting with each other, but also point to a need for supervision and support from the teachers. The results also show that merely gaming in parallel as such does not necessarily lead to interaction, which entails a need for pedagogical planning of collaborative tasks in the game.

Keywords: Classroom study, Tandem language learning, Video games

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