Editorial

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This special issue explores the role of external manipulation in enhancing L2 learning in ‘paradidactic’ environments. We use the term paradidactic environment to refer to any low-structured learning context – either in-person or online – in which the teachers’ role is primarily focused on promoting the meaningful use of the target language through exposure to input and/or collaboration with peers, rather than teaching the languages themselves. Therefore, all forms of (e-)tandem and (tele)collaborative exchange between language learners fall under the term paradidactic environment, including both NNS–NNS and NS–NNS peer interaction.

From an instructed second language acquisition perspective, the interest in these outside-of-the-classroom learning environments resides specifically in their being on the borderline between instructed and spontaneous acquisition, thus emphasising the role of ‘external director’ played by the teacher. Second language teaching is a matter of facilitating and enhancing the natural process of second language development through providing exposure to adequate input and opportunities for producing output and engaging in interaction. In the classroom, teachers are in charge of creating the best conditions for learning to occur by applying a solid knowledge about L2 acquisition mechanisms. In paradidactic contexts, the role of language instructors is even more challenging than in classroom settings, as they are expected to scaffold students’ active and autonomous learning from behind the scenes. To take over their scaffolding role and enhance L2 learning in these contexts, teachers should endeavour to provide learners

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with an effective indirect instructional intervention. Such external manipulation of learners' collaborative activities includes teachers' choices in terms of task selection, design, and sequencing, as well as in terms of instructions about how to provide (and accept) corrective feedback or implement other focus-on-form procedures during peer interaction.

The three articles of this special issue focus on tandem learning that, as previously said, is one of the possible forms of paradidactic learning. Traditionally, instructed second language acquisition research has privileged teacher–student and NNS–peer interaction in classroom or laboratory settings, whereas scholars and practitioners interested in tandem learning have mainly focused on the intercultural value of these NS–NNS exchanges. We therefore believe that the studies included in the special issue can help promote a dialogue between the two research traditions.

The first paper, by Del Bono and Nuzzo, explores the outcomes of incidental pragmatics learning in the context of a tandem telecollaboration programme, with a focus on the speech acts of criticising and suggesting produced by three intermediate-to-advanced learners of L2 English when providing peer corrective feedback to their US linguistic partners and commenting on errors. The findings reveal a longitudinal change in the way the L2 learners provided feedback and commented on their partners' errors, and this change reflects an improvement in the learners' pragmatic competence, at least to some extent. The findings suggest that pragmatic development in a second language is likely to occur incidentally, provided that learners have the opportunity to use the target language in meaningful interactions. The choice of feedback-providing-and-discussing activities as part of the online tandem programme enhanced the learners' opportunities to perform face-threatening speech acts repeatedly in the context of meaningful and goal-oriented communication.

The role of task selection and design in tandem programmes is also explored in the second contribution of this special issue. Conti investigates the use of Chinese sentence-final particles (SFPs) in the interactions between 13 Italian learners of Chinese as a foreign language and 6 native speakers of Chinese participating in a face-to-face tandem-learning project over a three-month timespan. In particular, he focuses on learners' production of SFPs marking questions (yes/no or truncated) and analyses the factors that foster or hinder SFP use. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the transcribed conversations shows that (i) the most frequently produced SFP was *ma* 吗, whereas other interrogative SFPs were seldom or never used; (ii) the production of SFPs did not vary over time, instead it seemed to be tied to factors such as the presence of (semi-)fixed chunks

or the type of task (focused or unfocused) in which the participants were engaged.

Finally, the paper by Cortés Velásquez and Nuzzo investigates how different ways of receiving peer written corrective feedback (WCF) affect learners' opportunities to actively engage in negotiation of form in tandem virtual encounters between Italian students of English and US students of Italian. Two types of WCF are compared: namely, direct WCF plus oral metalinguistic explanation; and indirect WCF plus oral prompt. The data analysis shows that indirect WCF plus oral prompt was more effective in leading the NNSs to actively engage with negotiation of form during the discussion phase. The findings confirms that peer-review activities can be used by instructors and organisers of telecollaboration programmes to introduce focus-on-form in semi-spontaneous peer interactions between NSs and NNSs, and that a more implicit type of WCF is more effective in pushing the NNS participants to actively engage in negotiation of form. It also confirms that the role of language tutor assumed by the NSs in tandem learning needs support from the instructor.

The book reviews of Dooly and O'Dowd's edited volume, *Teachers' Experiences with Transnational, Telecollaborative Language Learning Projects*, and of García Mayo's edited volume, *Working Collaboratively in Second/Foreign Language Learning*, close the issue.