



Universidad de Concepción
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**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE TANDEM APP ON TOURISM
UNDERGRADUATES' SPEAKING FLUENCY IN ENGLISH**

Tesis para optar al grado de Magíster en Innovación de la Enseñanza, Aprendizaje
y Evaluación del Inglés

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List of acronyms

A1: Basic users of language level of English

B1: Independent users of the language level of English

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FCE: First Certificate English

MALL: Mobile Assisted Language Learning

W: Value obtained from the Wilcoxon signed-ranked test

Abstract

Speaking English fluently in social and professional settings has become a major requirement in the Tourism industry. Thus, the following action research study explores how Tandem application supports Tourism students' speaking fluency in English. The sample of this study was comprised of seven participants from a Chilean professional institute who took part in four online intervention sessions, administered once a week. Participants used Tandem app to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English through voice messages during and after the intervention sessions. Their oral fluency was assessed by contrasting their speech rate and use of long pauses during a pre and a post English speaking fluency interview. Additionally, participants' perceptions were collected through a semi-structured interview conducted in Spanish. Findings revealed that there was a slight speaking fluency improvement, statistically significant according to the Wilcoxon test. Learners agreed on the benefit of the application as a tool that helped them to increase their speaking fluency and their confidence.

Keywords: Tandem app, speaking fluency, language exchange, speech rate, pauses

Resumen

Hablar inglés con fluidez en entornos sociales y profesionales se ha convertido en un requisito importante en la industria del turismo. Por ello, el siguiente estudio de investigación-acción explora cómo la aplicación Tandem apoya la fluidez del habla en inglés de estudiantes de Turismo. La muestra de este estudio estuvo compuesta por siete participantes de un instituto profesional chileno que tomaron parte de cuatro sesiones de intervención online, administradas una vez a la semana. Los participantes utilizaron la aplicación Tandem para comunicarse con hablantes nativos y no nativos de inglés a través de mensajes de voz durante y después cada sesión. Se evaluó su fluidez oral contrastando su ritmo de habla y el uso de pausas largas durante una entrevista de fluidez oral en inglés previa y posterior a la intervención. Además, se recogieron las percepciones de los participantes mediante una entrevista semiestructurada realizada en español. Los resultados revelaron que hubo una ligera mejora en la fluidez del habla, estadísticamente significativa según la prueba de Wilcoxon. Los alumnos coincidieron en el beneficio de la aplicación como herramienta que les ayudó a aumentar su fluidez oral y su confianza.

Palabras clave: Tandem ap., fluidez hablada, intercambio lingüístico, rango del habla, pausas

Chapter I: Introduction

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1.1. Problem statement

Throughout the years, English has become an essential tool, not just for communication but also for work. According to the Cambridge global analysis of language skills in the workplace (2016, p.2), “English language skills are important for over 95% employers in many non-native English-speaking countries”. This scenario is of particular interest for Chilean higher education institutions which currently follow a competency model, which emphasizes the acquisition of specific job competencies. As a result, speaking skills development in social and professional contexts has become their major focus regarding English language teaching and assessment. For instance, according to the Applied English for Tourism and Hospitality I course syllabus (2020) of a Technical Training Center from South Chile, first year students are expected to be able to communicate effectively in English in a myriad of social and professional settings, reaching an initial A1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and eventually reaching B1 during their second year.

However, many Tourism students usually struggle to achieve such a goal. Based on class observation, it has been noticed that learners face difficulty in mastering basic communicative language functions fluently. Learners’ major speaking fluency deficiencies were classified into two main categories: low speech rate and long pauses. Even though students can listen and understand spoken English, they tend to speak in a very segmented manner and usually make use of frequent extended pauses, which exhausts conversation and often leads to communication breakdowns.

To address these oral fluency weaknesses, the present study aims at assessing the Tandem-Language Exchange application’s contribution to support learners' speaking fluency. Tandem is a free language exchange mobile phone application that allows the user to interact with native and non-native speakers around the world by practicing a common language through written chat, voice messages, video calls and pictures. Nevertheless, this action research project focuses on oral fluency development through interaction with English speakers through recorded voice messages.

1.2. Aims

1.2.1 General objective

- Explore how the Tandem-language exchange application supports first year Tourism students’ English-speaking fluency to fulfill basic communicative functions.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

- SO1: Assess the contribution of the Tandem app regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speech rate and frequency of extended pauses.
- SO2: Identify the learners' perceptions regarding the contribution of Tandem on their speaking fluency.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Tandem language exchange application

Tandem is a language exchange application that allows users to connect with native and non-native speakers and practice each other's target language via text messages, audio recordings, audio and video calls. This free tool was created in 2015, and it is currently available for iOS and Android platforms, and it can be accessed through smart phones, iPad and tablets as well. Users can access the app by downloading it for free from either Google Play or App Store, creating a profile and submitting an application before being accepted as part of the Tandem community. Tandem app also supports 300 languages, including English, Spanish and German among many others, and features options for translating and correcting messages. Apart from that, the app allows optional review writing of Tandem partners as well as reporting and blocking those Tandem users who present inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, according to the Tandem's official website, the language exchange application has 10 million members around the world and over 100.000 5-star reviews.

2.2. Tandem Language Learning

Even though the Tandem language exchange application is a modern tool, the approach to learn a language through interaction among speakers originated a long time ago. According to Brammerts (1996), tandem language and culture learning was born out of an effort to foster cooperation among French and German youths through linguistic and cultural exchanges such as language courses carried out in holiday camps after World War II during the late 1960s. In addition, during the seventies and at the beginning of the eighties in Europe, tourists and native speakers alike started to create tandem partnerships to practice a target language in a similar fashion (Wolff, 1982). Eventually, during the 20th century, tandem evolved from face-to-face to a distance and virtual modality, offering asynchronous interactions. Tardieu & Horgues (2019) claimed that even though Tandem was initially restricted to asynchronous written interactions through emails and chats, the great technological advancements of the 21st century allowed tandem learning to develop a step further through the use of instantaneous video chat platforms such as MSN messenger and Skype.

From a theoretical point of view, tandem learning follows two founding principles: autonomy and reciprocity. On the one hand, according to Holec (1981) autonomy is defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning, to have and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (p.3). On the other hand, Tardieu & Horgues (2019) agree that reciprocity is of utmost importance because learners depend on the goodwill of their partners to carry out the exchange process and support each other.

Taking into account its technological background and founding principles, the Tandem language application not only shares the name of this particular language learning method but also stands as the result of great efforts made in order to promote foreign language learning through international cooperation, autonomy and reciprocity during the last century.

2.3. English Speaking Fluency

According to Tavakoli & Wright (2020) fluency is an aspect of language that has been commonly associated with spoken language mastery and considered as an element contributing to communicative competence. It is also a recurrent indicator in international English proficiency examinations such as English Cambridge exams. Several authors have attempted to provide a clear definition of what fluency is, such as Spratt, Pulverness & Williams (2011), who regard fluency as “speaking at a normal speed, without hesitation, repetition or self-correction and with smooth use of connected speech” (p.36); and Lackman (2010), who adds another definition of fluency as “a speaking sub skill together with pronunciation and accuracy and it involves learners in practising speaking with a logical flow without previous rehearsal or planning” (p.4).

Additionally, Brand and Götz (2011) acknowledged temporal variables related to fluency, for instance, “speech rate, length of speech runs or the number and length of filled and unfilled pauses” (p. 257). Bøhn (2015) agrees on this view noting that speaking fluency is determined by different aspects such as speech rate, number of filled and unfilled pauses, number of errors, and use of formulaic language. The present action research took into consideration two of these specific features of fluency, namely speech rate and use of long pauses. Speech rate was classified into three categories: word level, phrase level and sentence level; while the use of long pauses was categorized as frequent use of long pauses, occasional use of long pauses and no use of long pauses at all.

However, the concept of speaking fluency may be broader than just natural uninterrupted speech production. According to Segalowitz’s model (2010), from a psycholinguistic perspective, there are three types of fluency: cognitive fluency, utterance fluency and perceived fluency. On the one hand, cognitive fluency refers to “the speaker’s ability to efficiently mobilize and integrate the underlying cognitive processes responsible for producing utterances with the characteristics that they have” (p. 48). On the other hand, utterance fluency involves “the temporal, pausing, hesitation and repair characteristics” (p.48) related to oral production. Perceived fluency has to do with judgements “made about speakers based on impressions drawn from their speech samples” (p.48). These three types of fluency are key to oral production and were considered in the intervention plan of this project. Since speakers first need to frame and mentally organize the intended message, vocabulary and example of communicative notions were reviewed at the beginning of each intervention session in order to fulfill the communicative language functions of answering personal information questions, describing appearance and personality

of family members, and talking about daily routines. Then, to support utterance fluency, considerations about suprasegmental speech features such as pausing and speech rate were taken into account. To decrease the frequency of the participants' pausing and increase their speech rate, learners compared and contrasted different English-speaking fluency video samples, which served as fluency models to be imitated afterwards while providing Tandem practice during and after each intervention session. Finally, perceived fluency was supported by a semi-structured interview, where participants shared their views and opinions regarding their own fluency performance and fluency improvement.

On top of that, speaking fluency may stretch even further than the speaker's own individual speech production processes and be associated to a social interactive dimension, as suggested by Tavakoli & Wright (2020), who comment on Segalowitz's framework, stating that "*Segalowitz's model is also important in reinforcing the hearer's role in fluency as an interactional construct and not just a learner-internal psycholinguistic construct*" (p.26). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind all these cognitive, articulatory, reflective and social factors and analyze how they can play a major role in improving learners' fluency development.

2.4. Speaking Fluency Assessment

Oral fluency is an important aspect of assessment, which has long been inconsistent in its measurement across different studies, as stated by Lennon (1990), whose work is considered to be a milestone in conceptualizing and measuring fluency, and encouraged further research on objective measures that reflected speakers' fluency instead of the listeners' perceptions of fluency (Tavakoli & Wright, 2020):

It would be advantageous if we could assemble a set of variables that functioned as good indicators of what expert judges, such as experienced native-speaker English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, are reacting to when subjectively assessing fluency. This would advance our knowledge of what constitutes fluency and especially what makes perceived fluency differences among learners and how an individual learner improves in fluency over time. (p.46)

In order to assess speaking fluency in more objective terms, Lennon (1990) proposed several common indicators of fluency such as words per minute, percentage of total pause time, mean pause time and percentage of repetitions, self-corrections, filled and unfilled pause time, among many others.

Despite these indicators are coherent for researching and measuring fluency, they may be too complex to be adapted and implemented in the conventional classroom. Nevertheless, a common ground regarding fluency assessment has been found in international English proficiency examinations such as Cambridge General English exams, which are delivered over 130 countries to over 5.5 million people every year, according to the official 2019 B2 First Handbook for teachers. For instance, in the speaking part of the Cambridge First Certificate English test, speaking fluency is assessed as part of the discourse management criteria, as shown on Figure 1:

Figure 1*Assessment scale for B2 First Speaking Part*

B2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition. Uses basic cohesive devices.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>			

Note. Taken from the 2019 B2 First Handbook for teachers

In this particular case, speaking fluency is assessed in terms of hesitation and length of speech production. The same criteria is also used for global achievement assessment as portrayed in Figure 2:

Figure 2*B2 First global achievement assessment scale*

B2	Global achievement
5	Handles communication on a range of familiar topics, with very little hesitation. Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce extended discourse that is generally coherent.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>
3	Handles communication on familiar topics, despite some hesitation. Organises extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>
1	Handles communication in everyday situations, despite hesitation. Constructs longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>

Note. Taken from the 2019 B2 First Handbook for Teachers

Therefore, for practical assessment of speaking skills, fluency can be measured using scoring scales, such as holistic and analytic rubrics, which provide quantitative results based on qualitative criteria. Such criteria can be adapted according to the specific speaking fluency aspects the teacher researcher seeks to assess and, in this way, provide better feedback for learners and to support their needs.

2.5.-Communicative language functions and speaking tasks

The present action research project engaged students in fulfilling basic communicative functions. Spratt, Pulverness & Williams (2011) provide a simple and clear definition of functions as “*a reason why we communicate. Every time we speak or write, we do so for a purpose or function... When we describe language through functions we emphasize the use of the language and its meaning for the people who are in the context where it is used*” (p.17). Functions are key elements of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) and are also used as a means of learning English and preparing for international proficiency examinations such as B2 First test (former FCE exam). Table 1 shows examples of functions listed in official 2019 B2 First handbook, referred as situations and topics:

Table 1

B2 First situations and topics sample

Topics and situations	Examples
Everyday situations	Having a meal, asking for information, shopping, traveling to work
Familiar topics	Talk about what people like to do on holiday, talk about what is like to do different jobs
Unfamiliar topics	Speculate about whether people in the world today only care about themselves, or the kinds of problems that having a lot of money can cause

Note: Adapted from 2019 B2 First Handbook for Teachers

The functions chosen for the current action research on Tandem practice were based on familiar topics such as answering personal information questions, describing appearance and personality of family members, and talking about daily routines. The criteria for such a selection were based on the learners' speaking fluency deficiencies such as the use of long pauses and low speech rate; and, curricular demands, since the three communicative functions were compulsory in the course descriptor units, therefore, the intervention contributed to further practice.

Furthermore, learners fulfilled the functions by completing a task. Tavakoli & Wright (2020) highlight the difference of the term task from the research perspective:

From a research perspective, however, a task includes a broader spectrum of concepts and definitions. For many, any activity participants are involved in as stimuli for data collection can be called a task, from sentence repetition to fill-in-the gap, to communicative and authentic activities that resemble life outside the classroom. Nevertheless, for many researchers examining fluency in task-based language teaching (TBLT), task is used in a specific sense in which the participants are engaged in a meaning oriented communicative and authentic activity. (p.66)

In this study, learners completed a task which consisted of communicating with native and non-native speakers using Tandem. The task allowed meaningful practice of language functions because it provided an authentic setting to interact in English with real language users online through voice recording mostly, and in some particular cases, learners were able to establish and keep partnerships with Tandem users even after the intervention.

2.6.-Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Research on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has shed some light on its advantages for EFL learning. For instance, according to Foomani & Hedayati (2016), mobile devices' ubiquity provide limitless language learning opportunities in everyday life experiences and promote learners' autonomy. In addition, Khan & Islam (2019) claim that MALL helps to maintain the learners' interest and motivation. Moreover, Namziandost & Nasri (2019) stated that learners believe that social media can help them improve their speaking skills and that both Iranian EFL students and teachers agree that social networks can serve an academic purpose.

This study supports these views for the following reasons. First, all learners were able to use a social network such as the Tandem app from their mobile devices (even though it is possible to use it through the official tandem website as well) and gave it an academic purpose. Second, participants used the app during the intervention, and more importantly, after it, as much as they could outside of the classroom for 4 weeks. Third, students reported that they felt motivated to use the app due to the actual interaction with the native and non-native English speakers they found online, and as mentioned earlier, some research participants developed and kept contact with their partners post-intervention. Lastly, learners did mention during the semi-structured interview that they agreed that the Tandem app helped them to improve their speaking fluency level, though at different degrees.

For all these reasons, this action research project agrees with the benefits of MALL, such as learners' autonomy, learning motivation, opportunities for out of the classroom practice and speaking skills improvement.

2.7.-Research on speaking fluency

Speaking fluency is an interesting aspect of language that has been researched all around the globe. Albino (2017) assessed how Angolan ninth grades improved their speaking fluency using task-based activities such as picture description and feedback tools as recast and prompts, for 8 weeks and discovered that learners were able to increase their speed of speech production, further their grammatical accuracy, elaborated on their utterances and developed interactional language.

Schenker & Kraemer (2017) investigated the effects of additional out-of-class speaking practice using an iPad application on American learners' general speaking proficiency, fluency, and syntactic complexity in German. The study involved individual homework speaking assignments using the Adobe Voice app, used for storytelling. Results revealed a statistically significant difference on the overall speaking proficiency of students who received additional out-of-the classroom speaking iPad practice in comparison to those who did not. Although speed fluency, which was measured as speech rate and calculated as the mean number of words per minute, did not present a statistically significant improvement in the intermediate speaking tasks, the overall score of the intermediate and the advanced tasks of the experimental group was slightly higher than those of the control group.

Another study carried out by Muhsin Alaraj (2017) with Jordanian learners who had recently graduated from High school and had started their first year at university, investigated three major EFL speaking problems students encountered, namely, lack of lexis, lack of listening and practicing, and psychological problems. Results from a semi-structured interview revealed that students perceived that lexis was tightly connected to EFL speaking fluency, since the lack of the former hindered the latter, leading to cease communication and revert to the speaker's mother tongue.

Zamani (2019) researched the effect of cyberlearning on EFL learners' speaking fluency performance and assessed an experimental group who was exposed to traditional classroom learning and also cyberlearning classes through a virtual learning environment. After a speaking posttest, Zamani concluded that learners who received the treatment tended to decrease the number of hesitations and pauses due to the positive effect of cyberlearning, in contrast with the research participants of the control group who were not exposed to the cyberlearning methodology.

In summary, the recent research on speaking fluency examined so far seems to indicate that this particular aspect of oral production can be improved through the implementation of task-based activities, practice through virtual learning environments, additional out-of-the classroom speaking tasks and by enhancing vocabulary.

2.8.-Research on the Tandem app

Though there has not been extensive research on the use of Tandem as a language learning tool, some authors have highlighted the advantages of using Tandem and similar language exchange applications. Khazaei & Nushi (2020) describe three relevant features of the Tandem app, which will be now explained. Firstly, Tandem helps learners improve their speaking skills because of the connection that is established with the native speakers of the language they want to master. Likewise, Dressman & Sadler (2019) agree that language exchange applications helped learners gain confidence and break mental barriers of not having real contact with native speakers. This is particularly useful since there is a tendency for many learners who prefer to be taught by teachers who are native speakers rather than those who are non-native speakers (Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009).

Secondly, Tandem allows the possibility of discussing topics of interest for both teachers and students. Users can use prompts to specify different topics of interest to practice the target language and use these prompts to select Tandem partners to practice with. Conversely, other learners may match the user's prompts and request him/her to practice with them.

Thirdly, an important strength of the application is its friendly and safe virtual learning atmosphere which helps learners not to be afraid of making mistakes at the moment of interacting with their partners. Users can leave polite and encouraging comments in the other learners' profiles as a review. In addition to that, Tandem's interface is user friendly and easy to navigate. Moreover, learners' profiles have to go through an approval process before being granted access to the learning community. In some cases, the process may take a few days and clear warnings about consequences regarding misbehavior are established during that process. Tandem also allows users to filter language partners by checking their profiles and blocking those the user does not want to practice with anymore.

Finally, Khazaei & Nushi (2020) remarked that Tandem appeared to be helpful especially in countries where the target language is being learned as a foreign language because teachers can motivate their students to use tandem to practice the language out of the classroom and access a more authentic context for communication.

Chapter III: Methodology

Chapter III: Methodology

3.1. Type of research

The present study is an action research project, and as it follows its core principles regarding scope, purpose, and cycle. First, action research involves problems of the researcher's own classroom (Borg, 1965), and in this case, this study is concerned with speaking fluency problems identified by the teacher researcher through class observation. Second, the purpose of conducting action research is to change and improve teaching practice (Corey, 1953). This aspect agrees with what the teacher researcher seeks, making methodological adjustments by introducing a new technological resource to support students and help them improve their current fluency level in their speaking skill. Thirdly, action research follows an ongoing cycle that involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Lewin, 1948). Such a cycle is also completed in the present study since an action plan was devised to address learners' fluency needs, which had been previously detected through classroom observation. Then, implementation of a technological solution was carried out. This intervention process was carefully followed and monitored by the teacher researcher who used a variety of instruments to record students' fluency progress session by session. Finally, reflection took place in order to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the technological solution and to generate further insight into future research.

3.2. Participants

The research participants of the present action research are eight first year-university students from a higher education institution in Chile. The sample comprises 1 male and 7 female learners with age range from 18-20 years old. These students belong to the International Tourism Administration program and were currently undertaking their first General English course in the afternoon shift. Additionally, after finishing the course, participants are expected to achieve an A1 level of English, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which enables them to fulfill communicative functions such as introducing themselves, exchanging personal information and sharing routines. Nevertheless, the selected learners' communicative competence is affected by their socioeconomic level and educational setting. Skilled students usually come from upper middle-class families and have studied English before in semi-private high schools, while less adept students face socioeconomic struggles and have not consolidated any basic English language skill previously. The learners were selected by using a non-probabilistic sample technique because this study is focused on a small sample and examines a real-life phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Also, the sample can be described as a purposive sample because subjects were selected according to specific criteria to best fit the research aims. For instance, participants needed to be part of the Tourism program because the emphasis on fluent communication is much greater, and more job skill related than other programs where English is taught

merely as an academic requirement for program completion. Additionally, subjects had to be first year students taking their first English course because it is in that specific course where the communicative functions to be practiced on Tandem (introducing oneself, describing family and daily routines) are usually taught. Last but not least, it is important to highlight the fact that the participants were invited and accepted to participate freely in this study and as stated before, the sample comprises learners with high, medium and low levels of English partly due to their academic and social background, interests and motivation.

3.3. Research question and objectives

3.3.1. Research question

Research questions are paramount to guide the action research process. The research question that the present action research seeks to answer is the following:

- **To what extent does Tandem language exchange app support first year Tourism students' English speaking fluency to fulfill basic communicative language functions?**

3.3.2. General and Specific Objectives

From the research question, the general objective and two specific objectives emerged:

- **General Objective:** Explore how the Tandem-language exchange application supports first year Tourism students' English-speaking fluency to fulfill basic communicative functions.
- **Specific Objective 01:** Assess the contribution of the Tandem app regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speech rate and frequency of extended pauses.
- **Specific Objective 02:** Identify the learners' perceptions regarding the contribution of Tandem on their speaking fluency.

3.4. Research Problem

The problem approached in the following research is that first year Tourism students usually present difficulty to communicate fluently in English, which is evidenced in the use of long pauses and poor speech rate in their utterances. This has been commonly noticed through class observation by teachers who teach the same Language course and who have also identified insufficient speaking fluency as a

major weakness that hinders the learners' communicative competence development, especially in the long term as they progress to upper course levels and are unable to communicate spontaneously in English. Furthermore, as Tourism technicians and professionals to be, fluent command of the language is a must in order to be successful in the travel industry, dealing with customers, negotiating with tourists and solving management problems. Therefore, it is imperative to tackle such a setback from their first English course.

3.5. Stages of the action research

The action plan of the current study consisted of six 70-minute sessions in which the intervention took place. These sessions were performed online using the Microsoft Teams platform and were conducted on a different schedule after regular classes. Each session met particular aims through the development of different activities and the use of various instruments for data collection (see Appendix A for more information), which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Action Plan Design

Session	Learning objective	Activities	Assessment	Data collection instrument
1	Assess students' initial level of speaking fluency	Research overview Tandem app introduction Pre-intervention speaking fluency interview	Pre-intervention speaking fluency interview	Pre-intervention speaking fluency rubric
2	Provide fluency practice by using Tandem to introduce oneself	Review of expressions to exchange personal information Analysis of videos depicting fluent introductions Tandem practice through voice messages	Assessment of the sessions are carried out a week after as to provide more time for participants to practice with the app outside the intervention	
3	Provide fluency practice by using Tandem to describe family	Review of expressions to describe appearance and personality of family members Fluent family description video analysis Tandem practice through voice messages	Formative speaking task: Personal information questions	Fluency Checklist

4	Provide fluency practice by using Tandem to describe daily routines	Review of expressions to describe daily routines Fluent daily routine description Tandem practice through voice messages	Formative speaking task: Picture description	Fluency Checklist
5	Provide fluency practice by using Tandem to introduce oneself and describe family and routines	Tandem practice through voice messages	Formative speaking task: Daily routine description	Fluency Checklist
6	Evaluate students' final oral performance to check their level of fluency Assess participants' perceptions about the contribution of Tandem regarding speaking fluency	Post-intervention speaking fluency interview Semi-structured interview	Post-intervention speaking fluency interview Semi-structured interview	Speaking fluency rubric Semi-structured interview

Note: Self elaboration

3.6. Data collection tools

In order to answer the research question and achieve the research objectives, this study considered three instruments of data collection:

3.6.1. Pre-intervention speaking fluency interview

The purpose of this oral interview was to serve as a starting reference of the learners' speaking fluency level, to be later contrasted with a post-intervention speaking fluency interview to fulfill Specific Objective 1. In order to do this, participants were required to answer questions orally formulated by the teacher regarding 3 dimensions based on basic communicative language functions: introducing oneself, describing appearance and personality of family members and describing daily routines. Sample questions are displayed on Table 3:

Table 3*Communicative functions and sample questions*

Dimensions	Questions
Introducing oneself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me something about yourself, please. • Where are you from? How old are you? What is your occupation? • Tell me about your hobbies
Describing family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about your family, please. • Could you describe the appearance of a family member, please? • Could you describe the personality of your best friend, please?
Talking about daily routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What time do you usually get up in the morning? • Tell me about your online class routine, please. • What activities do you do with your family on weekends? • What do you typically do on Fridays?

Note: Self elaboration

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In addition, the learners' responses were assessed by using an analytic rubric (see Appendix B) which focused on speaking fluency, particularly in aspects such as the use of extended pauses and speech rate, features which either allowed or hindered intelligibility and communication. This analytic rubric was created considering Pearson's holistic rubric (2005) and Brown's fluency proficiency scoring categories (2001), and then it was validated by two faculty professors. To assess the data, 3 dimensions were selected based on the communicative functions practiced using the Tandem app, as well as four proficiency levels ranging from Advanced, Standard, Basic and Poor. These proficiency levels included specific scores which ranged from one to four, being 4 the highest score, equivalent to Advanced Fluency, while 1 was the lowest, associated with Poor Fluency (see Appendix B for further details)

3.6.2. Post-intervention speaking fluency interview

This activity was held after the intervention process, and it aimed at exploring if there was any change regarding the participants' initial speaking fluency level in order to decide whether the Tandem methodology had supported the students' speech rate and the use of extended pauses as stated in Specific Objective 01. The task took the form of a speaking fluency interview guided by the teacher's questions about the very same communicative language functions (introductions, family and routine descriptions) and questions used in the initial fluency assessment. Likewise, the same rubric used in the pre-speaking fluency interview also served as the instrument to assess the learners' fluency in the post-fluency speaking interview.

3.6.3. Semi-structured interview about students' perceptions

Once the intervention was over, it was necessary to collect the subjects' views on the contribution of Tandem methodology to support their speaking fluency level and raise their awareness to perform communicative language functions as stated in Specific Objective 02. To achieve a better balance and flexibility considering the

learners' responses this interview was designed as a semi-structured one which included different questions grouped into four dimensions, as shown in Table 4:

Table 4

Semi-structured interview dimension and sample questions

Dimension	Sample questions
Tandem app language contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Do you feel you can speak more spontaneously now, compared to the beginning of the intervention? If so, Why? · How do you think practicing English through recorded and written messages help you consolidate your fluency? · In what ways did the fluency video analysis observation help you improve your speaking fluency?
Remaining fluency problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What fluency problems do you think remain to be improved?
Tandem partners' communication challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Were you able to engage in a video call with a native speaker? · Did you encounter difficulties to connect and communicate with Tandem users? How often did you get replies?
Tandem technical breakdowns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Did you have any technical problems while using the application? · Did the Tandem app present any problems to use? If so, which?
Tandem improvement suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What aspects could Tandem improve to support fluency in English better?

Note: Self elaboration

3.7.-Data analysis techniques

Data collected from the participants' performance through the initial and final speaking fluency interviews, and the participants perceptions from the semi-structured interview were analyzed by using quantitative and qualitative techniques.

3.7.1. Descriptive statistics: Mean score, percentages, standard deviation and Wilcoxon test

Simple descriptive statistical techniques such as the mean, percentages, and standard deviation were used to describe if there was a change in the students' fluency level after the intervention and serve as indicators to assess the contribution of the Tandem application.

Mean scores were used to compare the students' speaking fluency progression between the pre and post-intervention. Mean scores were calculated in terms of use

of long pauses and speech rate, individually per participant and as a group. In addition, percentages were used to understand better the difference between the individual and group scores of the pre and post speaking fluency interviews.

Additionally, standard deviation was calculated to have a clearer idea of how the group and individual scores spread out from the mean score during both, pre and post speaking fluency interviews.

Finally, the Wilcoxon signed-ranked test was also applied to see if there had been any statistically significant improvement in the participants' performance between the pre and post speaking fluency interviews.

3.7.2. Thematic Analysis

Learners' perceptions about the Tandem methodology, which were elicited from the semi-structured interview responses were processed through a thematic analysis technique. In this case, based on the topics that emerged from the students' responses, five general themes were included namely Tandem app language contribution, remaining fluency problems, Tandem partners' communication challenges, Tandem technical breakdowns and Tandem improvement suggestions. From these general themes, different sub themes emerged, among the most frequent being fluency development, the interaction with native and non-native speakers and the delay in the Tandem partner's response. Responses were quantified and classified according to its frequency, and exemplified through response transcription (for more details, refer to Chapter 04).

Chapter IV: Findings

Chapter IV: Findings

In this chapter the research results derived from the pre and post-intervention speaking fluency interviews are analyzed according to the specific objectives of this action research. To provide better consistency and validity in the evaluation of the participants' speaking fluency, the results of both speaking fluency interviews were revised by the teacher researcher and also by a fellow teacher, who worked in the same higher education institution and has taught the same courses for three years. Inter-rater comments and feedback can be found in Appendix C.

4.1. SO1: Assess the contribution of Tandem app regarding the learners' speaking fluency in terms of speech rate and extended pauses

In order to assess the support provided by Tandem app to learners' both speech rate and use of long pauses in their speaking fluency, the participants' mean scores, standard deviation and frequency distribution were calculated.

A first analysis is presented based on the comparison of the group and participants' mean scores between the pre and post speaking fluency interviews which are displayed on Table 5. The individual scores emerged from the rubric used to evaluate the participants' speech rate and use of long pauses while participants fulfilled three communicative functions, namely, answering personal information questions, describing physical appearance and personality of family members, and describing daily routines. The maximum score of the rubric was 12 points.

Table 5

Mean scores during pre and post-intervention speaking fluency interviews

Research participant	Pre-intervention speaking fluency interview score	Post-intervention speaking fluency interview score	Mean score
1	12	12	12
2	6	6	6
3	11	9	10
4	9	9	9
5	7	10	8.5
6	12	12	12
7	10	11	10.5
Sample average score	9.57	11.14	10.35

Ideal score

12

12

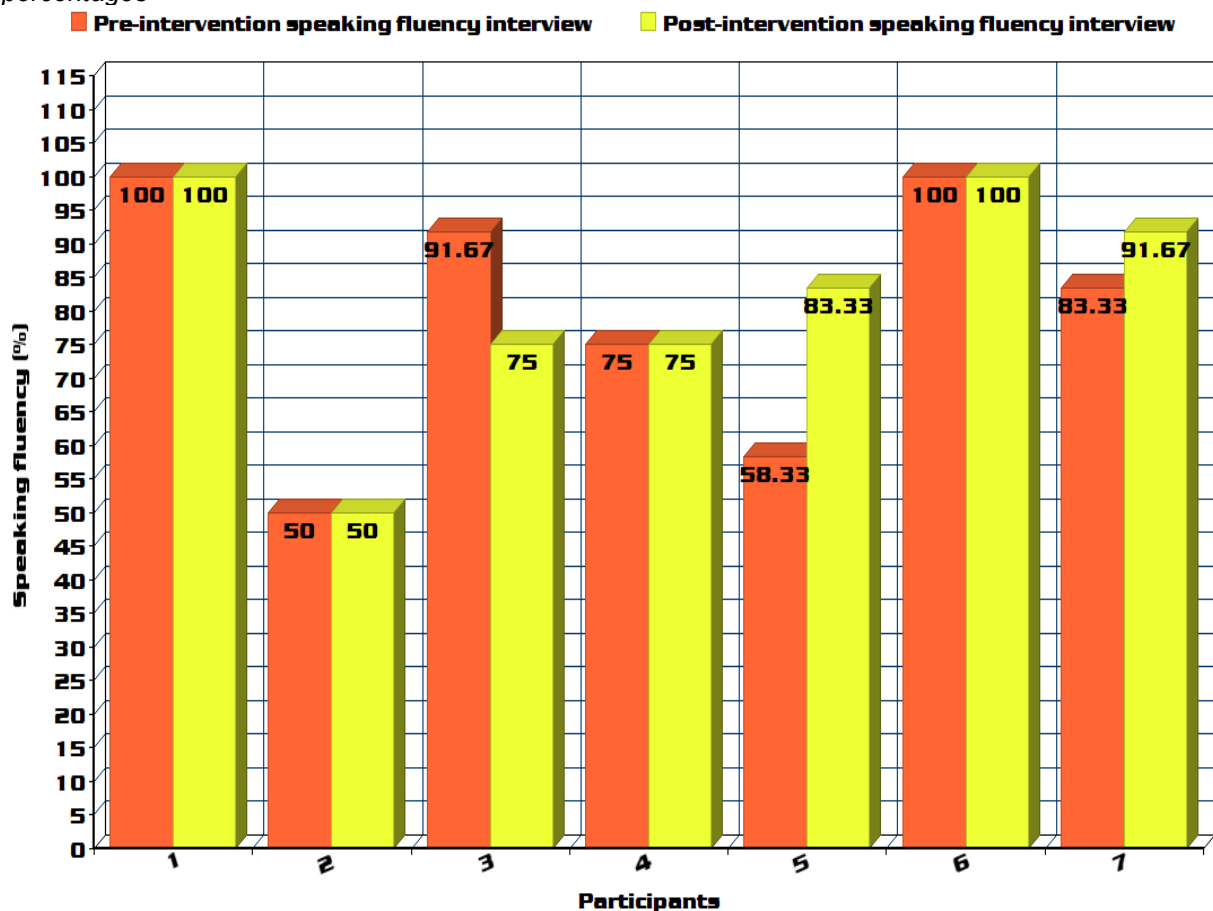
12

Note. Own elaboration

Taking into consideration the mean scores displayed on Table 5, it is possible to state that as a group, there was a minor improvement of 1.57 points (13.08%) in the learners' overall fluency level between the mean score in the pre-intervention speaking fluency interview (9.57 points) and the mean score obtained in the post-intervention speaking fluency interview (11.14 points). In fact, 71% (5 out of 7) participants scored over 9 points in the pre-speaking fluency interview and this figure increased up to 86% (6 out of 7) during the post-intervention speaking fluency interview. This speaking fluency improvement can be better appreciated in terms of percentages per participant as displayed in Figure 3:

Figure 3

Speech rate comparison between pre and post intervention speaking fluency interviews in percentages



Note. Elaborated at <https://www.onlinecharttool.com>

On the one hand, central tendency indicates that the students' initial speaking fluency in terms of speech rate and use/avoidance of long pauses was high,

nevertheless, minor improvements of 25% and 8.34% were observed in participants number 5 and 7 respectively, as suggested by the results from the post-intervention speaking fluency interview.

On the other hand, the sample's high mean scores during pre and post intervention speaking fluency interviews were coherent with the information provided by the calculation of the standard deviation, as shown on Table 6:

Table 6

Comparison of means scores and standard deviation during pre and post-speaking fluency interviews

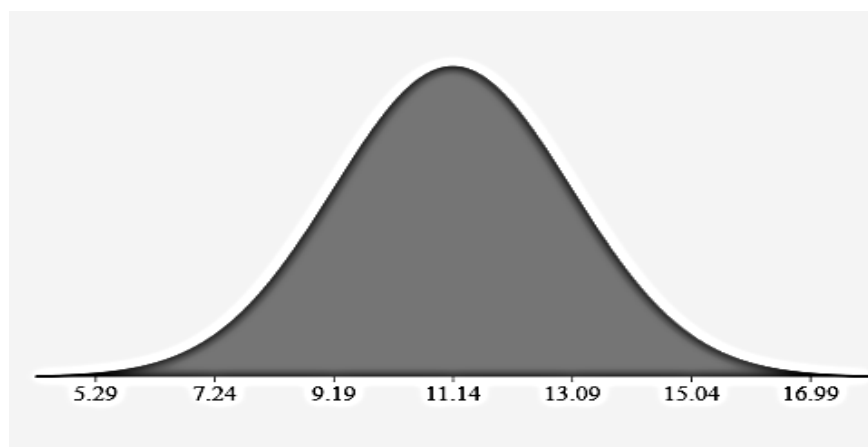
Indicators	Pre-intervention speaking fluency interview	Post-intervention speaking fluency interview
Mean score	9,57	11,14
Standard Deviation	2,19	1,95

Note. Own elaboration

Table 6 shows a low standard deviation during both the initial and the final speaking fluency interviews, which means that the data was not very dispersed from the mean. What is more, if the standard deviation from both interviews is compared, there is a decrease of 0.24 points during the post intervention speaking interview, which means that the participants' scores became even less spread and are closer to the mean due to the small improvement made during the second interview. This small variation can be visually depicted in the normal distribution shown in Figure 4:

Figure 4

Normal distribution of post-intervention speaking fluency interview



Note. Calculated at <https://onlinestatbook.com/>

The normal distribution shown in Figure 4 portrays a bell curve, in which around 95% of the results are symmetrically within 2 standard deviations from the mean.

To sum up, participants' speaking fluency performance was high during both pre and post speaking fluency interviews, and a small statistically significant improvement was made. The data obtained from the speaking fluency interviews presented a low standard deviation and, therefore, little dispersion and were closer to the mean.

4.1.1. Correlation between speaking fluency improvement and time of practice using the Tandem app

Analysis of results indicated that there could be a correlation between research participants' time of Tandem app practice after every intervention session and their increase, decrease and stagnation in their scores between the pre and post speaking fluency interviews. As stated earlier, participant 5 and participant 7 increased their speaking fluency scores in 3 points (25%) and 1 point (8.34%) respectively, as shown in Figure 1. However, weekly intervention records of Tandem app usage after every intervention session indicated that participants 5 and 7 are also within the top 3 highest values of practice time registered (from 60-95 minutes), as shown in Table 7:

Table 7

Research participants approximated weekly practice time using the Tandem app outside the classroom (in minutes)

Research participant	Tandem practice per week (min)				Total time
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	
Participant 1	15	40	30	10	95 minutes
Participant 2	15	10	20	0	45 minutes
Participant 3	15	5	5	15	40 minutes
Participant 4	0	0	20	20	40 minutes
Participant 5	30	15	10	5	60 minutes
Participant 6	10	10	15	5	40 minutes
Participant 7	25	25	5	20	75 minutes

Note. Own elaboration

Conversely, participants 2, 3 and 4 ranked the lowest weekly practice time register (40 -45 minutes) and also the lowest speaking fluency mean scores during the post speaking fluency interviews. Additionally, perceptions collected through the semi-

structured interview responses complemented this finding. For instance, participant 2 reported not having dedicated much time to practice fluency using the Tandem app, though other reasons also discouraged its use. Therefore, based on the increase, decrease and lack of change in some learners speaking fluency mean scores, it is possible to link oral fluency changes in relation to practice time using the app, at least partially, since there are exceptions to this generalization such as participant 6, who presented low practice time (40 minutes) but got twice the highest scores, probably due to the high level of English the participant presented and their educational background. Similarly, other internal and external factors may have affected the learners' experience in using the Tandem app (See section 4.2 for further information).

4.1.2. Wilcoxon signed-ranked test

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to assess whether the speaking fluency improvement made by the participants and shown in the central tendency measures had been statistically significant or not. Figure 5 depicts the results of the test calculation:

Figure 5

Results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test

n	Alpha value				
	0.005	0.01	0.025	0.05	0.10
5	-	-	-	-	0
6	-	-	-	0	2
7	-	-	0	2	3
8	-	0	2	3	5
9	0	1	3	5	8
10	1	3	5	8	10
11	3	5	8	10	13
12	5	7	10	13	17
13	7	9	13	17	21
14	9	12	17	21	25
15	12	15	20	25	30
16	15	19	25	29	35
17	19	23	29	34	41
18	23	27	34	40	47
19	27	32	39	46	53
20	32	37	45	52	60
21	37	42	51	58	67
22	42	48	57	65	75
23	48	54	64	73	83
24	54	61	72	81	91
25	60	68	79	89	100
26	67	75	87	98	110
27	74	83	96	107	119
28	82	91	105	116	130
29	90	100	114	126	140
30	98	109	124	137	151

Sample 1
12. 6. 11. 9. 7. 12. 10

Sample 2
12. 6. 9. 9. 10. 12. 11

CALCULATE

W test statistic = 2

Number of non-tied pairs (n) = 3

Note. Calculated at <https://www.statology.org/wilcoxon-signed-rank-test-calculator/>

According to Corder and Foreman (2014) if the critical value equals or exceeds the obtained value, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, since the sample was comprised of 7 participants, and the test statistic value W obtained (2) is equal to the critical value (2) of the significance level chosen (0.05), the results of the learners' performance in the post intervention speaking fluency interview can be regarded as statistically significant, and that the participants improvement by using the Tandem app has a probability of error of 5%.

4.2. SO2: Identify learners' perceptions regarding the use of Tandem app to support their speaking fluency

In order to assess the learners' perceptions about Tandem and its contribution to speaking fluency, a semi-structured interview in their mother tongue was carried out and their views on the topic were summarized through a thematic analysis, as shown on Table 8. Four major themes emerged from the participants' responses: Tandem app language contribution, remaining fluency problems, Tandem partners' communication challenges, Tandem technical breakdowns, and Tandem

improvement suggestions. Also, the thematic analysis included a sample of the students' responses and the frequency for each sub theme.

Table 8

Thematic Analysis on the participants' perceptions about the Tandem app

Theme	Sub theme	Frequency	Example
Tandem app language contribution	1.-Speaking	15	<p>“Cuando encontré a mi compañera (de tándem) con la que, si podía hablar ya fluidamente, estaba lavando la loza y me ponía a grabar audio y hablaba de mi vida normal...y tampoco lo pensaba... lo decía no más ... y eso igual me ayuda a ser un poquito más espontánea y no sobre pensar las cosas”.</p> <p>“Yo creo que un poco, no tan fluido, así como una persona nativa, pero Sí hablar un poco más fluido en el sentido que puedo decir palabras si trabarme como antes”.</p> <p>“Yo creo que igual ayudo harto porque antes yo hablaba muy... antes me trataba al hablar y ahora no me trabo tanto como antes. Yo creo que sí ayudó en la fluidez”.</p>
	Fluency development		
	2.-Speaking		
Fluency awareness			
	3.-Interaction with native and non-native speakers	11	<p>“Encontramos un punto medio en que sí y me conectaba a las 10 de la mañana, ella iba a estar despierta y podíamos hablar (a pesar de la diferencia horaria) podíamos hablar”.</p>

			<p>“Si...ella también empezó a mandarme audios... teníamos muchas cosas en común... nos seguimos comunicando hasta el día de hoy por Tandem y por Instagram”.</p> <p>“La persona con la que hablé era de Brasil (non native) y le entendía todo lo que decía...y él lo corregía y todo... así que ahí iba... mandando audios también”.</p>
	4.-Confidence building/Anxiety decrease	8	<p>“Yo digo que sí... no por completo... me ha hecho perder el miedo de hablar en inglés, antes me ponía nerviosa ... ahora llego y disparo en inglés”.</p> <p>Me da mucha vergüenza a hablarle a personas que no conozco... (antes) Me ponía a llorar porque tenía que hablarle a mis compañeros (de curso) y me daba mucha vergüenza y la aplicación me hizo cambiar un poco el pensamiento. No tengo porque estar nerviosa</p> <p>“Como uno envía respuestas, se motiva a hacerlo mejor y otra cosa es que uno no conoce a la gente así que el inglés fluye más y no siente vergüenza”.</p>
	5.-Safe learning environment	6	<p>“No sentí como que estuvieran usando/violando mi espacio personal. No tuve ese miedo como cuando estoy con una persona frente a frente”.</p> <p>“No tengo porque estar nerviosa...trataba de actuar natural... sabía que si me equivocaba no me iban a juzgar”.</p> <p>“Si, (me sentí segura) No me llegaron ningún mensaje con otra intención”.</p>
Remaining fluency problems	Long pauses	2	<p>“Lo de las pausas en ...durante la oración ...siento que hago muchas pausas, pero terminó haciendo una pausa muy larga entre medio de la frase”</p> <p>“Como que tengo pausas muy largas encuentro yo.”</p>
	Anxiety	5	<p>“El miedo de si me equivoque o lo dije bien...igual me pongo nerviosa... eso yo creo que me falla, los nervios más que nada”</p>

			<p>“Que me pongo muy nerviosa...pero es que soy muy ansiosa también, Cuando digo algo me quedo pensando si lo dije bien ..y a veces me desconcentro un poco de la conversación”.</p> <p>“Soy una persona bastante ansiosa así que quizás eso sea igual”.</p>
	Vocabulary	3	<p>“Me falta como tener más vocabulario para saber expresarme mejor ... sí porque hago pausas como buscando la palabra. Igual voy a seguir ocupando la aplicación”.</p> <p>“Me falta vocabulario.”</p> <p>“Mi vocabulario. Buscar las palabras que quiero decir.”</p>
Tandem partners' communication challenges	Inappropriate response	2	<p>“Me llego un mensaje un poquito inapropiado y lo bloquee y me llego altiro el reporte de que habían bloqueado a ese usuario”.</p> <p>Aparecían hombres y mandaban mensajes medios mmm...</p>
	Irrelevant response	1	<p>“A veces la respuesta de otros usuarios era inapropiada (relevante) o insuficiente (por ejemplo, que tenía bonito acento... una respuesta que no esperaba”</p>
	Delayed reply	11	<p>“Eso sí es un punto débil, de repente es muy difícil conectar con las demás personas porque no responden, o sea el tiempo de espera que responden de vuelta (Lo máximo de espera de una respuesta) como uno día, dos días más o menos”.</p> <p>“...Se demoran, pero al final si llegan a responder”.</p> <p>“Sí, diría que hay que tener paciencia ya que no siempre responden enseguida.”</p>
	Insufficient feedback	9	<p>“Tenía los mismos problemas, que no mucha gente respondía. ¡A veces llegaba a las 2 semanas y me respondían con un Hi! / Ok”.</p> <p>“También eso fue un 50 y 50...Más que nada fue favorable, pero a veces la respuesta era insuficiente”.</p>

			“Costo lograr eso... de 6 audios que mandaba solo 2 se respondían.”
Tandem technical breakdown	App breakdown/crashes	3	<p>“La abría (la aplicación) y se me cerraba. La abría y se volvía a cerrar y como que se me cerraba sola. La apretaba para abrir el teléfono y se me cerraba”.</p> <p>“Tampoco podía enviar audios cuando estaba en clases (intervención).”</p> <p>“La primera vez que me metí a la aplicación como que se pegaba...se me pegaba en la parte de los chats.”</p>
	App filters not working	1	“Lo otro que funcionan mal los filtros... ese sería un problema técnico”
	Password control	2	<p>“Una vez ...Tandem me pidió comprobar mi identidad, entonces tuve que mandar de nuevo mi correo de verificación”</p> <p>“Si, no había forma de recuperar contraseña. Tuve que hacerme 2 cuentas más.”</p>
Tandem improvement suggestions	Real-time social network features for trust building	1	“Ser más como una red social...uno podría ver más cosas de lo que hace la otra persona (usuario). Uno ve el perfil... es como formal...no deja ver mucho ... queda la duda, ¿será confiable esta persona? Postear cosas como un estado, ...como un blog”
	Unlimited Translator tries	1	“Que la cantidad de traducciones no sea tan limitado y que se pueda escuchar más de una vez el audio o por si uno quiere cambiar la velocidad del audio”
	Less Advertising	1	“La página de inicio es como media desordenada. Como es gratis tiene anuncios de la misma aplicación”

Note. Own elaboration.

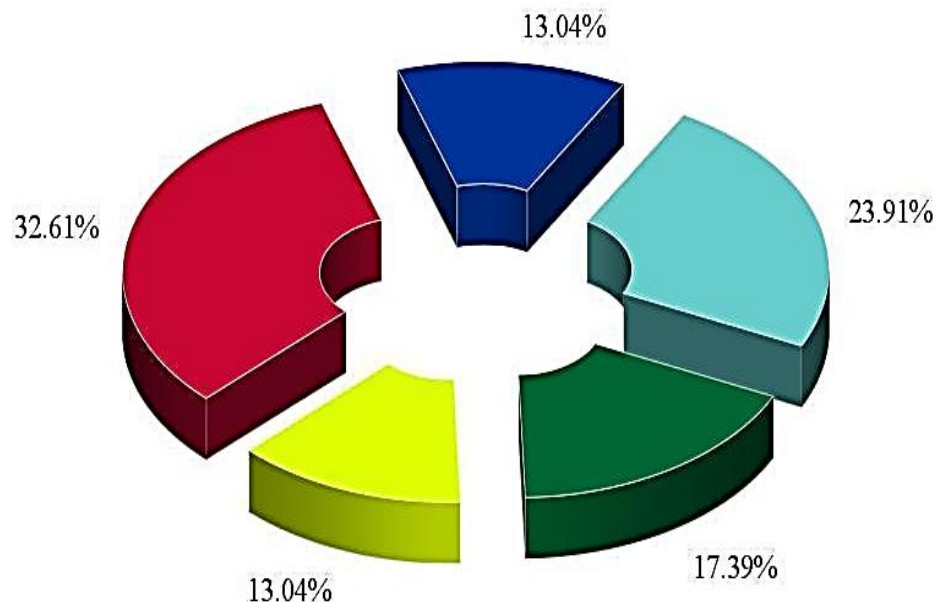
According to the research participants' views, Tandem did help them to improve their speaking fluency (see Appendix D for a more detailed view of the participants' perceptions). In fact, 100% of the learners, even the ones that showed very little to no improvement at all, agreed on the fact that Tandem app supported their speaking fluency development, though in different degrees of effectiveness. This contribution was evidenced as it was the most frequent response in the thematic analysis as portrayed in Table 7 and it can be complemented further by sub themes 2 (Speaking fluency awareness), 3 (Interaction with native and non-native speakers of English), 4 (Confidence building) and 5 (Safe learning environment). For instance, students

reported that Tandem supported their fluency because they felt more confident in their speaking skills after they were able to connect with other English language users. This opportunity to connect with other virtual language users was the second most frequent theme in this category of the analysis and was addressed by 71% of the participants while confidence building was the third most repeated theme, highlighted by 57% of the students. Finally, even though fluency awareness had the least frequency, it was mentioned by 71% of the research participants, who expressed that by listening to the audios they had sent and by analyzing the chat log, they judged their own performance and developed a sense of how fluent and intelligible they had become. To summarize these findings, Figure 6 takes the frequency of the sub themes related to Tandem app language contribution from Table 8 and displays them as percentages.

Figure 6

Percentage of sub themes regarding the Tandem app language contribution

- Speaking fluency development ■ Speaking fluency awareness ■ Interaction with native and non-native speakers
- Confidence building ■ Safe learning environment



Note. Elaborated at <https://www.onlinecharttool.com>

Therefore, based on the frequency of the participants' responses it can be stated that the contribution of the Tandem application is related to three major themes, namely, speaking fluency development, the opportunity of interaction with native and non-native speakers and confidence building at the time of speaking in English; while awareness of speaking fluency and the safe learning environment provided by

Tandem are also considered as contributions of the language exchange app, though to a much lesser extent.

Though much less frequently, participants also stated that despite the support provided by the Tandem application they still felt they needed to work further on their vocabulary, use of long pauses and anxiety. A few technical issues while using the app, for instance, app crashes and password control were also mentioned, and some suggestions for improving their experience using the app, such as providing more tries to use the translator feature were given too. Nonetheless, one of the most frequently mentioned sub themes were the delayed replies (11 times mentioned) and insufficient feedback provided by some Tandem partners (repeated 9 times). Furthermore, all of the participants agreed on these two negative aspects while using the Tandem application, although they differed in the length of time they had to wait for a reply, which in some cases went from hours to days. Regarding the amount of feedback received, this was also experienced differently since participants described finding a partner to interact consistently with was hard at the beginning, however, once the connection had been made, communication tended to flow a bit more naturally.

Finally, the learners' experience of communicating with native and non-speakers using voice messages might also have been affected by the amount of time they used the app too, since it is very likely that the participants who practiced more time with the Tandem app might have found more partners to interact with and received better feedback than those who used it occasionally after the intervention sessions.

Chapter V: Discussion

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of the present chapter is to discuss the research question stated for the following action research by analyzing the two specific objectives in relation to the results and findings that emerged supported by literary reviews. This chapter also addresses research limitations and implications concerning the use of Tandem app to support speaking fluency.

After conducting the following action research and having analyzed the main findings, it is necessary to shed some light on the research question of this study, which was the following:

- To what extent does Tandem language exchange app support first year Tourism students' English speaking fluency to fulfill basic communicative language functions?

Based on the comparison of the participants' oral performance between the pre and post intervention speaking fluency interviews, the use of Tandem app supported the learners' speaking fluency. The media scores comparison between pre and post speaking fluency interviews revealed that participants improved their fluency in 1.57 points (13.08%). Furthermore, such improvement was statistically significant according to the results obtained from the Wilcoxon test that was applied. Additionally, 100% of the participants stated during the semi-structured interview that practice through the Tandem app contributed to the development of their speaking fluency skills. Also 57.14% of the students expressed that the app helped them boost their confidence when speaking English, while 71.43% of the learners declared that Tandem was useful in raising awareness of their own fluency and their errors. Therefore, the participants' perceptions seemed to agree on the psychological support provided by this language exchange app. Similar benefits of the Tandem app are mentioned by Khazaei and Nushi (2020), who praise the language exchange app because it assists users not to be afraid of making mistakes.

5.1 Specific Objective 1: Assess the contribution of the Tandem app regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speech rate and frequency of extended pauses

Regarding this objective, it can be said that practice through Tandem application contributed to improve the participants speaking fluency by increasing their speech rate and decreasing the number of extended pauses 13.08%. Particularly, participants 5 and 7 increased their oral fluency scores in 3 points (25%) and 1 point (8.14%) respectively, which means they managed to start communicating using sentence level speech, instead of phrase level speech and, that they made a transition from a frequent use of long pauses to an occasional one. Furthermore, the increase of mean score in the post-intervention speaking fluency interview, though slight, turned out to be statistically significant, as suggested by the results of the Wilcoxon test. Similar improvements on speaking skills through practice involving

mobile devices have also been explored by Schenker & Kraemer (2017), who researched the effects of additional out-of-class speaking practice using Adobe Voice, a storytelling iPad application on American learners' general speaking proficiency, fluency, and syntactic complexity in German. The study involved individual homework speaking assignments and results revealed a statistically significant difference on the overall speaking proficiency of students who received additional out-of-the classroom speaking iPad practice in comparison to those who did not. Although speed fluency, which was measured as speech rate and calculated as the mean number of words per minute, did not present a statistically significant improvement in the intermediate speaking tasks, the overall score of the intermediate and the advanced tasks of the experimental group was slightly higher than those of the control group.

5.2 Specific Objective 02: Identify the learners' perceptions regarding the contribution of Tandem on their speaking fluency

Data obtained through the semi-structured interview responses and the thematic analysis reflected that the research participants' views were mostly positive and favorable regarding their use of the Tandem app as a tool that did help them to improve their oral fluency and fluency awareness. Indeed, 7 out of 7 learners agreed that the app assisted their speaking fluency development (which was commented 15 times), though at varying degrees of effectiveness. Also, 4 out of 7 participants expressed consensus on practicing English with native and non-native speakers through the Tandem app that played a role in decreasing their anxiety levels and increasing their confidence at the time of communicating using a foreign language. This perception was stated 6 times and agrees with Khazaei & Nushi's (2020) view on the Tandem app as a beneficial tool for speaking skill improvement since it is user friendly and provides a safe virtual environment which helps learners not to be afraid of making mistakes.

Moreover, research participants' views on the role of the Tandem app on raising their fluency awareness were acknowledged by 5 out of 7 students, but to a much lesser extent, being mentioned 6 times only. Still, these participants stated having recorded and listened to their own audio messages served the purpose of error analysis and self-correction. Furthermore, 1 out of 7 participants expressed having gone beyond causal interactions and were able to establish a more permanent partnership with the other Tandem users by negotiating a mutually beneficial schedule and topics to practice. Such view was repeated thrice, and it evidences the application of the key principles of autonomy (Holec, 1981) and reciprocity (Tardieu & Horgues, 2019) in which Tandem Language Learning is based on.

Thus, the participants' perceptions about the contribution of the Tandem app on their speaking fluency is mostly positive, though varied in regard to the degree of assistance the app provides and towards fluency awareness and confidence building.

5.3 Research limitations

The ongoing process of action research did not go through without some setbacks. The main drawback encountered had to do with the participants' decrease of academic availability, delays in partners' replies when using the Tandem app and the high level of fluency some research participants exhibited.

Though only seven learners successfully completed the intervention and took part in the data collection procedures, originally ten students participated in this project and three of them had to quit due to different problems related to their health, work and studies. In fact, some of the research participants mentioned in the semi-structured interview that they could have used the application much more in their spare time, however they did not. This was partly because the last weeks of the intervention clashed with the last weeks of their courses and mid-term exams, which demanded a lot of time to prepare for.

Another common challenge learners reported was that despite having contacted and interacted with native and non-native speakers through the Tandem app, there were long delays in receiving a reply to continue with the conversation, ranging from minutes to days. Casual exchanges did happen weekly too, and even a few participants were able to establish more stable partnerships but only after two to three weeks of practicing and sending messages and requests.

Furthermore, participants in general scored high levels of speaking fluency in the pre-intervention interview, 50% of accomplishment being the least obtained, and in some cases, improvement was impossible because some students, such as participants 1 and 6, obtained the maximum scores (12 out of 12 points) in both pre and post intervention speaking fluency interviews. Such a high level of speaking fluency may be related to the time allotted to practice by using Tandem app and determined by their previous experience and exposure to the language, as Tourism students have different socio-cultural backgrounds as well as different levels of motivation. Normally, learners with more speaking fluency deficiencies would have been ideal for this research, nevertheless, to ensure a better sample size, the invitation to participate in this study was established as a free and voluntary activity and without any kind of discrimination or requirement other than the learner's eagerness to participate in it.

5.4 Implications for further research

Despite limitations, there are some methodological implications that are worth considering. To begin with, the students that improved their speaking fluency were the ones that allocated more time to practice with the Tandem app. All research participants were encouraged to continue using the Tandem app after every intervention session for four weeks, however, the learners that practiced a total time of 40 to 45 minutes did not show any improvement in their speaking fluency. On the contrary, participants that practiced a total time of 60 to 75 minutes showed 25% and 8.34% respectively. Therefore, it seems to be that the increase in speech rate and

avoidance of long pauses is related to the amount of time using the Tandem app in an out of the classroom setting.

As a result, learners' efforts to contact and communicate with other target language users outside of the classroom should be encouraged further. By promoting such practice in daily teaching, learners could be exposed to a more authentic and meaningful context of communication using English as a foreign language. Even though a few learners mentioned in the semi-structured interview that they had originally struggled to find a Tandem partner, they eventually succeeded in making such connections. What is more, one participant managed to negotiate a mutually beneficial schedule to practice and developed a more consistent interaction apart from recording audio messages casually. In addition, all participants agreed on the contribution of the Tandem app, however, at different degrees. Therefore, the Tandem app contributed to improving speaking fluency further, providing opportunities for making partnerships with native and non-native speakers in the short term, and in turn, developing a positive attitude towards continuing learning English.

Likewise, Khazaei & Nushi's (2020) praise the Tandem app because teachers can promote practicing a foreign language in an outside of the classroom environment and providing an authentic setting for communication. This view is very relevant because teachers could devise optional homework tasks for further practice of English-speaking fluency and free conversation, by having learners interact with native and non-native speakers through the Tandem app, as a complement to classroom activities. If such virtual tasks were properly promoted and implemented for an extended period such as a semester, it might be possible to accomplish a significant improvement in learners' speaking skills like the one accomplished by Schenker & Kraemer's (2017) by exposing learners to additional homework tasks using iPads.

Last but not least, it is important to continuously question our personal approach towards teaching and assessing speaking fluency and reflect upon what factors and fluency standards we usually take into consideration. As stated by Tavakoli & Wright (2020) a cognitive approach on fluency usually pays little attention to how fluency is affected by interactional factors:

The narrow focus on speaker internal factors has overshadowed the significance of speaker-external and interactional factors. Moreover, the emphasis on speaker-internal factors can sometimes lead to an over-idealised or overly native speaker-based description of fluency: 'normal' speed, no disruption or undue hesitation, fluid, continuous... the ideal sense of fluency may not work in authentic real-world situations. (p.147)

Likewise, an ideal native-like standard for speaking fluency might not always serve our students' learning needs and purposes, especially when teaching a one-semester course. Therefore, by conducting research in our own classroom contexts, keeping ourselves updated about best practices and innovations, and daring to try new methods, we can further research and contribute not only to our discipline, but more importantly, to our students' lives.

Chapter VI: Conclusions

Chapter VI: Conclusions

Speaking fluency is an essential aspect of language learning and whose research breakthroughs over time have provided a myriad of definitions. However, this action research project envisions oral fluency as a dynamic phenomenon, not only related to the cognitive and articulatory processes each individual experiences as in Segalowitz's framework (2010) but also enhanced by the interaction with other target language users as in an authentic context highlighted by Tavakoli & Wright (2020). So far, this research report has delved into reviewing literature, explaining research methodology, analyzing findings, and providing further discussion about speaking fluency. The purpose of the final part of this study involves summarizing the main findings, providing personal reflections, comments, and recommendations regarding the contribution provided by the Tandem app on English speaking fluency.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

The major findings of this action research study are related to use of Tandem application as a means of supporting learners' oral fluency. Firstly, the Tandem application helped some research participants improve their speech rate and avoid extended pauses, from a statistically significant point of view as indicated by the results of the Wilcoxon test. Comparison between pre and post intervention speaking fluency interviews depicted three different outcomes. On the one hand, A few students increased their interview scores and managed to move from a phrase level of speech production towards a sentence level speech rate. There were other cases in which participants did not improve their speech rate, either because their level of speaking fluency was high and got maximum scores from the start, or on the contrary, because their level of oral fluency was not high and needed further practice using Tandem. In addition, there was a particular scenario in which one specific participant decreased their initial level of speech rate, which may be explained because of insufficient Tandem partners' feedback and time constraints. On the other hand, learners in general were able to decrease their frequent use of long pauses, using them occasionally after the intervention. Nevertheless, there were also cases in which students who had a higher level of English did not resort to any long pause during any of the speaking fluency interviews.

Secondly, participants' perceptions about the contribution of the Tandem application to improve their speaking fluency were mostly favourable. Learners agreed that the app was useful to practice oral fluency and that after the intervention they felt increasing confidence while interacting with native and non-native speakers of English through voice messages, as their anxiety and nervousness decreased. Despite this view, participants differed regarding the degrees of effectiveness of the Tandem app due to delayed and insufficient feedback by the Tandem users, though this was only experienced by few participants only. Also, some students agreed that the Tandem app had helped them raise their fluency awareness by analyzing their own voice messages and self-evaluating them.

Thirdly, results seem to indicate that there seems to be a correlation between research participants' time of Tandem app practice outside of the intervention sessions, and their increase, decrease and stagnation of their scores between the pre and post intervention speaking fluency interviews. That is to say, learners who practiced more time using the Tandem app were also the ones that improved their post interview scores and hence, their speaking. This was probably because they devoted more time to practice and therefore had more chances to interact with English native and non-native speakers. Furthermore, by dedicating more time to use the app, one learner was able to establish a more permanent partnership with other Tandem users, thus achieving a more permanent virtual language exchange.

6.2 Personal reflection

Conducting the present action research has been a very significant experience for the researcher and the participants for several reasons regarding participants' attitudes, intervention decisions.

On the one hand, learners approached the action research project with a very positive attitude, despite being the first semester of English and the first time they had been taught by the teacher researcher. Students demonstrated a lot of commitment towards the study by participating voluntarily, attending the intervention sessions, and practicing with the Tandem app in an out of the classroom setting and by finishing the pre and post speaking fluency interviews accordingly.

On the other hand, designing the intervention helped the teacher researcher realize that in order to prepare students to use the Tandem app more efficiently to strengthen their speaking fluency, specific pre-Tandem app practice activities were needed. Such preparation was implemented during three intervention sessions, where students were briefly reminded about what oral fluency was about (since they already had some notions about it) by analyzing short videos depicting different degrees of fluent oral communication and reviewing some vocabulary notions to fulfill the communicative functions. Therefore, these pre-activities were a means to assist the learners' to engage more effectively in communicating using the Tandem app.

Finally, the teacher researcher considered the experience of having carried out action research as very satisfactory for being able to make a positive difference in the participants' experience of learning a foreign language. This judgement is based on learners' favourable views after completing the semi-structured interview, in which all of them, even those who obtained low mean scores, perceived the Tandem app as a useful tool to improve their speaking fluency.

6.3 Further research and recommendations

As stated earlier, the action research process is never finished. Lessons can be learnt from the implications related to methodological changes that can be implemented in the teacher researcher's classroom. Similar studies on practising

English speaking skills through the Tandem app can be conducted to support specific learners' needs. Teachers could use the Tandem app to have learners hone not only fluency but also pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and writing skills. For instance, through oral and written messages, the app may provide opportunities for additional practice on syntactical patterns such as Wh- and Yes/No questions. Students also could fulfill basic communicative language functions such as the ones this research covered and more advanced ones, for example, giving and justifying opinions and talking about hypothetical situations. Moreover, analysis of audio messages and chat history could be useful for learners to reflect upon their pronunciation, accuracy, register and use of discourse markers.

Furthermore, action research encourages teachers to continually reflect on their own teaching practice, try new methods and make informed decisions. As for the teacher researcher of this project, two compelling methodological considerations regarding the integration of the Tandem app in the everyday classroom remain to be researched. The first one is the establishment of more stable partnerships with Tandem app users in the long term. If a more permanent connection between learners and Tandem users were to be achieved, it might be possible to support the lack of exposure to native and non-native speakers of English that Tourism students usually encounter. Such exposure is sorely needed for them to develop a more integral communicative competence as they need to use the target language to interact efficiently in social and professional settings. The second research interest is how the use of Tandem for an extended period would support students' overall oral proficiency by contrasting the speaking performance of first- and second-year Tourism learners after having interacted with Tandem app partners for a semester.

To conclude, this action research study highly recommends technological tools such as the Tandem app since its use contributes to develop learners' positive attitude towards learning a foreign language and offers learners the opportunity to improve their speaking skills by interacting with other target language users in a real-life setting.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Action research intervention plan

	Session 01	Session 02	Session 03	Session 04
Date	June 11, 2021	June 18th, 2021	June 25th, 2021	July 2nd, 2021
Learning Objective	Practice fluency by recording introductions using the Tandem application.	Practice fluency by recording family descriptions using the Tandem application.	Practice fluency by recording daily routines using the Tandem application	Practice fluency by recording introductions, family descriptions and daily routines using the Tandem application
Activities/ Procedures	<p>Motivation (2 min): The teacher starts with an inspiration quote, asks students if they agree or not and why. Learners respond in either English or Spanish.</p> <p>Review (5 min): The teacher reviews orally introductions and personal information questions through a ppt.</p> <p>NOTE: Learners are already familiar with the communicative functions of the intervention as they were taught and assessed at the beginning of the semester.</p> <p>Presentation of new structures (10 min.): The teacher presents a definition of fluency by https://dictionary.cambridge.org</p> <p>The teacher explains and models speech rate at word, phrase and sentence level, and how extended pauses disrupt fluency. Then, he shows 3 short videos on how to introduce oneself fluently and asks students to pay attention to the following features of connected speech:</p>	<p>Motivation (3 min.): The teacher asks SS about what aspects they feel weak, considering the previous interaction with speaking partners using the app in the previous session. Also, the teacher asks students reflecting questions about their last fluency performance using the app and students give their opinions in either English or Spanish.</p> <p>ASSESSMENT (10 MIN) The teacher asks SS about their use of the app outside the classroom during the last week, the recordings and interaction register form. Then he formatively assesses the learners using PERSONAL INFORMATION QUESTIONS</p> <p>Review (12 min): The teacher reviews orally how to describe the appearance and personality of family members/friends through a ppt.</p> <p>NOTE: There will not be more Presentation of new structures stage (only REVIEW OF THE OLD ONES) because the idea of fluency features was</p>	<p>Motivation (3 min): The teacher asks SS about what aspects they feel weak, considering the previous interaction with speaking partners using the app in the previous session. The teacher displays a picture about different options to practice fluency and they choose 3 and justify why in either English or Spanish.</p> <p>ASSESSMENT (10 MIN) The teacher asks SS about their use of the app outside the classroom during the last week, the recordings and interaction register form. Then he formatively assesses the learners using PICTURE DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Review (12 min): The teacher reviews orally how to describe daily routines through a ppt.</p> <p>Then, the teacher asks students to explain what fluency is and to give examples of sentence level speech rate and avoidance of extended pauses.</p> <p>Then, he shows 3 short sample videos of fluent descriptions of</p>	<p>Motivation (3 min): The teacher ask SS about what aspects they feel weak, considering the previous interaction with speaking partners using the app in the previous session. The teacher starts with an inspirational quote and asks for the students' opinion. They can answer in either English or Spanish.</p> <p>ASSESSMENT (10 MIN) The teacher asks SS about their use of the app outside the classroom during the last week, the recordings and interaction register form. Then he formatively assesses the learners ASKING ABOUT SPECIFIC ROUTINES</p> <p>Review (7 min): The teacher reviews orally introductions and personal information questions through a ppt.</p> <p>Then, the teacher asks students to explain what fluency is and to give examples of sentence level speech rate and avoidance of extended pauses. NOTE. No videos are shown in this session in order to provide more time for practice using the app.</p> <p>Practice (25 min): Learners practice fluency by recording audios introducing themselves, describing appearance and personality of family members or friends and describing a daily routine using the Tandem app. They</p>

	<p>*How the speakers use a sentence level speech</p> <p>*How the speakers present little or no hesitation at all.</p> <p>*How the speakers avoid extended pauses in the middle of their message.</p> <p>*How speakers pause very briefly while communicating without disrupting their message.</p> <p>Also, the teacher presents the rubric to be used in the post speaking interview in order to familiarize SS with it.</p> <p>NOTE: Before the intervention, students have already downloaded the app, logged in, created a Tandem app. profile and sent speaking practice requests to other partners.</p> <p>Practice (20 min): Learners practice fluency by recording audios introducing themselves using the Tandem app. They are encouraged to imitate fluency features as it was shown in the videos, focusing on:</p> <p>*Trying to communicate at sentence level speech.</p> <p>*Trying to pause at the end of each idea.</p> <p>*Avoiding extended pauses in the middle of their message.</p> <p>*Avoiding hesitation as much as possible while expressing an idea.</p> <p>1.-If speaking partners are not available online, students record and send voice messages introducing</p>	<p>introduced in session 01 and learners already know the notions to express the language functions considered in the intervention.</p> <p>Then, the teacher reminds students about features of fluency, modeling orally sentence level speech rate and avoidance of extended pauses.</p> <p>Then, he shows 2 short sample videos of fluent descriptions of appearance and personality of friends and asks students to pay attention to the following features of connected speech:</p> <p>*How the speakers use a sentence level speech</p> <p>*How the speakers present little or no hesitation at all.</p> <p>*How the speakers avoid extended pauses in the middle of their message.</p> <p>*How speakers pause very briefly while communicating without disrupting their message.</p> <p>Practice (20 min): Learners practice fluency by recording audios describing appearance and personality of a family member and friend using the Tandem app. They are encouraged to imitate fluency features as it was shown in the videos, focusing on:</p> <p>*Trying to communicate at sentence level speech.</p> <p>*Trying to pause at the end of each idea.</p>	<p>daily routines and asks students to pay attention to the following features of connected speech:</p> <p>*How the speakers use a sentence level speech</p> <p>*How the speakers present little or no hesitation at all.</p> <p>*How the speakers avoid extended pauses in the middle of their message.</p> <p>*How speakers pause very briefly while communicating without disrupting their message.</p> <p>Practice (20 min): Learners practice fluency by recording audios describing a daily routine using the Tandem app. They are encouraged to imitate fluency features as it was shown in the videos, focusing on:</p> <p>*Trying to communicate at sentence level speech.</p> <p>*Trying to pause at the end of each idea.</p> <p>*Avoiding extended pauses in the middle of their message.</p> <p>*Avoiding hesitation as much as possible while expressing an idea.</p> <p>1.-If speaking partners are not available online, students record and send voice messages describing a daily routine (academic, family or personal routines) in English to at least 5 offline partners (20 min) .</p> <p>2.-If speaking partners are available online, students engage with as many of them as possible and ask and answer about daily</p>	<p>are encouraged to imitate fluency features, focusing on:</p> <p>*Trying to communicate at sentence level speech.</p> <p>*Trying to pause at the end of each idea.</p> <p>*Avoiding extended pauses in the middle of their message.</p> <p>*Avoiding hesitation as much as possible while expressing an idea</p> <p>1.-If speaking partners are not available online, students record and send voice messages introducing themselves, describing appearance and personality of a family member and friend and describe a daily routine in English to at least 2 offline partners.</p> <p>2.-If speaking partners are available online, students engage with as many of them as possible and ask and answer about personal information, appearance and personality of family members and daily routines through recorded messages.</p> <p>Feedback (5 min): The teacher asks for comments, answers students' questions, summarizes the lesson and gives a quick preview of the next session. . In addition, SS complete a short self-assessment form about their fluency performance and weaknesses and the role of the app on supporting those weaknesses.</p> <p>Also, he encourages learners to:</p> <p>1.- Continue using the app out of the classroom and interact with speaking partners as much as they can, according their own possibilities.</p> <p>2.-Keep a record of the interactions with the native speakers, through a register given by the teacher, which states how often and how long the learners engaged in</p>
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	<p>themselves in English to at least 5 offline partners. The introductions include their name, age, country, occupation and hobbies.</p> <p>2.-If speaking partners are available online, students exchange personal information with as many of them as possible, by asking and answering questions about names (in case the speaking partner profile name is an acronym, for example: VJ) age, country, occupation and hobbies, through recorded messages.</p> <p>Feedback (3 min): The teacher asks for comments, answers students' questions, summarizes the lesson and gives a quick preview of the next session. . In addition, SS completes a short self-assessment form about their fluency performance and weaknesses and the role of the app on supporting those weaknesses.</p> <p>Also, he encourages learners to: 1.- Continue using the app out of the classroom and interact with speaking partners as much as they can, according to their own possibilities.</p> <p>2.-Keep a record of the interactions with the native speakers, through a register given by the teacher, which states how often and how long the learners engaged in conversation with</p>	<p>*Avoiding extended pauses in the middle of their message. *Avoiding hesitation as much as possible while expressing an idea.</p> <p>1.-If speaking partners are not available online, students record and send voice messages describing the physical appearance and personality of a family member or best friend in English to at least 5 offline partners (20 min) .</p> <p>2.-If speaking partners are available online, students engage with as many of them as possible and ask and answer questions about personality and appearance of family members or friends through recorded messages.</p> <p>Feedback (5 min): The teacher asks for comments, answers students' questions, summarizes the lesson and gives a quick preview of the next session. In addition SS complete a short self-assessment form about their fluency performance and weaknesses and the role of the app on supporting those weaknesses.</p> <p>Also, he encourages learners to: 1.- Continue using the app out of the classroom and interact with speaking partners as much as they can, according to their own possibilities.</p> <p>2.-Keep a record of the interactions with the</p>	<p>routines through recorded messages.</p> <p>Feedback (5 min): The teacher asks for comments, answers students' questions, summarizes the lesson and gives a quick preview of the next session. In addition, SS completes a short self-assessment form about their fluency performance and weaknesses and the role of the app on supporting those weaknesses.</p> <p>Also, he encourages learners to: 1.- Continue using the app out of the classroom and interact with speaking partners as much as they can, according to their own possibilities.</p> <p>2.-Keep a record of the interactions with the native speakers, through a register given by the teacher, which states how often and how long the learners engaged in conversation with the native speakers and how much feedback they got from them.</p>	<p>conversation with the native speakers and how much feedback they got from them.</p>
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	the native speakers and how much feedback they got from them.	native speakers, through a register given by the teacher, which states how often and how long the learners engaged in conversation with the native speakers and how much feedback they got from them.		
Time	40 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tandem app -M. Teams -Inspiration quote -Introduction ppt -Introduction sample video -Speaking Fluency checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tandem app -M. Teams -Reflecting questions -Family Description ppt -Description sample video -Celebrity pictures -Speaking fluency checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tandem app -M. Teams -Picture about Fluency practice methods -Daily routine ppt -Routine description sample video -Speaking fluency checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tandem app -M. Teams -Inspiration quote -Basic notions ppt -Speaking fluency checklist
Assessment	In this session there's no assessment since it will be carried out in session 2, after students had a week to use the app outside the classroom and actually interacted with native speakers.	Learners complete a short speaking task introducing themselves as the teacher assesses their fluency through a checklist (10 min).	Learners complete a short speaking task describing the appearance/personality of a celebrity picture as the teacher assesses their fluency through a checklist (10 min).	Students complete a short speaking task by briefly describing a family, academic or weekend routine as the teacher assesses their fluency through a checklist (10 min).
Research objective	S01: Assess the contribution of the Tandem methodology regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speed rate and extended pauses.	S01: Assess the contribution of the Tandem methodology regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speed rate and extended pauses.	S01: Assess the contribution of the Tandem methodology regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speed rate and extended pauses.	S01: Assess the contribution of the Tandem methodology regarding the learners' fluency in terms of speed rate and extended pauses.

Appendix B: Analytic Rubric

Rubric for assessing Fluency during initial and final oral interview tasks to be submitted to expert judgement (before and after intervention)

NAME:

Function/ Proficiency levels	Advanced (4 pts)	Standard (3 pts)	Basic (2 pt)	Poor (1 pts)	Observations
Introducing oneself	Introduces himself/herself at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Introduces himself/herself with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to introduce himself/herself properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to introduce himself/herself properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	
Describing Family	Describes appearance and personality of family members at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Describes appearance and personality of family members with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to describe appearance and personality of family members properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to describe appearance and personality of family members properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	
Describing routines	Describes daily routines at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Describes daily routines with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to describe daily routines properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to describe daily routines properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	
Total score					
Ideal score	12				

Appendix C: Inter-rater feedback and inter-rater observations

INFORME

El propósito principal de este informe reside en el análisis de 14 rúbricas para coincidir o refutar en la consistencia de los resultados derivadas de entrevistas realizadas por el Profesor Miguel Agurto a 7 estudiantes pre y post intervención, cuyo objetivo principal era medir habilidades de comunicación oral en inglés, basados en 3 funciones : información personal, descripción de apariencia y personalidad y rutina diaria en base a dos elementos claves de la fluidez : uso de pausas y conexión del mensaje a nivel de oración. Adicionalmente, también se analiza la percepción de utilidad para los alumnos de las funciones presentadas en la rúbrica, implicaciones en las instrucciones y retroalimentación. Además, para el análisis conté con el apoyo de 14 grabaciones a los 7 estudiantes antes y después de la intervención del profesor Agurto.

Del análisis se concluye:

- a) ***En términos de selección de funciones:*** Se destaca un acuerdo entre mi percepción y la del profesor en la selección de las funciones según el propósito de las entrevistas y nivel de los estudiantes en el desarrollo de competencias.
- b) ***En términos de sus implicaciones de las instrucciones:*** El Profesor Miguel Agurto realiza preguntas claras y sencillas y según nivel, lo cual permite un fácil entendimiento por parte de los alumnos facilitando su comprensión y eliminando posibles resistencias.
- c) ***En términos de resultados:*** Considerando las rúbricas y grabaciones, resalto y coincido con los resultados y los puntajes otorgados por el Profesor Agurto a los 7 estudiantes en las dos etapas pre y post intervención. Desde mi análisis, los

resultados coinciden con las respuestas ofrecidas por los estudiantes a los distintos ítems que integra la entrevista oral elaborada para este efecto. Los puntajes están ajustados al nivel de ejecución alcanzado por los alumnos.

- d) **En términos de retroalimentación:** No se observa retroalimentación de parte del Profesor al final de cada grabación en los 7 estudiantes en ambas etapas. En caso de no realizarla posterior a la entrevista, se sugiere como soporte para que los estudiantes autoevalúen su desempeño, además para que puedan efectuar las dudas respecto a la evaluación.

En conclusión y habiendo visto y analizado el material proporcionado, confirmo el juicio del profesor, no existiendo discrepancia significativa o relevante entre los resultados del Profesor Agurto y los míos. Se destaca la percepción de validez de los resultados en los 7 estudiantes en las entrevistas antes y después de la intervención.

Rubric for assessing Fluency during final oral interview

NAME: GENESIS AGUILERA

Function/ Proficiency levels	Advanced (4 pts)	Standard (3 pts)	Basic (2 pt)	Poor (1 pts)	Observations
Introducing oneself	Introduces himself/herself at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Introduces himself/herself with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to introduce himself/herself properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to introduce himself/herself properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	4
Describing Family	Describes appearance and personality of family members at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Describes appearance and personality of family members with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to describe appearance and personality of family members properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to describe appearance and personality of family members properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	3
Describing routines	Describes daily routines at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Describes daily routines with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to describe daily routines properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to describe daily routines properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	4
Total score	11 /12				

Comments:

Genesis demonstrated an improvement from the initial to final oral interview.

She provided connected and appropriate opinions and answers in the 3 functions: introducing herself, describing family and routine. Her production was highly intelligible. She used intermediate and complex grammar structures and her use of vocabulary and expressions was correct and accurate. Her pronunciation and intonation were highly intelligible most of the time.

Rubric for assessing Fluency during final oral interview

NAME: JULIE FERNANDEZ

Function/ Proficiency levels	Advanced (4 pts)	Standard (3 pts)	Basic (2 pt)	Poor (1 pts)	Observations
Introducing oneself	Introduces himself/herself at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Introduces himself/herself with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to introduce himself/herself properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to introduce himself/herself properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	3
Describing Family	Describes appearance and personality of family members at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Describes appearance and personality of family members with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to describe appearance and personality of family members properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to describe appearance and personality of family members properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	3
Describing routines	Describes daily routines at ease, most of the time avoiding long pauses and having a well-connected speech rate.	Describes daily routines with some minor fluency problems, occasionally using long pauses and having a fairly connected speech rate.	Struggles to describe daily routines properly, frequently making use of long pauses and having a segmented speech rate.	Is unable to describe daily routines properly and most of the time uses very long pauses and has a very segmented speech rate which causes serious communication breakdowns.	3
Total score	9/12				

Comments:

Julie demonstrated an improvement from the initial to final oral interview.

In the last interview, she was able to answer relevant information when asked to provide an opinion or respond to complicated questions related to introducing herself, describing family and routines. Her pronunciation was generally intelligible with some pauses, However, in some parts of the interview, her production presented inappropriate intonation or stress producing difficult to understand or interpret. Julie used appropriate vocabulary related to the topic to answer.

Appendix D: Thematic Analysis of the Tandem app language contribution

Theme	Sub theme	Frequency	Example
Tandem app language contribution	Fluency development	15	<p>Participant 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me ayudó (a perder el miedo) y a hablar con más fluidez también. • Yo digo que sí..... ahora llego y disparo en inglés no más ... • Entonces me ha servido para mi fluidez y para conversar mejor en inglés. <p>Participant 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yo creo que si porque (la práctica con tándem) no es un diálogo estructurado. Es una conversación normal. No tiene que ser siempre la respuesta correcta ... personas empiezan a hablar de su día a día...y eso era más espontáneo que como seguir un guión. • Moderado (contribución) porque cuando encontré a mi compañera (de tándem) con la que, si podía hablar ya fluidamente, estaba lavando la loza y me ponía a grabar audio y hablaba de mi vida normal...y tampoco sobrepensaba... lo decía no más ... y eso igual me ayuda a ser un poquito más espontánea y no sobrepensar las cosas. <p>Participant 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yo creo que ayuda lo normal... esto tiene que ver con la forma de aprendizaje que tenga cada uno...igual me ayudo bastante para ser más fluida... depende del del estilo de aprendizaje así que me ayudo lo normal... igual siento que me ayudó mucho • Como uno envía respuestas, se motiva a hacerlo mejor y otra cosa es que uno no conoce a la gente así que el inglés fluye más. <p>Participant 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • si, la mayoría de las veces si porque a veces es como que grababa un audio y lo borraba porque lo escuchaba y no me gustaba o sentí que no se entendía

			<p>lo que había dicho y lo grababa de nuevo. Eso es lo bueno, si queda la opción de escuchar el audio antes de mandarlo.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (la aplicación ayuda) mucho, igual siento que me puede ayudar mucho más usándola más tiempo. <p>Participant 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si yo creo que sí. <p>Participant 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yo creo que igual ayudo harto porque antes yo hablaba muy... antes me trataba al hablar y ahora no me trabo tanto como antes. Yo creo que si ayudó en la fluidez. • Yo creo que un poco, no tan fluido, así como una persona nativa, pero Si hablar un poco más fluido en el sentido que puedo decir palabras si trabarme como antes. • <p>Participant 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si me ayudo bastante... pero los hablantes no responden casi inmediatamente. • (mejoré) en lo normal porque no era muy constante. • Comunicarse con más naturalidad que antes de la intervención) más o menos tirando más o menos a más... De una escala a uno a siete, cinco.
	Fluency awareness	6	<p>Participant 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pero las veces que lograba obtener respuesta era bastante apropiada y me servía igual como para saber que mejorar al momento de hablar en inglés. <p>Participant 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuando yo enviaba audios y ellos respondían con audios como que aparte de entender las palabras durante los audios en el inglés nativo así rapidito ... Me ayudó a esforzarme más yo misma para hacerlo mejor, ahora lo

			<p>entiendo mejor para formar oraciones con más sentido.</p> <p>Participant 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (contribución de la app) En ser más segura al momento de hablar porque el grabar los audios yo Los escucho después entonces ahí se lo que tengo que corregir. <p>Participant 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentí que mejore mu poquito, muy demasiado poco • Y creo que sí, un poco pero no tanto porque yo soy de escuchar varias veces algo... y así memorizarlo. Soy más de memoria en otro aspecto. Necesito escuchar varias veces lo mismo. <p>Participant 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (comunicarme) más rápido no, pero tener una idea más clara de lo que voy a decir quizás, podría decir que sí.
	<p>Effectiveness to communicate with native and non-native speakers</p>	<p>11 5 a favor 2 en contra</p>	<p>Participant 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sí... hubo casos y casos... • Sí porque ... la vida real no va a hablar con mensajes. O digo que si los audios han servido mucho. <p>Participant 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si...ella también empezó a mandarme audios... teníamos muchas cosas en común... nos seguimos comunicando hasta el día de hoy por Tandem y por Instagram. • Encontramos un punto medio en que sí y me conectaba a las 10 de la mañana, ella iba a estar despierta y podíamos hablar (a pesar de la diferencia horaria) podíamos hablar. • Con otra chica de Brasil también... encontramos el punto medio como a las 6 de la tarde de que ahí podíamos hablar. <p>Participant 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si, en lo personal encuentro que si (es efectiva) ... aquí es mucho mejor

			<p>porque da la opción de hasta videollamada, si uno se hiciera muy amigo o amiga de esa persona (speaking partner).</p> <p>Participant 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La persona con la que hable era de Brasil (non native) y le entendía todo lo que decía...y él lo corregía y todo... así que ahí iba... mandando audios también • (la interacción con hablantes nativos a través de audios ayuda) Apropiadamente. <p>Participant 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (yo creo que) si y no Cada vez que enviaba un audio como que se cortaba la comunicación y no volvía a hablar el hablante. No envíe muchos audios, envíe muy poquitos (estudio, diferencia horaria). • Yo creo que no, igual como que me sirvió mucho pero no como esperaba. Esperaba más. <p>Participant 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si, si se pudo (contactar a los hablantes nativos). El hecho de mandar audios facilita mucho
	Confidence building/ Anxiety decrease	8	<p>Participant 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principalmente me ayudo a perder el miedo a hablar en inglés y... • y a perder el miedo y hablar con más fluidez también • Yo digo que sí... no por completo... me ha hecho perder el miedo de hablar en inglés, antes me ponía nerviosa ... ahora llego y disparo en inglés • Aunque me equivoque, pero los errores pasan, todavía puedo practicar. <p>Participant 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me da mucha vergüenza a hablarle a personas que no conozco... (antes)Me ponía a llorar porque tenía que hablarle a mis compañeros (de curso) y me daba mucha vergüenza y la aplicación me hizo cambiar un poco el

			<p>pensamiento. No tengo porque estar nerviosa...trataba de actuar natural... sabía que si me equivocaba no me iban a juzgar.</p> <p>Participant 3;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Como uno envía respuestas, se motiva a hacerlo mejor y otra cosa es que uno no conoce a la gente así que el inglés fluye más y no siente vergüenza. <p>Participant 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (contribución de la app) En ser más segura al momento de hablar porque el grabar los audios yo Los escucho después entonces ahí se lo que tengo que corregir ... en la pronunciación. • Si, siento que me pongo un poco menos nerviosa.
	Proper partner's feedback	8	<p>Participant 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pero las veces que lograba obtener respuesta era bastante apropiada. • también eso fue un 50 y 50...Más que nada fue favorable, pero a veces la respuesta era insuficiente. • Las veces que obtenía respuesta eran buenas y eran como buena retroalimentación. • ...se demoran, pero al final si llegan a responder. <p>Participant 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si...ella también empezó a mandarme audios... teníamos muchas cosas en común... nos seguimos comunicando hasta el día de hoy por tándem y por Instagram. • Otros me respondían 3 horas después. <p>Participant 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondieron super rápido, más de media hora no me hacían esperar. <p>Participant 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (yo creo que) si y no Cada vez que enviaba un audio como que se cortaba la comunicación y no volvía a hablar el hablante ...no envié muchos audios,

			envíe muy poquitos (estudio, diferencia horaria).
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