



TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI

PUJILI CAMPUS

NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY ENGLISH MAJOR

RESEARCH REPORT

**“WAYS OF INTEGRATING E-TANDEM MODE IN THE LANGUAGE CURRICULUM
IN THE ENGLISH CAREER AT TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI”**

Research report before obtaining the bachelor degree in National and Foreign language
Pedagogy, English Major

Authors:

Zuñá Tenemaza Mirian Sofia
Yupangui Aimacaña Nancy Marlene

Tutor:

Arias Arroyo Paulina Alexandra, PhD.

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MARCH 2022

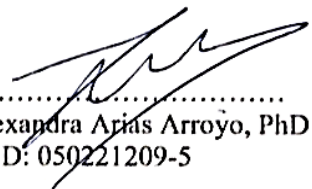
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In my capacity as a supervisor of the research report entitled “Ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi”, and researched by Nancy Marlene Yupangui Aimacaña and Mirian Sofia Zuña Tenemaza, ID number 050390854-3 and 175155245-4, for obtaining the bachelor's degree in National and Foreign language Pedagogy, English Major.

I CERTIFY THAT:

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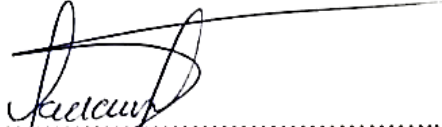
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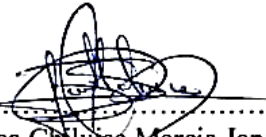
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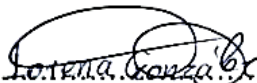
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.....
Venegas Álvarez/Gina Silvana, MSc
ID: 050159864-3
Committee president



.....
Chiluisa Chiluisa Marcia Janeth, MSc
ID: 050221430-7
Committee, Member 1



.....
González Ortiz Olga Lorena, PhD
ID: 100237727-1
Committee, Member 2

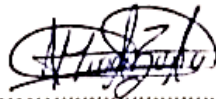
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.....
Yupangui Aimacaña Nancy Marlene
ID: 050390854-3



.....
Zuña Tenemaza Mirian Sofia
ID: 175155245-4

GRATEFULNESS

First of all, we express our most sincere gratitude to God for providing us health and life, for guiding us to get to where we are now. For giving us the necessary wisdom to successfully complete our professional development stage. Also, to our beloved Technical University of Cotopaxi and all the professors that make it up for having received us with warmth and forging in us values of both knowledge and humanity. To our dear tutor, PhD. Paulina Arias, for having been more than a teacher, for being a great friend since she has wisely helped us during the development of this investigative work. Finally, we thank our families who have given us their unconditional support from our beginnings until today.

Thank you infinitely, our success is because of all of you.

Mirian & Marlene

DEDICATION

With huge satisfaction and full of joy, I dedicate this research work to my parents, Maria and José because they have helped and supported me during my studies. They have been in my best and hard moments. I love them infinitely. To my siblings, Jessica, Jaime, Nathaly, and Adrián for always reliance and motivating me to complete this hard but not impossible stage. To my grandmother for taking care of me as a second mother and instilling in me good values to be a good human being and never giving up without damaging anyone. To my dear boyfriend for arriving into my life, encouraging me and not letting myself fall when I was dismaying. To my project partner, Marlene, for being patient with me and for her effort to carry out this work. To my dear teachers, Paulina, Rodrigo, Gina, Fabiola, Lorena, Mercedes, Sonia and Marcia for providing me with new knowledge and boosting me to continue working hard to achieve my goals.

Thank you for being part of my successes and for allowing me to be your pride.

Mirian

DEDICATION

With huge satisfaction, full of thankfulness, I dedicate this research work to my family and some friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my darling parents, Nancy and Luis because they have supported me during my studies. To my siblings, Marcelo, Angélica, for always relying on my capacity and motivating me to complete my university career, especially to my brother Edgar who from heaven has guided me in this first stage of my life. To my friends María Belen. Ch, Jessica. Q, Edison. C, and Mirian.Z since they knew the bad times, I had to go through to get where I am now. Thanks for not leaving me to fall. To my project friend, Mirian, for being patient with me and for her effort to carry out this work. To my dear teachers, Paulina, Sonia, Marcia, Rodrigo, Gina, Fabiola, Lorena, and Mercedes for encouraging me to continue working hard to achieve my goals. All of you have been my best cheerleaders. I congratulate myself because of this great job, for never giving up, and for pursuing my dreams without losing heart.

Thank you for being part of my successes and for allowing me to be your pride.

Marlene

**TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI
PUJILI CAMPUS**

NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY ENGLISH MAJOR

THEME: “WAYS OF INTEGRATING E-TANDEM MODE IN THE LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN THE ENGLISH CAREER AT TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI”.

Authors:

Zuñá Tenemaza Mirian Sofia
Yupangui Aimacaña Nancy Marlene

Tutor:

Arias Arroyo Paulina Alexandra, PhD.

ABSTRACT

E-tandem mode is a language learning method where students of different mother tongues can practice and improve a language. It has been implemented in some universities providing students with an innovative way of learning a language. E-tandem has helped students to develop their communicative and cultural competence. Despite these benefits, the Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC) does not have this modality in the English career. Thus, it is important to integrate e-tandem into the language curriculum since it would allow pre-service English teacher to enhance their pedagogical skills. Whereby, this research study aimed at analyzing the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at UTC, because of their important experiences with this mode of language learning. The qualitative methodology was followed as well as interviews and focus groups techniques. The participants were eleven EFL pre-service teachers: two were in their fifth semester, four in their sixth semester, one in his seventh semester, and four in their eighth semesters as well as two professors. The criteria to select the participants was that they had participated in the e-tandem pilot project carried out in 2020-2021 at UTC. The bottom-up approach was used to analyze the collected data from participants' opinions. In addition, the Academic Regime Regulations of Ecuador were analyzed, to have a better perspective of the e-tandem curriculum inclusion. The analysis of the data suggested that the e-tandem can be integrated into the curriculum of the English career in two ways: as a component of a subject and as pre-professional practice. As a component of a subject, giving rewards (scores) when learners participate in sessions. As a pre-professional practice activity in which students of the last career levels can participate as tutors in the e-tandem interactions. Moreover, as a part of the results, it can be said that if this mode is integrated into the curriculum, it would be able to minimize technological problems, have the e-tandem sessions in the schedule, and monitor students' performance. It is recommended to apply pilot plans in the English career with the application of the e-tandem sessions in the two modalities, to then be subjected to an evaluation and thus know which of them would give better results.

Keywords: e-tandem mode, language curriculum, legal basis, qualitative method.

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE COTOPAXI
EXTENSIÓN PUJILÍ

PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS INGLÉS

TEMA: “FORMAS DE INTEGRAR LA MODALIDAD E-TÁNDEM EN EL CURRÍCULO DE IDIOMAS DE LA CARRERA DE INGLÉS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE COTOPAXI”.

Autores:

Zuñá Tenemaza Mirian Sofía
Yupangui Aimacaña Nancy Marlene

Tutor:

Arias Arroyo Paulina Alexandra, PhD.

RESUMEN

E-tándem es un método de aprendizaje de idiomas donde los estudiantes de diferentes lenguas maternas pueden practicar y mejorar un idioma. Éste se ha implementado en algunas universidades brindando a los estudiantes una forma innovadora de aprender un idioma. E-tándem ha ayudado a los estudiantes a desarrollar su competencia comunicativa y cultural. A pesar de esos beneficios, la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi (UTC) no cuenta con esta modalidad en la carrera de inglés. Por lo tanto, es importante integrar e-tándem en el plan de estudios de idiomas, ya que permitiría a los profesores de inglés en formación mejorar sus habilidades pedagógicas. Por lo cual, el presente estudio de investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las diferentes formas de integrar la modalidad e-tándem en el currículo de idiomas en la carrera de inglés de la UTC. Se siguió la metodología cualitativa, así como también las técnicas de entrevistas y grupos focales. Los participantes fueron once profesores en formación de inglés: dos estaban en quinto semestre, cuatro en sexto, uno en séptimo y cuatro en octavo, y dos profesores. El criterio para seleccionar a los participantes fue que hubieran participado en el proyecto piloto e-tándem realizado en 2020-2021 en la UTC. El enfoque de abajo hacia arriba se utilizó para analizar los datos recopilados de las opiniones de los participantes. Se analizó el Reglamento de Régimen Académico del Ecuador, para tener una mejor perspectiva de la inclusión curricular del e-tándem. Los resultados mostraron que e-tándem puede incluirse en el currículo de la carrera de inglés de dos formas: como componente de una asignatura y como práctica preprofesional. Como componente de una asignatura, otorgando puntuaciones cuando los alumnos participan en las sesiones. Como actividad de práctica preprofesional, los estudiantes de los últimos niveles de carrera pueden participar como tutores en las interacciones. Como de los resultados, puede decir que, si esta modalidad se integra en el currículo, sería capaz de minimizar los problemas tecnológicos, tener las sesiones de e-tándem en el horario y monitorear el desempeño de los estudiantes. Se recomienda aplicar planes piloto en la carrera de inglés con la aplicación de las sesiones e-tándem en las dos modalidades, para luego ser sometido a una evaluación y así saber cuál de ellas daría mejores resultados.

Palabras claves: modo e-tándem, método cualitativo, currículo de Idiomas, base legal.

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Theme:

Ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi.

Starting Date:

March 2021

Ending Date:

March 2022

Place of Research:

Latacunga, Cotopaxi-zone 3- Technical University of Cotopaxi

Sponsoring Faculty:

Pujili Campus.

Sponsoring career:

National and Foreign Language Pedagogy

Linked Research Project (Macro project of the career):

Formative processes in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in the educational institutions of the Cotopaxi province.

Work Team:

Arias Arroyo Paulina Alexandra, PhD; 050221209-5

Zuñá Tenemaza Mirian Sofia; 175155245-4

Yupangui Aimacaña Nancy Marlene,

Knowledge area:

Education setting (professional development of the English teacher in training)

Research line:

Education, communication and graphic design for human and social development.

Research line of the career (if applicable):

Training of the person and professional development of the English teacher

Keywords: e-tandem mode, language curriculum, legal basis.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tandem is one of the applications specifically designed to help learners improve their communication competence. Its aim is to make mastering the skill easier by putting together a group of different learners for language exchange. It creates an interesting environment because both parties can share attractive topics (Nushi & Khazaei, 2020). According to Almazova, et al. (2020) “tandem language learning is considered as an effective tool in complementing the formal education at University level as it helps create a positive learning environment and involve students in new academic experiences” (p.1).

Some studies have been conducted to analyze the effectiveness of applying e-tandem mode as a new way for teaching and learning languages, especially English. Most of the findings suggested that the e-tandem program is useful to students since they can encourage their speaking and listening skills as well as cultural knowledge. E-tandem seemed to have a great potential to decrease learners' fear while they speak (El-Hariri, 2017., Wang-Szilas, et al. 2013).

Teletandem seems to be not only an environment aimed at teaching and learning foreign languages but also an environment that may help pre-service teacher education (Biondo, 2011). E-tandem interactions had a positive impact on pre-service teachers' learning because they could foster their language awareness (Başyurt & Akcan, 2009). Seymen (2017) states that “a teacher needs to be surrounded with a good knowledge of the language” (p. 66).

Therefore, some researchers conducted pilot e-Tandem projects in Higher education obtaining good results. Cando & Tovar (2021) developed a project which aimed at analyzing the advantages and drawbacks of an institutional, non-integrated e-tandem between a group of English learners from the Technical University of Cotopaxi and Spanish learners from Miami University in Florida. The results showed the main advantages of an institutional non-integrated pilot e-tandem: 1) it fostered language learning, 2) it helped to develop cultural awareness, and 3) it increased motivation (p. 8).

Although most of the results were positive, there were some issues, for instance, technological problems, scheduling problems, the lack of a tutors' guide, compatibility of e-tandem partners, and a low level of the target language. Those issues were related to the mode of non-integrated implementation of e-Tandem in the institutional curriculum (Cando & Tovar, 2021). Consequently,

they suggested investigating how to connect e-tandem learning to classroom teaching and how they contribute to each other.

Moreover, other investigators stated that e-tandem opened an interesting language discussion about how tandem can be organized in an optimal way in formal education (Karjalainen, et al. 2013). They discussed the curriculum and the requirements of the language teacher education program in an EFL setting and made suggestions for the professional development of non-native pre-service language teachers (Cando & Tovar, 2021; Başıyurt & Akcan, 2009). Teletandem can give useful pedagogical cues and ideas to pre-service teachers in the foreign language curriculum (Telles, 2015). For these reasons, it is necessary to analyze the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at UTC.

The research problem is that at UTC, the e-tandem mode is not connected to the curriculum, despite the different advantages described by previous research in which this integrated modality was used in the curriculum. For instance, Biondo (2011) argues that “e-tandem not only is aimed at teaching and learning foreign languages in a virtual and collaborative way but also an environment that may help pre-service teacher education” (p. 154). Wang-Szilas, et al. (2013) also mentions that “e-tandem has brought great benefits to the students, not only linguistically, but also culturally” (p. 48). On the other hand, when e-tandem was conducted as a piloting project at UTC not only advantages were found, but also disadvantages such as technological problems, problems with the schedule, students’ language level (Cando & Tovar, 2021). These issues were found because e-tandem was not part of the language curriculum. It caused professors could not have enough control of these interactions. Therefore, it is necessary to implement this new learning system to improve learners’ language practices.

In this respect, this study will benefit pre-service English teachers and the authorities of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages (English) career who can participate in the e-tandem program to enhance their pedagogical practices as well as their cultural knowledge. Hence, the research question of this project is: **What are the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi?**

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 General

To analyze the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi.

3.2 Specifics

1. To describe the e-tandem mode in a language curriculum
2. To identify the pre-service teachers' and professors' opinions about integrating e-tandem mode in the English career curriculum
3. To determine the legal basis of implementing an institutional integrated e-tandem mode in the English career curriculum at Technical University of Cotopaxi
4. To explore the advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem program at Technical University of Cotopaxi.

4. ACTIVITIES AND TASKS SYSTEM IN RELATION TO THE OBJECTIVES PROPOSED

Table 1: Activities and task system in relation to the objectives proposed.

Objectives	Activities	Verification means
To describe the e-tandem mode in a language curriculum	Searching for relevant literature.	Theoretical Framework section.
To identify the pre-service teachers' and professors' opinions about integrating e-tandem mode in the English career curriculum	Applying an interview for professors and two focus groups for pre-service English teachers.	Results and discussion section. Annexes of the transcripts.
To determine the legal basis of implementing an institutional integrated e-tandem mode in the	Investigating the legal basis in the regulation of the higher education system of Ecuador	Results and discussion section.

English career curriculum at Technical University of Cotopaxi.	about the implementation of e tandem mode in the language curriculum.	
To explore the advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem program at Technical University of Cotopaxi.	Applying an interview for professors and two focus groups for pre-service English teachers.	Results and discussion section. Annexes of the transcripts.

Source: Mirian Zuñia & Marlene Yupangui

5. JUSTIFICATION

This project focused on analyzing the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC). In the UTC, a non-institutional integrated e-tandem pilot project was carried out bringing successful results. Pre-service English teachers were able to enhance their language skills as well as their cultural knowledge (Cando and Tovar, 2021).

That is why it was decided to investigate some ways of integrating e-tandem in the regular English classes. Consequently, by incorporating this mode in the language curriculum, pre-service English teachers will be able to put in practice the target language with native speakers without fear and also improve it. This mode of interaction will have a positive academic impact on the English teaching and learning process since this program will help pre-service teachers to foster their communicative skills as well as their cultural awareness. Thus, if it is included in the English curriculum career, professors will have a new innovative tool for their teaching procedures. So, the e-tandem will benefit the students, professors, and authorities from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career.

This investigation was feasible to be conducted because the Technical University of Cotopaxi authorities gave us their support. As an ethical part, we asked participants to give us informed consent for their participation in the study. The practical utility of this project will be the implementation of e-tandem mode in the language curriculum to be validated in the English career.

6. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL FOUNDATION

6.1 Background

Pomino & Gil-Salom (2016) conducted a study about integrating e-tandem in Higher Education. It was a project called “E-Tandem-Projekt Valköln”. Its main objective was to promote action-oriented learning, autonomous learning, and effective communication skills in all domains (reading, writing, speaking and listening), intercultural exchange and international collaboration by the use of web 2.0-tools. Researchers used a qualitative method. The main findings showed that the majority of the students developed more confidence in their speaking skills and worry less about making mistakes when they speak or write with a native speaker. Students reported that the e-tandem exchange project was a good chance to improve their academic speaking, listening and writing skills in the target language.

Cavalari & Aranha (2019) developed research called *The Teacher’s Role in TeleCollaborative Language Learning: The Case of Institutional Integrated Teletandem*. The main objective was to discuss the pedagogical implications of integrating teletandem into the foreign language syllabus, focusing on the professor’s dual role. A qualitative methodology was employed. The results revealed that there seems to be a give and take relationship between the virtual exchanges and the classroom work that can only be achieved because of the professor’s mediating role. Teletandem practice can contribute to language learning in the classroom and, by the same token, how EFL lessons can aid in autonomous telecollaborative learning. Institutional integrated teletandem (iiTTD) was defined by Cavalari & Aranha (2016) “as a series of teletandem sessions that are embedded in regular foreign language (FL) lessons (thus mandatory) so that such lessons both feed and are fed by teletandem practice” (p.329).

Tolosa et. al (2017) examined the *Language Learning Shifts and Attitudes Towards Language Learning in an Online Tandem Program for Beginner Writers*. The aim was to advance our understanding of how CMC, and specifically tandem communication, can support foreign language (FL) learners in developing their beginner language skills by communicating with speakers of the target language in writing. Researchers applied a qualitative method and used posttest and structured interviews as techniques. The main finding was to gain in foreign language writing and positive attitudinal changes toward foreign and native language learning.

Cavalari & Aranha (2016) conducted a study called *Teletandem: integrating e-learning into the foreign language classroom*. Its aim was to describe the characteristics of a blended foreign

language learning context in which a series of teletandem sessions has been integrated into the syllabus of an EFL course at UNESP (in São José do Rio Preto). The qualitative method was used as a methodology and as an instrument they used questionnaires. The main result showed that autonomous learning does not usually play a role in students' academic life. It has a strong effect when they are expected to take control of and make decisions about their learning.

Likewise, Serrato & Padilla (2020) carried out a study called Academic e-tandems as a strategy for English language learning in a Mexican University. This investigation reported the experience of students who were learning English at a public university in Mexico. They connected via Skype with a group of peers who were taking a Spanish course in the United Kingdom. Researchers used mixed methodology. Data sources such as field notes, surveys, and a focus group were used. The main results suggested that e-tandem was effective as a strategy to learn English as a foreign language in an academic setting. The experience offered several advantages, such as connecting native speakers, developing oral communication skills, and enhancing cultural knowledge. Learners reported feeling an increased motivation to practice the target language.

6.2 Theoretical Framework

6.2.1 Teaching Foreign Languages

According to Kramer & Catalano (2015) "the study of another language allows the individual to communicate effectively and creatively and to participate in real-life situations through the language of the authentic culture itself" (p.327). From the overviews of many linguists, people started to learn some foreign languages such as Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, English, German, Russian, Urdu, and Chinese decades ago (McLelland, 2017). This process began in Europe through the use of the first printed didactic material "polyglot manual". Those materials allowed the increase of learners' knowledge of a foreign language, causing the evolution of it (McLelland, 2017). Over time, different ways of language teaching have been developing and taking different forms. According to Walia (2012) "during the period of 1950s methods for language teaching such as audio-lingual, suggestopedia, and TPR emerged. In the 1980s, with the evolution of interactive views of language teaching, these methods got overshadowed by the Communicative Language Teaching" (p.125). Each one of these methods has been a fundamental pillar in the strengthening of foreign languages such as English.

Moreover, Walia (2012) states that “another advancement that further strengthened the concept of interaction and communicative competence in the language classroom was the use of the Internet” (p.126). Bekešová & Romanová (2019) mentions that "Nowadays, due to the technological age, a wide range of effective tools for language teaching and help to avoid the routine of using only a coursebook can be observed in the classrooms" (p.30). So, foreign language teachers, especially English teachers can make use of different technological resources to apply in the teaching setting because Santhosh & Meenakshi (2015) affirm that “technology is one of the effective teaching tools for language teachers. It comprises mobiles, tablets, networking hardware, computers and media” (p. 92). Current teachers need to be aware of their roles and responsibilities that the latest technology requires from them. They have to go beyond knowledge transmission. The change of the role of the teacher is conditional on the development and implementation of new technology in the classroom. It brings a new dimension to the role of the teacher (Santhosh & Meenakshi, 2015).

6.2.2 Teaching English as a Foreign language

English teachers have recognized the importance of promoting the enhancement of the four English skills that in the opinion of Husain (2015) “Speaking and writing are called productive while listening and reading are considered receptive skills” (p.3).

According to Solak & Erdem (2016) "Listening is an active and interactional process in which a listener receives speech sounds and tries to attach meaning to the spoken words. Its comprehension is an extremely important part of a language learning phenomenon" (p.30). Therefore, teachers need to select the right listening material for language classrooms. They can employ sources such as textbook recordings, radio, and songs in the classroom. Additionally, teachers can access listening materials easily via the internet. Those materials support them as learners' needs and help them to develop good listening techniques (Solak & Erdem, 2016).

Kurum (2016) states that “speaking is the most sought skill for an individual to be accepted competent in a foreign language. It is not just formed grammatically correct sentences, but also it covers broad areas of mechanics, functions, pragmatics and social interaction”. That is why current methodologies emphasize enhancing speaking fluency rather than accuracy. Thus, teachers can use strategies (dialogues, role plays, workgroups, question/answers, tongue twisters, etc) to motivate students to practice speaking. These activities can work together with technological websites, platforms, or any application (Husain, 2018).

Sheeba & Hanif (2018) argue that “reading is a process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text has letters, words, sentences and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills and strategies to determine what meaning is (p.2). Instructors can help their students to become more effective readers by teaching them how to use strategies before, during and after reading. Teachers can employ the following techniques to teach reading: previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, guessing and paraphrasing (Sheeba & Hanif, 2018). Now, students can access different technological tools that can help them to enhance their reading skills. Furthermore, teaching writing requires hard work, but not impossible. Ling (2016) affirms that “teachers should emphasize to students that a good piece of writing cannot be produced in one draft; it has to go through multiple times of revision. It is very important for students to use electronic media to fulfill writing knowledge” (p.16).

6.2.3 Authentic Learning setting and technology integration in EFL

Many studies show that over time teaching setting has been carried out traditionally. Thus, Yildiz (2020) mentions that “one of the factors affecting language education in the classroom setting” (p. 31). Lombardi (2007) suggests that “learners require new forms of authentic learning forms that cut across disciplines and bring them into meaningful contact with their future colleagues. Without a doubt, technology plays an essential supporting role” (p. 2). The author suggests that authentic learning typically focuses on the real world, using role-playing exercises, and especially, participation in virtual communities since nowadays technology is seen as an inseparable part of the teaching environment.

Moreover, Abbasova & Mammadova (2019) declare that “the technological tools are essential parts of integration to the digital world with the help of teachers who can facilitate learners’ learning process” (p.364). Taking into consideration this statement, Cai (2012) suggests that “English teachers can employ e-learning and turn the pedagogical strategies to student-centered, focusing on fostering linguistic skills and enabling students to master a language” (p. 843). So, Wu & Marek (2009) proclaim that “e-learning allows students to be more creative and to learn quickly while creating a more fun and creative learning environment” (p.109).

Actually, as part of e-learning, teachers can employ different resources because according to Fadil et al., (2010) “E-learning tools can provide training and education to a large number of students with diverse cultural backgrounds and educational levels” (p.1). There are many tools that can be

applied in the teaching and learning environment. For example, learning/content management systems, live and virtual worlds, blogs and wikis, resource sharing, web exercise creation, dictionaries, communication, social networking, presentation, website creation, web search engines, utilities, platforms and programs (Son, 2011).

Teachers can make use of any of these tools in their teaching practices, however, researchers also discuss the implementation of programs in language learning. The inclusion of different English programs can enhance students' learning, knowledge and build interest (Supriyono et al., 2020). Some of the programs for language learning are Verbling, Busuu, Hello Talk, The mixer, Speaky, Hi uTandem, and Tandem (Language and Communication Program, 2018). All of them are tools that allow language students to connect with many other ones around the world and practice the different languages. They also serve as a bridge to create new atmosphere zones to promote and encourage the learners to use language such as English in communication with the teacher and among their friends (Supriyono et al., 2020). Besides, authentic interaction with native speakers enhances students' participation, giving them integrative motivation and resulting in improved confidence and ability to domain English language.

6.2.4 E-tandem for EFL Learning as an Authentic Learning setting

Technology helps teachers to create an EFL Authentic Learning setting since it brings students with different technological resources (Apps, platforms, websites, e-books, etc.) which help them to encourage their language abilities. So, one of the applications that aid them to generate authentic learning is E-tandem (Abbasova & Mammadova, 2019). E-tandem is a learning tool where two learners of different mother tongues join together in order to practice a language (Menéndez & Martinez, 2015). It started as a Tandem mode in the 1960s in Germany and other European countries as an alternative and complementary modality to formal learning of foreign languages (Benedetti, 2010 as quoted in Telles & Vassallo, 2006). It was the first modality that developed face-to-face conversation. Tandem permitted that different mother tongue students had a meeting where they developed the conversation for learning a language (Menéndez & Martinez, 2015).

Later on, the tandem was changed by the technology evolution becoming Tandem online (e-tandem). This mode was created in the 90s. It was developed via technological tools for instance email or skype (Menéndez & Martínez, 2015). E-tandem interactions were conducted through the use of electronic media such as telephone, chat, Computer-mediated Communication (text, audio,

and video, emails) (Cziko, 2004). Later on, researchers looked for new different ways to keep oral interactions. They employed new technological tools which allowed them to make the e-tandem mode quite different, so they created “Teletandem”.

Some authors define teletandem as a distance and computer-assisted mode of learning that incorporates technological tools for videoconferencing in which speakers from different languages learn each other’s language in virtual meetings (Telles & Vassallo, 2006; Biondo, 2011; Cavalari & Aranha, 2019). Teletandem helps students to learn a language in a collaborative and autonomous manner employing synchronous tools like text, voice, and webcam image (Cavalari & Aranha, 2019; Telles & Vassallo, 2006). While other authors define e-tandem as a way of virtual exchanges among learners of different languages in order to practice their skills with native speakers (El-Hariri, 2017; Serrato & Padilla, 2020), with emphasis on the use of electronic media such as telephone, chat, Computer-mediated Communication (text, audio, and video, emails, MOOs, PalTalk, Video Conferencing System, etc) (Cziko, 2004). E-tandem is a useful method in language and culture learning. It helps to improve communicative and cultural competence. Learners’ confidence increases since they can use the target language without fear (Wang-Szilas, et al., 2013). El-Hariri (2017) argues that “e-tandem communication via the internet may be realized in different ways. While written interaction through emails or text-chats was prevailing in the late 1990s, audio-visual telecollaboration through video-conferencing, establishes itself more and more these days” (p. 24).

In this regard, it can be assumed teletandem and e-tandem are similar concepts since both focus on developing telecollaboration among speakers of different countries which can be employed in academic contexts, in order to practice and enhance language and culture skills. Therefore, e-tandem or teletandem are considered as methods (Karjalainen et al., 2013), approaches (El-Hariri, 2017), modes (Telles & Vassallo, 2006), proposals (Biondo, 2011), or models (Cavalari & Aranha, 2019) that promote language learning by the use of technological tools. Both models have the same objective, which is to improve students’ language and cultural competence. This interaction is based on the same principles that are reciprocity, autonomy, and separation of language (Karjalainen et al., 2013; Telles & Vassallo, 2006; El-Hariri, 2017). Hence, these modes can promote authentic learning because they offer students the opportunity to have a new way of working and learning a language (e.g., participation in virtual communities). Through e-tandem or

teletandem sessions, students feel motivated to enhance their communicative skills (Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016; Lombardi, 2007).

6.2.5 E-tandem principles

E-tandem has two principles: reciprocity and autonomy. The first principle is accomplished when both participants cooperate with each other, for example, in the session using the same deal of time and striving on both languages. According to Telles & Vassallo (2006) "The reciprocity principle allows enough space for its partners to feel free of financial commitments with the other. It increases their self-esteem and puts both participants on equal terms" (p. 3). The second principle involves independent learning. Thus, students need to keep in mind their own aim and at the same time, learners must decide how and when they want to practice the language. It involves discovering the students' capacity to lead and take control of their own language acquisition (Karjalainen et al., 2013). Likewise, other authors emphasize only those two principles described above, however, other authors believe that it is important to add another principle which is the separation of languages. It encompasses language that must not be blended for the time of the tandem participation (Silva & Quaresma, 2015). According to Telles & Vassallo (2006) "this basic principle ensures that both partners will have their respective chances to communicate in the language in which they are proficient, particularly when trying to attain communicative goals that would be too difficult or too challenging in the target language" (p. 3).

6.2.6 Modes of E-tandem

There are three modes of E-tandem: non-institutional, institutional non-integrated, and institutional integrated. According to Spatti (2018) "non-institutional, carried out by two language learners without any institutional involvement or recognition" (p. 419). This alternative means when people are not integrated into an educational environment. Thus, students who want to improve their second language practice it out of the classroom time. It is a voluntary activity that is not supported by teachers. In this modality, the decision of their learning performance is the responsibility of the participants' pair (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). The institutional non-integrated sessions are conducted as extracurricular activities outside of the educational setting (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014 as quoted in Cando & Tovar, 2021). Institutional-integrated teletandem Institutional integrated mode demands activities that are embedded in the language curriculum (Cavalari & Aranha, 2019).

6.2.7 Institutional Integrated Teletandem (iiTD)

Cavalari & Aranha (2016) state that “institutionally integrated teletandem (iiTTD) is a series of teletandem sessions that are embedded in regular foreign language lessons (thus mandatory)” (p.329). It is known as iiTTD when teletandem sessions occur during the regular classes which are part of the tasks/works needed for a language subject (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). According to Biondo (2011) “iiTTD interactions are developed making use of technological tools available on the internet for video conferencing, such as Skype, MSN, ooVoo, among others” (p. 140). Hence, it is required that sessions occur in groups and in laboratories having internet connectivity (Ramos & Carvalho, 2018). In an institutional integrated teletandem, it is necessary to have a guide/mediator who can coordinate the schedule, organize, and conduct the interactions. The sessions are scheduled based on the groups' and institutions' availability. The mediators have to agree on how the activities might be organized (Ramos & Carvalho, 2018). Telles (2015) states that “teachers’ pedagogical support has a relevant impact on how students respond to teletandem sessions” (p. 606). Mediation allows to promote foreign language learning and teaching successfully (Aranha and Cavalari, 2014).

Whereby, having the necessary equipment and schedule planned, sessions can be carried out. In the beginning, e-tandem interactions used to last one hour developing three aspects. Firstly, a conversation was about 30 minutes in which learner 1 had to pay attention to how learner 2 was using the target language. L1 had to take notes of the vocabulary, grammar mistakes, and pronunciation problems of his/her partner. Secondly, there used to be language feedback for about 20 minutes after the interaction. Student 1 had to correct his/her partner without focusing on grammar explanations but on opinions of grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation problems. Lastly, learners had to share their reflections in the last 10 minutes. The next day of interaction, roles were changed and L2 had to do what L1 did a day before (Telles & Vassallo, 2006). Over time, the way of developing interactions changed depending on the institutions that have the e-tandem program. Biondo (2011) suggests that learners can meet during an hour in which they teach each other their native languages. This means that during the first half-hour, L1 (e.g., Spanish native speaker) can talk about any topic using the target language while his partner (L2) (e.g. English native speaker) helps him improve it. The other half-hour, the roles change, L2 talks in his target language, and L1 helps him learn that language. After the interactions, the teacher who is the guide or mediator can send any type of task to reinforce learners’ knowledge (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016).

Moreover, Cavalari & Aranha (2016) argues that “the iiTTD modality involves three components: 1) the tutorial (preparing students for iiTTD both in practical and theoretical terms); 2) integrating tasks (blending teletandem interactions and FL syllabus); 3) integrating assessment (assessment (by the learner, by the partner and by the FL teacher)” (p. 329).

The tutorial is a crucial component in an institutional integrated teletandem since it helps learners in their comprehension about the learning potential of iiTTD practice. So, it is divided into three elements: 1) presentation of some theoretical issues that govern iiTTD practice; 2) information about the tasks and processes involved in the participation (calendar, rules, tasks, assessment; and 3) selecting a learning goal.

Cavalari & Aranha (2016) affirm that “the first element implicates learners to follow the three principles of teletandem (separation of languages, autonomy, and reciprocity) and on how they are intertwined in order to foster foreign language learning with the collaboration of an individual who is not a language teacher” (p. 330). The second element occurs when learners are notified of the practicalities in the iiTD interaction. FL teachers have to create a calendar with the number of interactions and tasks that learners need to complete. Here, they are asked to store iiTD information such as interactions, video/audio files, and word files which must be in an e-portfolio. The last element states that FL teachers provide students a questionnaire with some oriented questions to let them know their learning goals (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). Cavalari & Aranha (2016) mention that “one of the strongest features of this integrated modality is that students are given the opportunity to reflect on what they can (or can’t) do in/with the foreign language during their FL lesson. They can count on their professor to help them establish specific learning goals as part of the mediation process” (p. 331).

Additionally, teachers have to integrate into the syllabus different tasks to be developed during the e-tandem interactions to promote collaborative learning (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). Instructors can select the topics that belong to the course syllabi and create activities to send learners as homework. These activities can be written works (Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016). After each interaction, students can develop different tasks that may be documented in a wiki software or any platform (Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016; Wang-Szilas, et al., 2013). These tasks are useful to enhance their autonomous learning and assist the FL teachers in determining whether pedagogical assistance is required during the iiITD encounters (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016).

The last component which is integrating assessment demands three types of assessments: self, peer, and teachers' assessment. In self-assessment learners focus on their learning goals during the interaction. They can use an e-portfolio to keep information about their progress in the learning process. FL teachers can grade students using their self-assessment e-portfolio (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). In peer-assessment learners have to review their partners' oral and written works. Learners do not have to judge such works but give an orientation about what they did well or not. This assessment can be done with the use of tools that permit the exchange of files between two partners. Teachers' assessment also is relevant in an iTD. This assessment can be done in a summative or formative way.

Cavalari & Aranha (2016) assert that

The iTD) may provide: 1) fl learners with practice in dealing with authentic input and a meaningful experience with autonomous collaborative technology-mediated learning; 2) teachers-to-be with an opportunity to participate in discussions about their own language and culture in any foreign language learning context; 3) fl teachers with favorable conditions to integrate authentic technology-mediated communication into their lessons, promoting a blended learning environment; - researchers with rich elements to be investigated as far as FL teaching and learning and CMC (Computer Mediated-Communication) are concerned; 4) universities with an appropriate context for international partnerships (p. 333).

6.2.8 Implementing e-tandem into the curriculum

E-tandem integration into the curriculum in universities has a positive impact on students learning because it allows them to fulfill academic content/tasks and increase communicative as well as cultural competence. Pomino & Gil-Salom (2016) states that "e-Tandem exchange is effective in the language learning process when it is incorporated into a course syllabus" (p. 673). So, it should be included gradually as teachers can monitor the students' development and analyze if the curriculum is designed according to students' needs (Wang-Szilas., et al, 2013). Through its implementation, online e-tandem interactions could be a viable instrument for enhancing the international cooperation between the professors and learners of foreign institutions (Brinckwirth, 2012).

The e-tandem mode can be included following three dimensions: (a) the role that the new pedagogical tool plays in its learning/teaching process, (b) the e-tandem interactions, and (c) the teaching, counseling, and/or mediation in the process (Telles & Vassallo, 2006, p.204). An e-tandem project into the curriculum in an EFL context is fundamental because pre-service teachers can significantly improve their oral competence since teachers need to have a good level of English to develop their teaching competence.

6.2.9 The Ecuadorian higher education regulations

Ecuadorian higher education is regulated by the organism called Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES according to its Spanish acronym). It regulates the higher education system, the organizations, and the institutions that comprise it. It determines the rights, duties and obligations of natural and legal persons. It also establishes the respective sanctions for non-compliance with the provisions contained in the Constitution and this Law (LOES, 2018, art. 1). LOES provides regulations that allow the educational system management of universities. One of these regulations is the “Reglamento del Régimen Académico” (RRA according to its Spanish acronym). It focuses on the regulation and orientation of academic activities of the higher education institutions (HEIs) in their various levels of training, including their learning or study modalities and their organization stipulated by the (LOES) (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 2, 2019).

The RRA’ scope applies to all public and private higher education institutions: universities, polytechnic schools, institutes, and higher conservatories (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art.1, 2019). The objective is to guarantee the training of quality, excellence and relevance, in accordance with the needs of society; ensuring compliance with the principles and rights enshrined in the Constitution, the LOES (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art.3, 2019).

The RRA refers to different points of learning organization. It is stated that learning organization has three basic components: a) learning in contact with the teacher; b) autonomous learning; and, c) practical experiential learning (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 26, 2019). Learning in contact with the teacher is the set of individual or group activities developed with the direct intervention of the teacher that includes classes, conferences, seminars, workshops, projects in face-to-face or virtual classroom (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 27, 2019). Autonomous learning is the set of individual or group activities developed independently by the student without contact with academic support staff. The activities planned or guided by the teacher

are developed according to their capacity for initiative and planning, the motivation and curiosity to know, knowledge transfer and contextualization, critical reflection, and self-evaluation of one's own work. For its development, specific activities were established by the HEIs. They should be planned and evaluated (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 28, 2019).

Practical-experiential learning is a set of activities (individual and group) for the application of conceptual, procedural, technical content, among others. These activities require the use of infrastructure (physical or virtual), equipment, instruments, and other material, which will be provided by the HEIs (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 29, 2019).

In addition, this Regime refers to pre-professional practices as learning activities aimed at the application of knowledge and the development of professional skills. These practices can be carried out in organizational, institutional, business, community, or other environments related to the professional field of the career, public or private, national or international (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 53, 2019). The article 57 explains pre-professional practices can be taken into account as extracurricular activities being susceptible to validation since they contribute to the application of knowledge and the development of professional competence (Reglamento del Régimen Académico, Art. 57, 2019).

Therefore, taking into account these established regulations, the career of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages in its redesign curricular (2019) mentions some elements that must be taken into account for the graduation profile of English teachers. These elements are learning achievements related to the mastery of theories, conceptual systems, methods and languages of knowledge integration, profession and research and the domain of B2 English level. The B2 level is based on the Common European Framework of Reference which includes 9 levels that will allow students to reach the mastery standards of English Language.

Since the qualifications required by the career of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages, The Common European Framework of References establishes that level B2 covers the parameters shown in Table 2.

Table 2: B2 level: Common European Framework

Level/ skills	Comprehension		Speaking		Writing
		Listening comprehension	Reading Comprehension	Spoken interaction	Spoken Production

B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writer adopts particular aptitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interest. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.
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Source: Common European Framework of References (MCEF, 2001).

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 Approach

A qualitative methodology was applied in this study since according to Creswell (2012) “qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem. The researcher is able to examine the data for description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings” (p.16). Moreover, Rahman (2016) affirms that "qualitative approach allows researchers to produce a detailed description of participants’ feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions" (p.104). Thus, it helped us to obtain, explain and detail opinions that pre-service English teachers and professors had about the ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC). In addition, the unit of analysis of this project is the e-tandem mode integration in the language curriculum in the English career at UTC. Different forms of collecting data such as focus groups, interviews, and literature review were employed.

7.2 Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to deliberately select participants and sites that helped researchers to comprehend the central problem. In this type of sampling, the most relevant information was taken into account in the research (Creswell, 2012). Hence, the homogeneous sampling technique was chosen. According to Creswell (2012) “In homogeneous sampling, the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics. To use this procedure, you need to identify the characteristics and find individuals or sites that possess it” (p. 208). Therefore, participants were picked up considering those who shared identical characteristics, that is their participation in a pilot study of implementing a non-integrated e-tandem project at the public university in 2020-2021. The criteria were those pre-service teachers who had completed all E-Tandem interactions. Eleven pre-service English teachers participated: two were in their fifth semester, four in their sixth semester, one in his seventh semester, and four in their eighth semesters. In addition, two professors who played the role of guide or instructor during that interaction took part in the study.

7.3 Data-gathering strategies

This study was conducted through the use of interviews and focus groups as strategies to collect and gather data. According to Creswell (2012) “interview is the most popular strategy in qualitative studies. It occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. The researcher then transcribes and types the data into a computer file for analysis” (p.217). An interview and a questionnaire with open-ended questions were employed. Furthermore, focus groups were used since Creswell (2012) affirms that “it focuses on gathering shared understanding from several individuals as well as getting views from specific people. It has to be carried out with a group of people, commonly four to six” (p. 218). In this study, two focus groups were applied. A questionnaire with some open-ended questions was used. So, these questions were asked to explore pre-service English teachers’ opinions about the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi.

7.4 Data Analysis approach

The bottom-up approach was employed to analyze the collected data from participants’ opinions. According to Creswell (2012) “Qualitative researchers first collect data and then prepare it for data analysis. This analysis initially consisted of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding description and themes about the central phenomenon. This approach involved six steps” (p. 237).

7.4.1 Prepare and organize data for analysis

Creswell (2012) stated that “the first step requires organizing the vast amount of information, transferring it from spoken or written words to a typed file and making decisions about whether to analyze the data by hand or by computer” (p.138). So, the collected data from the pre-service teachers and professors’ opinions were organized into computer files. A large amount of information from the interviews, and focus groups were obtained. The videos recordings were transcribed into text data. After that, hand analysis was used which consists of reading, marking the data by hand, and dividing it into parts (Creswell, 2012). Sentences or paragraphs were marked that relate to what the participant was saying in the text. Each underlined idea was categorized into different parameters.

7.4.2 Explore and code the data

Creswell (2012) declared that "after you have organized and transcribed the data and decided whether to hand or computer analyze it, it is time to begin data analysis. It consisted of exploring the data and developing codes" (p. 243). Firstly, the data was read for obtaining a general sense of it. Further, the data was coded in order to analyze them. Coding data involved making sense of the data, dividing, and avoiding repetitive information. So, after exploring the information of our participants, it was divided into segments. The important aspects were taken and other data that did not specifically provide evidence for the study was disregarded.

7.4.3 Coding to Build Description and Themes

Creswell (2012) affirms that "In a qualitative study, you need to analyze the data to form answers to your research questions. It involves examining the data in detail to describe what you learned, and developing themes or broad categories of ideas from the data (p. 247). According to Creswell (2012) "description can transport the reader to a research site or help the reader visualize a person. It takes experience and practice to describe the detail in a setting" (p. 247). Therefore, after coding data the codes (abbreviation) were written down to the participants as well as categories and subcategories to the information provided by them.

7.4.4 Represent and Report Qualitative Findings

According to Creswell (2012) "The primary form for representing and reporting findings in qualitative research is a narrative discussion. It is a written passage in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis" (p. 254). That is why the narrative discussion was selected since it helped researchers to report participants' opinions from the interviews and focus groups data. So, the feelings, emotions, and the ways people expressed about their experiences were captured in these quotes.

7.4.5 Interpret findings

Creswell (2012) states that

"Interpretation in qualitative research means that the researcher steps back and forms some larger meaning about the phenomenon based on personal views, comparisons with past studies, or both. Qualitative research is interpretive research, and you will need to make

sense of the findings. You will find this interpretation in a final section of a study under headings such as “Discussion,” “Conclusions,” “Interpretations,” or “Implications” (p.257). Hence, the discussion and analysis section were created. The description and themes coded before (participants’ comments) were added. Other authors’ perspectives were used to analyze and compare them.

7.4.6 Validate the Accuracy of the Findings

Findings are validated when researchers use procedures to verify their accuracy or trustworthiness. There are three primary forms used by investigators to validate the accuracy of the findings: triangulation, member checking, and auditing (Creswell, 2012). Hence, findings were validated using the triangulation form. According to Creswell (2012) “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., participants), types of data (e.g., interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., focus groups) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p. 259). Through the triangulation, each information source was examined: professors’ viewpoints, pre-service teachers’ opinions, and Academic Regime Regulations, to support each category and subcategory.

7.4.7 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2012) mentions that “gaining access to the site or individual(s) in qualitative inquiry involves obtaining permissions at different levels, such as the organization, the site, the individuals, and the campus institutional review boards” (p.210). Thus, in this study informed consents were used to the participants. These consents allowed them to know the degree of participation that they had. In addition, the anonymity was taken care of as an ethical part of the researchers, providing specific codes to each participant. So, Chinanuekpere (2010) affirms that “Informed consent is a legal procedure to ensure that a participant knows all of the risks and costs involved in a study. Consent considered is valid when the participant is competent and gives voluntarily the consent” (p. 5). Furthermore, researchers implemented an application form to get the participants' consent in which they asked participants to attend the interview as well as the focus group, indicating the time of the meeting.

8. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Findings of the data analysis are presented fulfilling the research objective, which was to analyze the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum in the English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi. We examined the information from professors' interviews and pre-service teachers' focus groups. We analyzed data in the light of the research questions and classified them in categories and subcategories.

Table 3: Categories and subcategories

Categories	Subcategories
E-tandem mode in the curriculum	As a mandatory subject As an optional subject As pre-professional practice
Legal basis for an institutional integrated e-tandem mode	As a mandatory/optional subject As pre-professional practice
Advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem mode	Minimize technological problems Have e-tandem sessions in the schedule Monitor students' performance

Source: Mirian Zuñiga & Marlene Yupangui

Category A: E-tandem mode in the language curriculum

This section is divided into three subcategories that answer the second specific objective which was to identify the pre-service teachers' and professors' opinions about integrating e-tandem mode in the English career curriculum.

Subcategory A.1: As a mandatory subject

Both professors suggested integrating the E-tandem program into the language curriculum as a mandatory subject. It must be compulsory since students will show more interest in participating in sessions due to their need to complete an aspect that is part of their career. Professors also recommended employing e-tandem obligatorily because other researchers argue that e-tandem embedded in the curriculum bring better students' learning experiences. They said that an e-tandem can be part of the curriculum by connecting it as a new aspect in the English subject.

Yo recomiendo 100% este programa, pero tiene que ser ya no un programa complementario, sino como un programa inserto en el pensum de estudio, de manera que el estudiante vea primeramente la necesidad y segundo la obligación de cumplir. [I recommend this program 100%, but it must no longer be a complementary program, but rather as a program inserted in the study curriculum, so that the student sees first the need and second the obligation to fulfill it.] (TRT)

Podría ser el programa E-tándem como una asignatura de continuidad que puede ser como prácticas del idioma en contexto. [It could be the E-tandem program as a continuity subject that can be as language practices in context.] (TRT)

Hay dos tipos de E-tándem, inmersos en el currículo, y no inmersos. Telles manifiesta que los estudiantes tienen mejores experiencias en programas E-tándem inmersos en el currículo. [There are two types of E-tandem, embedded in the curriculum, and not embedded. Telles states that students have better experiences in e-tandem programs immersed in the curriculum] (TFC)

Pienso que debería estar inmerso en el currículo en el sentido de que esté conectado a las asignaturas de inglés y que sea un aspecto de la asignatura de inglés. [I think that it should be embedded in the curriculum in the sense that it is connected to the English subjects] (TFC)

Lo más factible que yo veo es en las asignaturas de inglés.” [Most likely I see it is in the subjects of English.] (TFC)

Additionally, some pre-service teachers agreed the e-tandem program should be a mandatory subject because it helps students to lose fear while they speak in a foreign language. They commented to include the e-tandem mode with a low hourly load so that students can acquire a

language significantly in a natural way. In this way, future English teachers would enhance their communicative competence more properly.

Yo creo que el E- tándem es una muy buena herramienta y debería ser implementada en la malla curricular para que los estudiantes puedan aprender y mejorar el inglés. [I believe that the E-tandem is a very good tool and should be implemented in the curriculum so that students can learn and improve English.] (PST-B81)

Pienso que sí se debería implementar como una materia ya que el e-tándem me ha ayudado a perder el miedo de hablar en un idioma extranjero. [I think that it should be implemented as a subject since e-tandem has helped me to lose the fear of speaking in a foreign language.] (PSTA-63)

Igual creo que debe ser implementado y debe ser de manera obligatoria, ya que esto es lo que a los estudiantes les ayudaría significativamente para que aprendan el idioma inglés de una manera natural. [I also believe that it should be implemented and it should be mandatory, since this is what would significantly help students to learn the English language in a natural way] (PSTA-52)

Yo consideraría que debería ser obligatoria desde los inicios, pero con poca carga horaria...que nos podamos sentir en confianza...y mejorar la calidad del docente que sale egresado de la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi. [I would consider that it should be mandatory from the beginning but with little workload perhaps that we can feel confidentand to improve the quality of the teacher who graduates from the Technical University of Cotopaxi.] (PSTB-83)

Yo creo que sí debe ser implementada porque es una herramienta muy útil para todos los estudiantes. [I believe that it should be implemented because it is a very useful tool for all students.] (PST-B81)

Considero que es bien necesario añadir esa materia más bien ese programa como materia dentro de la carrera. [I believe that it is necessary to add that subject, that program as a subject within the career.] (PST-B84)

Being a compulsory subject, students will have their teacher's pedagogical support, which may have a relevant impact on how students respond to teletandem sessions (Telles, 2015). E-tandem exchange is effective in the language learning process when integrated into a course syllabus and given adequate institutional support (Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016; Cavalari & Aranha, 2019).

Chaieberras & Rascón (2018) states that “compulsory online interactions permit to obtain adequate receptive and productive skills, as well as socio-cultural knowledge of the English language” (p. 159).

Subcategory A.2: As an optional subject

Any professor agreed on e-tandem as an optional subject, however some pre-service teachers mentioned that this program should be optional. Pre-service teachers concurred that e-tandem can be a complementary method in which they can attend sessions when they feel ready to use it. So, professors can give some extra scores to students who participate in the interactions. This action could motivate them to continue employing this program in their language learning.

Creo que podría ser como una materia en donde los estudiantes estén libres de escoger cuando se sientan listos para poder usarla. [I think it could be like a subject where students are free to choose when they feel ready to use it.] (PST-B82)

Pienso que el E-tándem puede ser un método complementario ...se debería incentivar a los estudiantes y decirles que si ellos asisten a las sesiones van a tener un punto extra... [I think that E-tandem can be a complementary method ... students should be encouraged and told that if they attend the sessions, they will have an extra point ...] (PSTA-63)

Se debe implementar, pero de manera opcional y se puede utilizar un día a la semana para despertar la motivación en los estudiantes. [It should be implemented but optionally and can be used one day a week to awaken motivation in students.] (PSTA-63)

E-tándem debería ser opcional para que los estudiantes puedan tener su respectivo tiempo porque como ya sabemos hay estudiantes que quizás trabajan [E-tándem should be optional so that students can have their respective time because, as we already know, there are students who may work ...]

Yo creo que implementarlo a la malla como un complemento, yo creo que sí nos ayuda bastante. [I think that implementing it to the curriculum as a complement, I think it helps us a lot.] (PSTA-61)

Pienso que, si se debe implementar, pero de manera opcional, no obligatoria. [I think that it should be implemented but optionally, not mandatory.] (PSTA-63)

Debe ser un método no obligatorio, porque nada de lo que se obligue le gusta a la persona. [It should be a non-mandatory method, because a person does not like anything that is forced.] (PSTA-63)

Se debería implementar, pero como una materia optativa. [It should be implemented but as an elective subject.] (PSTB-82)

In an optional mode learners feel free to practice the FL language by themselves without pressure, and receiving a reward (scores) can motivate them even more. Litzler (2018) highlights that “it is important to set up activities that students will feel free to do” (p. 14). However, Cando & Tovar’s (2021) study affirms that when e-tandem is optional, many learners do not attend the sessions and do not responsibly fulfill all the tasks of the e-tandem process. Students do not consider the enormous value to develop activities when these are optional ones (Verkade & Lim, 2015). Therefore, Cando & Tovar (2021) recommend that e-tandem should be performed mandatory, which agrees with what was mentioned by the teachers interviewed.

Subcategory A.3: As a as pre-professional practice

Regarding to the implementation of the e-tandem as a pre-professional practice, English professors and pre-service English teachers agreed. A professor mentioned that e-tandem as a pre-professional practice would be the best option. In addition, pre-service English teachers said that if the e-tandem justify some hours of the pre-professional practices, they would participate regularly. They stated that the interaction not only improve their communicative skills but also motivate them following enhance their professional proficiency.

Professor’s opinion

Si se puede hacer como práctica qué mejor. [If it can be done as a practice, it would be better] (TFC)

Pre-service teachers’ opinions

Yo creo que se debería implementar a las prácticas pre profesionales. Nosotros no estamos aprendiendo el idioma inglés sólo para comunicarnos, sino para enseñar. Por lo tanto, debemos tener un nivel óptimo en el idioma y podemos lograrlo por medio del E-tandem. [I believe so, it should be implemented in the pre-professional practice. We do not learn

English only to communicate but also to teach. So, we must have a high level and it is a way that we can acquire it through interactive activities in E-tandem.] (PSTA-51)

Sería útil para nuestras prácticas, porque nos ayudaría a desarrollar (...) el speaking. [It would be useful for our pre-service practices because it would help us to develop our speaking skills.] (PSTA-62)

Sí, sería muy beneficioso, ya que esto nos motivaría. Si me dicen te vamos a apoyar con un cierto porcentaje de número de horas de práctica profesional, si deseas asistir a nuestro programa y en E-tándem. Yo con mucho gusto voy a ir, una porque primero quiero seguir desarrollando mis habilidades de speaking y otra porque tengo el incentivo de las horas de práctica sumadas a mi práctica pre profesional. [Yes, it would be very beneficial, since this would motivate us. If you tell me, we will support you with a certain percentage of the number of hours of professional practice, if you want to attend our program and in E-tandem. I will gladly go because first I want to continue developing my speaking skills and another because I have the incentive of the hours of practice added to my pre-professional practice.] (PSTB-63)

De mi parte también pienso que sería útil para nuestras prácticas, porque nos ayudaría a desarrollar tanto nuestra habilidad en el speaking y a obtener más vocabulario. [I also think that it would be useful for our pre-service practices because it would help us to develop our speaking skills and to acquire more vocabulary.] (PSTA-62)

Yo creo que en esa parte sí apoyaría que sea parte del programa de prácticas profesionales, porque obviamente, son prácticas pre profesionales. Tú estás preparándote para ser profesional y necesitas esa interacción que sea un ambiente donde puedas desenvolverte. [I believe that in this part I support that the program is part of the pre-professional practice because obviously, it is pre-professional practice, you are practicing to be a professional and you need that interaction is an environment where you can development] (PSTA-61)

Estoy de acuerdo que este E-tándem program sea parte también de las prácticas preprofesionales. [I agree that the E-tandem program is also part of pre- professional practice.]

The pre-professional practice allows pre-service teachers to develop their skills and professional competence in a real situation (Cedeño, & Santos, 2017). Certainly, a high level of English oral competence is necessary for English teachers, but unfortunately in EFL context it is difficult to

develop because of the lack of interaction opportunities. However, thanks to e-tandem, pre-service teachers can develop their communicative competence since it offers them the opportunity to have a learning process in a real-time context (Benedetti, 2010). Griggio & Rózsavölgyi (2016) states that “one of the most effective ways of improving L2 communication skills is through enabling students to engage directly with native speakers” (p. 171). Thus, this program helps them to acquire new lexicon, and enhance their written and oral skills (Griggio & Rózsavölgyi, 2016). Moreover, the idea of receiving credits or scores when participating in E-tandem is ratified. Recognizing their effort can increase their motivation to responsibly fulfill all the tasks of the e-tandem process: the tutorial lesson, the interactions and the final evaluation that can be summative or formative (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016).

Category B: Legal basis for an institutional integrated e-tandem mode

This section contains two subcategories that respond to the third specific objective which was to determine the legal basis of implementing an institutional integrated e-tándem mode in the language curriculum in English Mayor at the Technical University of Cotopaxi.

Subcategory B.1: As a mandatory/optional subject

The academic regime which is a current regulation in Ecuador that controls higher education institutions' substantive functions (HEI) was reviewed. It involves a set of articles that describe emphasizes the main components of the learning process in a subject. Thus, in the title III, chapter I, it is stipulated that

La organización del aprendizaje tiene tres componentes básicos: a) aprendizaje en contacto con el docente; b) aprendizaje autónomo; c) aprendizaje práctico experimental [The organization of learning has three basic components: a) learning in contact with the teacher; b) autonomous learning; c) practical experiential learning.] (Art. 26)

El aprendizaje en contacto con el docente es el conjunto de actividades individuales o grupales desarrolladas con intervención directa del docente (...) que comprende las clases, conferencias, seminarios, talleres, proyectos en aula presencial o virtual (...). [Learning in contact with the teacher is the set of individual or group activities developed with the direct intervention of the teacher (...) that includes classes, conferences, seminars, workshops, projects in face-to-face or virtual classroom (...).] (Art. 27)

El aprendizaje autónomo es el conjunto de actividades individuales o grupales desarrolladas de forma independiente por el estudiante sin contacto con el personal de apoyo académico. Las actividades planificadas y/o guiadas por el docente se desarrollan en función de su capacidad de iniciativa y de planificación; (...) la motivación y la curiosidad para conocer; la transferencia y contextualización de conocimientos; la reflexión crítica y autoevaluación del propio trabajo, (...). Para su desarrollo, deberán planificarse y evaluarse actividades específicas (...) que establezca la IES (...). [Autonomous learning is the set of individual or group activities developed independently by the student without contact with academic support staff. The activities planned or guided by the teacher are developed according to their capacity for initiative and planning; (...) the motivation and curiosity to know; knowledge transfer and contextualization; critical reflection and self-evaluation of one's own work, (...). For its development, specific activities (...) established by the IES (...) should be planned and evaluated] (Art. 28)

El aprendizaje práctico-experimental es el conjunto de actividades (individuales y grupales) de aplicación de contenidos conceptuales, procedimentales, técnicos, entre otros, (...) que pueden requerir uso de infraestructura [física o virtual), equipos, instrumentos, y demás material, que serán facilitados por las IES. [Practical-experiential learning is a set of activities (individual and group) for the application of conceptual, procedural, technical content, among others, (... ..) that may require the use of infrastructure [physical or virtual), equipment, instruments, and other material, which will be provided by the HEIs] (Art. 29)

According to the academic regime of Ecuador, there are three components as a part of a subject: teacher-contact learning, autonomous learning and practical experiential learning. The first and third components are not completely suitable for the conception of an e-tandem learning. In contrast, the autonomous work can be considered as an e-tandem experience of curriculum integrated mode, since it involves activities developed independently by the student without contact or guide of tutors, but previously planned and supported by teachers considering the students' curiosity, self-motivation, self-reflection and self-assessment (Wakisaka, 2008; Serrato & Padilla, 2020; Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). Therefore, the teachers' pedagogical support in e-tandem sessions can be focused in the three relevant components of this interaction: the tutorial role when explaining students about the whole process of the interaction; designing integrating tasks according to their students' interest and motivations, and organizing different assessment to

demonstrate their students' progress (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). E-tandem also can promote students' autonomous and action-oriented learning (Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016). In this sense, this organization would respect the principle of autonomy when permitting students define their objectives, time and duration of the sessions, how they want to be evaluated, and manage their own learning (Luz, 2009, as quoted in Nogueira, 2012, p. 35) in agreement with their teachers. As Nogueira (2012) mentions, "teletandem seeks autonomy but not but not in isolation but in interaction, in collaborative work." (p.36). In the higher education context in Ecuador, as has been indicated according to the existing regulations, autonomous work which is considered a component of any subject, can be the ideal space for e-tandem interaction at the UTC, specifically. It can be included in any of the subjects that teach the English language, respecting the student's autonomy but without losing the teacher's guidance.

Subcategory B.2: As a pre-professional practice

The integration of E-tandem mode into the curriculum can be adopted as pre-professional practices since it can contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' English professional knowledge and competences. Also, the pre-professional practice can perform in institutions related to pre-service teachers' profession. The Academic Regime Regulations 53 argues that:

Las prácticas preprofesionales y pasantías en las carreras de tercer nivel son actividades de aprendizaje orientadas a la aplicación de conocimientos y/o al desarrollo de competencias profesionales. [pre-professional practice and internships in third-level of the careers are learning activities aimed at the application of knowledge and/or the development of professional skills] (Art. 53).

Estas prácticas se realizarán en entornos organizacionales, institucionales, empresariales, comunitarios u otros relacionados al ámbito profesional de la carrera, públicos o privados, nacionales e internacional. [These practices will be carried out in organizational, institutional, business, community, or other environments related to the professional field of the career, public or private, national or international] (Art. 53)

The integration of E-tandem mode into the curriculum can be adopted as pre-professional practices since it can contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' English professional knowledge and competences. When referring to knowledge, the language learning achievement required in Ecuador for pre-service and in-service English teachers is B2 (Ministry of Education, 2013), it

means they have to be able to “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” (CEFR, 2001, p.24). In this regard, the e-tandem interaction is the feasible opportunity for pre-service teachers to apply their English language knowledge in a real context, improving their communicative competence through the interaction with native speakers.

On the other hand, a basic professional competence for pre-service teachers is the pedagogical; the e-tandem experience could be the opportunity for UTC pre-service English teachers, in their last career (7th and 8th) level, to develop this competence, by assuming the role of mediator or tutor in an e-tandem interaction, with their low-level partners. This role could help pre-service teachers participate actively in a teaching experience, making a link between practice and theory. In this sense, they could organize the learning process, establish pedagogical objectives, and pay attention to the techniques and procedures used during their partners’ e-tandem interaction, having the opportunity to gain confidence and explore their pedagogical practice (Biondo, 2011). According to Biondo (2011) “E-tandem provides the opportunity to explore pedagogical practices on different levels: in practical terms (paying more attention to techniques and procedures), and in reflective terms (exploring decisions and actions pedagogically)” (p. 154)

In addition, the academic regime establishes that the pre-professional practices can be developed in different scenarios, in national or international contexts; it implies that this mode of virtual interaction can be the perfect opportunity for pre-service teachers to interact with foreign partners in an international cooperative work. This mode of learning is in harmony with one of the challenges proposed by the UTC in its Strategic Plan of Institutional Development [PEDI] 2021-2025, related to achieve internationalization through the integration of the institution into an international context, permitting teachers and students to have contact with foreign universities to accomplish an increase in the students’ academic efficacy. Internationalization is considered by the UTC as an important non-economic resource to prepare students to face the challenges of globalization [PEDI, 2021].

Category C: Advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem mode

This last section responds to the fourth specific objective which was to explore the advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem program at the Technical University of Cotopaxi.

Subcategory C.1: Minimize technological problems

Professors stated that an e-tandem integrated into the language curriculum would help to minimize technological problems in sessions. It means that when this program is part of the regular classes, the educational institutions have to give the necessary equipment such as a laboratory and good internet connection for the development of the interactions.

Professor' opinions

Teniendo el programa e-tándem integrado como materia se requiere que la universidad disponga de un laboratorio equipado con todo lo necesario y un asistente técnico para el desarrollo de las sesiones. [Having the integrated e-tandem program as a subject, the university is required to have a laboratory equipped with everything necessary and a technical assistant for the development of the sessions.] (TFC)

Se requiere tener unos instrumentos de tecnología muy avanzada en donde la banda o ancho de internet sea aceptable para que no haya interferencias. [It is required to have some very advanced technology instruments where the band or internet width is acceptable so that there is no interference.] (TRT)

One of the main advantages is that the e-tandem embedded in the curriculum avoids negative aspects such as technological issues during the sessions. An iiTD necessarily requires laboratories that arrange internet connection and enough equipment in good conditions to carry out the online interactions (Ramos & Carvalho, 2018). In this way, pre-service teachers can employ more technological resources for video conferencing, such as Skype, MSN, etc & computer-mediated communication including e-mail, video, and audio with the pertinent technical support provided by the instructors/mediators during the interactions (Biondo, 2011; Telles, 2015). Cando & Tovar's work (2021) suggests an infrastructure with "technological equipment to train the users and provide technical support will contribute to achieving the required academic goals" (p. 6). Besides, the organic law of higher education (2015) states that one of the rights of students is "to have access to the appropriate means and resources for their higher education" (art. 5, lit.c). In this sense, being e-tandem integrated into the curriculum, the institution would have the obligation to provide all the technological facilities so that the sessions can be developed properly, minimizing problems of this type.

Subcategory C.2: have e-tandem session in the schedule

Moreover, professors argued that an integrated e-tandem mode would allow students to develop the sessions within the class schedule. In this way they would be more committed to achieve their language learning goals. They also said that if the program is complementary, learners do not feel responsibility to attend sessions and it is not beneficial for them.

Professors' opinions

Como el programa era complementario los estudiantes no tenían tiempo para asistir a las sesiones. Había estudiantes que se apoderaban de dicho programa y lo hacían a conciencia porque tenían el interés de aprender. No obstante, había estudiantes que a veces iban y a veces no. [As the program was complementary, the students did not have time to attend the sessions. There were students who took over this program and did it conscientiously because they had an interest in learning. However, there were students who sometimes went and sometimes didn't.] (TRT)

Un e-tándem integrado permitiría el desarrollo de las interacciones dentro del horario de clases. De esta manera los estudiantes estarían más comprometidos con su aprendizaje. [An integrated e-tandem would allow the development of interactions within the class schedule.

In this way the students would be more committed to their learning.] (TFC)

Cando & Tovar's (2021) pilot project showed that many students did not have enough time to attend the e-tandem sessions because the program was not integrated into the regular classes and the schedule of both universities did not match. So, students did not feel the obligation to participate. Therefore, e-tandem integrated into the curriculum allows teachers/mediators to coordinate, organize, and conduct sessions based on the groups' and institutions' availability (Ramos & Carvalho, 2018, p. 39). The mediators have to agree on how the activities might be organized. These activities can be conducted whether or not in the schedule of regular classes. So, it depends on the agreement of the mediators (Ramos & Carvalho, 2018). Cavalari & Aranha (2016) affirm that “in iiTD participants are expected to negotiate their schedules, establish their own learning goals and strategies, assess their progress, and help their partner achieve their objectives” (p. 328).

Subcategory C.3: Monitor students' performance

According to the participants' opinions, when the non-integrated e-tandem pilot was carried out at the UTC, the professors did not prepare to pre-service teachers for the interaction that is why they had difficulties during the interaction. They also mentioned that pre-service teachers should be monitored, especially those who are at the A1 level because some of them lack of English knowledge so that they need a specific guide from the professors. In addition, they explained that monitoring comes in planning, the tasks' integration, and identifying the students' difficulties.

Professors' opinions

Cuando se desarrolló el proyecto de e-tándem no integrado se les dijo a los estudiantes que día y hora van a tener la conversación, prepárense, no se hizo ningún acompañamiento al estudiante ni planificación para la interacción. [When the non-integrated e-tandem project was developed, the students were told what day and time they will have the conversation, the teacher told them to be prepared. Teachers did not monitor the students nor plan for the interaction] (TFC)

Algunos estudiantes solían planificar a la misma hora de la presentación, recién estaban intentando que tema voy a hacer, que voy a explicar [Some students used to plan at the same time as the presentation, they were just trying what topic I am going to do, what I am going to explain] (TRT)

Telles manifiesta que debe haber retroalimentación donde el tutor habla con los estudiantes de su desenvolvimiento durante las interacciones [Telles states that there should be feedback where the tutor talks with the students about their development during the interactions] (TFC)

El monitoreo no solo se basa en cómo los estudiantes hablan en las interacciones, el acompañamiento viene en la planificación, integración de tareas o identificar las dificultades de los estudiantes para poder ayudarlos a mejorar [Monitoring is not only based on how students speak in the interactions, the monitoring comes in planning, integrating tasks or identifying students' difficulties in order to help them improve] (TFC)

Con respecto en qué niveles se podría participar, hay estudiantes A1 que han participado, algunos no tienen mucha dificultad, algunos no han podido. Según bibliografía dice que tal vez los estudiantes del A1 sí podrían participar, pero con una guía mucho más específica del docente, entonces al integrar las secciones de E-tándem al currículo ese sería otra cosa

que se podría hacer, integrar a los estudiantes del A1 también, pero con mayor monitoreo o tutoría de un docente. [Regarding what levels could participate, there are A1 students who have participated, some do not have much difficulty, some of them have not. According to the bibliography, it says that perhaps A1 students could participate but with a specific guide from the teacher, then when integrating the E-tandem sections into the curriculum, that would be another thing that could be done, integrating A1 students as well but with more monitoring or tutoring of a teacher] (TFC)

Pre-service teachers' opinions

Recuerdo que fue la primera vez que fui a una sesión de E-tándem, yo fui sin nada de escrito preparado y realmente se me hizo muy difícil porque todo fue hablado y yo no tenía preparado nada. [I remember that it was the first time I went to an E-tandem session, I went without any written preparation and it really was very difficult because everything was discussed and I had nothing prepared] (PSTA-71)

The non-integrated e-tandem is a program that is not developed in the educational environment. Learners are not monitored by a professor, so they do not plan their conversation or they sometimes try to find a topic to speak about at the moment of the interaction. The first day of preservice teachers in the non-integrated e-tandem pilot program was difficult because they did not have prior planning about any topic. It happened because they did not have a prior guide or tutor who reviewed their task before and during the conversation. Whereas the integrating e-tándem is developed into an educational setting. It is supported by instructors or mediators who help to develop a strategy to use in the e-tandem interaction (Almazova, et al, 2020., Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). Mediation allows to promote foreign language learning and teaching successfully (Aranha and Cavalari, 2014). Hence, learners with low knowledge of the language need a specific tutor to aid in improving their conversation plan and abilities. To achieve that, teachers have to integrate tasks such as writing texts (in the foreign language), revising texts (in the native language), and writing reflexive diaries. The guide is in charge of introducing the iiTTD practice, communicating about the activity and procedures in iiTTD participation, and attending to setting a learning goal (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). Therefore, Telles (2015) states that "teachers' pedagogical support may have a relevant impact on how students respond to teletandem sessions" (p. 606). In Pomino & Gil-Salom's study, the instructors did prior planning. They chose topics for their students and integrated the project into the course syllabi. So that all tandem assignments were incorporated into the course syllabus

(Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016). The sessions are scheduled based on the groups' and institutions' availability. The mediators have to agree on how the activities might be organized (Ramos & Carvalho, 2018). Likewise, professors comment that e-tandem could be implemented from the low level (A1), however, they recommend that they must be monitored by a specific professor who guides them in the conversation planning, helps to improve the weaknesses with the language, and motivates them. Nevertheless, Cando & Tovar (2020) mention that "The level required must be A2 or higher because they can manage the conversation" (p.8).

9. RESEARCH IMPACTS

E-tandem is a program designed to connect students from different mother tongue to interact with each other for practicing a foreign language. According to several authors (Telles, 2015; Telles & Vassallo, 2006; Aranha & Cavalari, 2014; Pomino & Gil-Salom, 2016; El-Hariri, 2017; Biondo, 2011; Cando & Tovar, 2021) this program has been considered as a new effective tool for Foreign Language Learners (FLL). Therefore, this study will have an impact in the educational area since we have found the different ways of integrating e-tandem mode in the language curriculum of English career at Technical University of Cotopaxi. This integration can give pre-service English teachers as well as professors an innovative way of teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Through the implementation of e-tandem, they can improve their language skills and acquire new cultural knowledge not only from Ecuador but also from other countries. Hence, English students who graduate from our university will obtain a high level of EFL and put it into practice when they become professionals.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Conclusions

- Based on the first specific objective concerned to describe the e-tandem mode in a language curriculum, it can be assumed that e-tandem is a useful method for foreign language students, since it focuses on join them to interact and learn each other. This interaction can be developed by using different technological resources such as Zoom, Meet, Skype, Google Duo, and Uber conference. This interaction allows learners to enhance learners' language and cultural skills. Whereby, this mode has been implemented in the language curriculum of some higher educational institutions, showing good results in a language learning.
- Regarding to the second specific objective which was to identify the pre-service teachers' and professors' opinions about integrating e-tandem mode in the English career curriculum, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers and professors concur that the e-tandem program can be implemented as a part of a mandatory subject, because it allows learners to feel the need and responsibility to practice the language as well as to promote independent learning. Compulsory activities can lead to a better performance so that students can take more advantage of the benefits of this program. Therefore, e-tandem sessions should be mandatory; giving rewards (scores) when learners participate in sessions. It could help them increase their motivation to responsibly fulfill all the tasks of the e-tandem process. Additionally, participants asserted that e-tandem sessions can be part of the pre-professional practice as it permits to foster their linguistic competence which is necessary for all English teachers. In any case, students claimed that their participation must be rewarded with credits or hours in their teaching practice.
- Concerning to the third specific objective which was to determine the legal basis of implementing an institutional integrated e-tandem mode in the English career curriculum at Technical University of Cotopaxi, it can be concluded that based on the analysis of the Regulation of the academic regime of Ecuador, this mode can be implemented through two ways. By one hand, despite the pre-service teachers and professors' opinions about the inclusion of e-tandem as a subject, optional or compulsory, the regulations indicate that one feasible way for this mode of interaction to be included in the curriculum is as part of the

learning organization of a subject, that is, as an autonomous learning component. On the other hand, e-tandem can also be part of the curriculum as a pre-professional practice. In the first form, as a component of a subject, it would be monitored with the professor's guidance and support, who would decide in mutual agreement with the students, the best form of evaluation to be applied. In the second form, as a pre-professional practice activity, it is an alternative that can be implemented for those students who voluntarily wish to improve their communicative competence and knowledge of the language. At the same time, the opportunity would be given to students of the last career levels (7th and 8th) who can participate as mediators or tutors of the process, being responsible for the organization of these types of interactions that allow them to apply their pedagogical skills.

- Respecting to the fourth specific objective which was to explore the advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem program at Technical University of Cotopaxi, it was encountered that some of the advantages of an institutional integrated e-tandem mode would be: minimize technological problems, have e-tandem sessions in the schedule, and monitor students' performance. Technological issues can be reduced if e-tandem mode is integrated into the regular language lessons because interactions are carried out necessarily in laboratories with enough institutional equipment and technical support. An iiTD will allow students to develop sessions connected with the schedule of regular classes. In e-tandem mode, pre-service teachers would have a mediator or tutor who would guide them during the interactions. The tutor would monitor students' performance by planning, integrating tasks and evaluating them.

These results are subjected to certain limitations: the tutor's poor knowledge with respect to the legal base and the fact that opinions come from a limited sample size. Further research can be done in implementing institutional integrated e-tandem mode and evaluating its effects.

10.2 Recommendations

- It is recommended to consider the advantages of incorporating the e-tandem in the language curriculum of universities based on the empirical evidence that demonstrates these advantages. Likewise, once this mode has been incorporated, it is necessary to take into consideration the drawbacks that can be found and how to minimize them.
- It is suggested to take into account the professors' and pre-service English teachers' opinions about the ways the e-tandem mode can be implemented into the language curriculum. The participants provided two options, first as a component of a subject, and second as a part of pre-professional practices. Hence, it would be great if this mode can be incorporated and then realize if it works or not as a component of the language syllabus.
- It is important to take into account the regulations of the Academic Regime of Ecuadorian higher education when applying this kind of interaction as a part of the curriculum in a career, because the legal basis is the foundation of all curricula designs.
- It is recommended to take into consideration this e-tandem study in order to integrate into the English curriculum since it has many advantages that could be beneficial for professors and pre-service teacher. Also, it allows them to foster pre-service teachers' learning and professors' teaching performance through the e-tandem program implementation.

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TANDEM LANGUAGE LEARNING INTEGRATED IN THE CURRICULUM REFLECTION FROM STUDENTS PERSPECTIVES

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Zainal, Z. (2007). Case study as a research method. *Journal Kemanusiaan*, 9, 1-6. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41822817> Case study as a research methodS
eccion 3

12. ANNEXES

12.1 Annex 1. Interview Guide

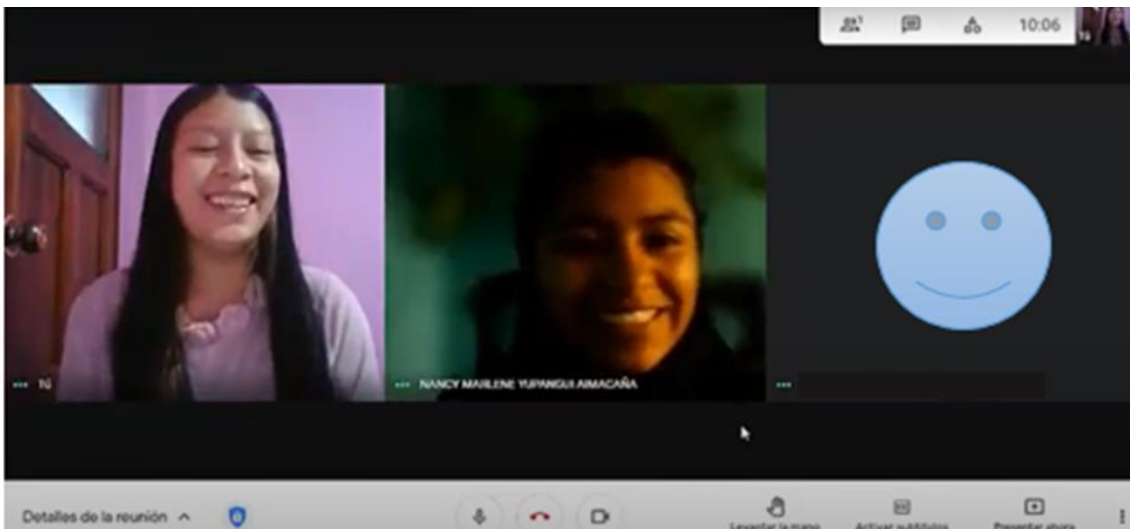
1. ¿Piensa que el programa E-tandem ayuda en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés de los docentes en formación? ¿Por qué?
2. ¿Considera que el programa E-tandem podría ayudar a pulir el conocimiento o prácticas pedagógicas de los docentes en formación? ¿De qué manera?
3. ¿Estima que el programa E-tandem contribuye a que los docentes en formación se sientan motivados para mejorar sus habilidades del idioma inglés?
4. ¿Cuán importante considera usted que los docentes en formación tengan un conocimiento cultural durante el desarrollo del idioma inglés?
5. ¿Qué opina usted acerca de la implementación de este programa E-tandem en la malla curricular de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas?
6. ¿Cree usted que este programa sería útil para implementarlo como parte de la asignatura de inglés?
7. ¿Considera usted que este programa sería útil para implementarlo en el proceso de prácticas pre-profesionales?

12.2 Annex 2. Focus Group Guide

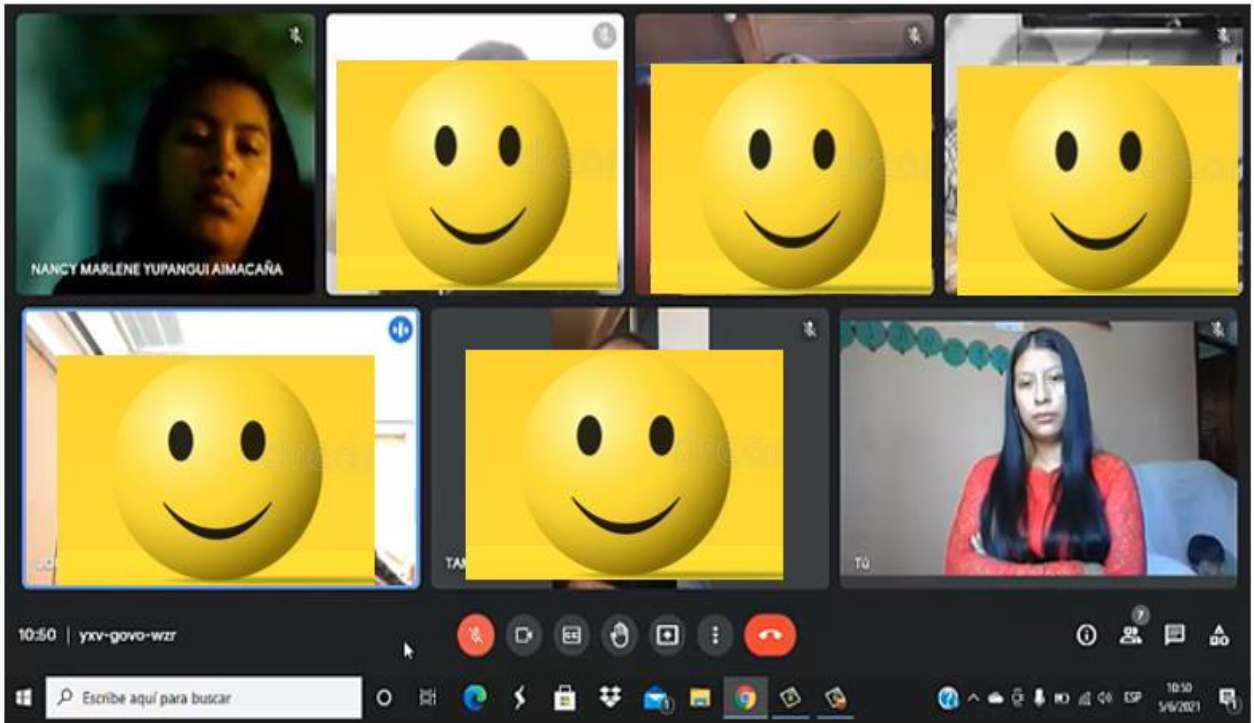
1. ¿Estiman que el programa E-tandem contribuye al aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés? de qué manera?
2. ¿Estiman que el programa E-tandem podría ser una herramienta de enseñanza aprendizaje del idioma inglés?
3. ¿Creen que interactuar con personas nativos hablantes les ayuda a sentirse motivados para mejorar sus habilidades lingüísticas? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿Consideran que como futuros docentes deberían tener un conocimiento cultural en el proceso de enseñanza del idioma inglés? ¿Por qué?
5. ¿Creen que el programa E-tandem podría contribuir no solo en su aprendizaje del idioma inglés, sino también en el desarrollo de su conocimiento cultural? ¿De qué manera?
6. ¿Creen que el programa E-tandem podría ser implementado en la malla curricular de la carrera PINE?

7. En caso de que la respuesta sea sí: ¿Consideran que el programa E-tándem debería ser obligatorio u opcional?
8. ¿Le gustaría que el programa E-tándem sea parte de sus prácticas preprofesionales? es decir las horas de prácticas se justificaría con las horas que han practicado en este programa.

12.3 Annex 3. Interview evidence



12.4 Annex 4. Focus groups evidence



12.5 Annex 5. Informed Consents

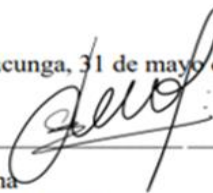


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HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo, Mg. [REDACTED] consiento que **Mirian Sofia Zuña Tenemaza y Nancy Marlene Yupangui Aimacaña**, estudiantes de séptimo ciclo paralelo B perteneciente a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y extranjeros (Inglés), utilicen la información, comentarios y opiniones que como docente de la carrera emito de manera voluntaria, para fines académicos y científicos, incluyendo publicación y divulgación, con la garantía de confidencialidad y resguardo de los datos que puedan identificarme de manera personal.

Latacunga, 31 de mayo de 2021.


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C.I.:050 [REDACTED] 089




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HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

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Latacunga, 31 de mayo de 2021.


Firma

C.I.: 172 [REDACTED] 804



HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo, [REDACTED] consiento que **Mirian Sofia Zuña Tenemaza** y **Nancy Marlene Yupangui Aimacaña**, estudiantes de séptimo ciclo paralelo B perteneciente a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros (Inglés), utilicen la información, comentarios y opiniones que como estudiante de la carrera emito de manera voluntaria, para fines académicos y científicos, incluyendo publicación y divulgación, con la garantía de confidencialidad y resguardo de los datos que puedan identificarme de manera personal.

Latacunga, 31 de mayo de 2021.

Firma

C.I.:180 [REDACTED] 57-3



HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo, MSc. [REDACTED] consiento que **Mirian Sofia Zuña Tenemaza** y **Nancy Marlene Yupangui Aimacaña**, estudiantes de séptimo ciclo paralelo B perteneciente a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y extranjeros (Inglés), utilicen la información, comentarios y opiniones que como docente de la carrera emito de manera voluntaria, para fines académicos y científicos, incluyendo publicación y divulgación, con la garantía de confidencialidad y resguardo de los datos que puedan identificarme de manera personal.

Latacunga, 31 de mayo de 2021.

Firma

C.I.:050 [REDACTED] 604



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HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo, [REDACTED] consiento que **Mirian Sofia Zuña Tenemaza** y **Nancy Marlene Yupangui Aimacaña**, estudiantes de séptimo ciclo paralelo B perteneciente a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y extranjeros (Inglés), utilicen la información, comentarios y opiniones que como estudiante de la carrera emito de manera voluntaria, para fines académicos y científicos, incluyendo publicación y divulgación, con la garantía de confidencialidad y resguardo de los datos que puedan identificarme de manera personal.

Latacunga, 31 de mayo de 2021.

Firma

C.I.: 172 [REDACTED] 719



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HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

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Latacunga, 31 de mayo de 2021.

Firma

C.I.: 172 [REDACTED] 948



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