

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

**INCREASING A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR
BME STUDENTS VIA THE TANDEM PROJECT
2023-24**

JUNE 2024

KING'S LANGUAGE CENTRE & KING'S FOUNDATIONS

Authored by:

Dr. Hongfen Zhou & Dr. Kyriaki Koukouraki

INTRODUCTION

This project aims to provide more opportunities for international students (mainly East Asian students from King's Foundation) to engage with home students (mainly students from King's Language Centre), and strengthen cultural understanding, mutual appreciation, and language practice.

The aim of this project is to:

- Create opportunities for students to connect beyond friendship groups in meaningful ways which contribute to their success.
- Develop understanding and appreciation of students' different cultures of learning.
- Develop students' language and cultural competency and commitment to racial and ethnic equality and raise their awareness of diversity issues.
- Create materials related to intercultural understanding of the culture of learning to enhance the quality of pedagogical aspects of Internationalisation at home for all students.
- Improve participation and engagement in the classroom to lead to an inclusive, diverse and healthy learning environment.

This report offers:

- Tips and guidelines on the design of the Tandem project
- The findings of this project
- Pedagogical advice on how to better support students via the Tandem project

Thank you to the collaborators Dr Kyriaki Koukouraki and Giorgia Ventimiglia. Thank you to the staff and students who supported this project. This project is supported by the 2023-2024 Race Equity & Inclusive Education Fund.

What did the participants say about this project? "It was a great experience to learn the language and get to know each other. Lots of fun! I hope I can do it again."

LANGUAGE EXCHANGE AND INTERCULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Student-led language exchange is a method of language learning that involves mutual practice between at least two partners who speak different native languages. Typically, each participant practices their native language with their partners. All participants engage in conversations regardless of their language backgrounds and proficiency levels. Language exchange enables learners to:

- Review and enhance their vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.
- Develop their language skills, particularly in listening, speaking, and overall communication.
- Improve soft skills, including cooperation, planning, reflection, etc.
- Understand each other's culture and society, as well as topics specific to each language exchange session.
- Build a friendship and support network to enrich university life experiences.

To stimulate active participation throughout the project, support from student group leaders or project leaders is crucial. They can maintain contact with each language pair and recommend potential topics for further discussion.

Intercultural workshops or activities play a crucial role in the tandem project, significantly enhancing the overall learning experience. These workshops provide participants with a deeper understanding of each other's cultures, which is essential for effective communication and mutual respect. By engaging in structured intercultural activities, students not only improve their language skills but also develop cultural competence, which is vital in today's globalized world. Intercultural workshops foster an environment of openness and curiosity, encouraging participants to explore diverse perspectives and challenge stereotypes. This cultural immersion enriches the tandem experience, making it more comprehensive and impactful. Moreover, these workshops help build stronger connections and friendships among participants, creating a supportive community that extends beyond language learning.

PROJECT REVIEW

Here is the summary of the language exchange and activities that this project completed:

Sept 2023: Promotion and Participant Enrolment

- About 60 students from KF and LC applied for this project, and 7 student group leaders have been recruited to support participants. Training has been provided to student group leaders as well.

Oct 2023: Pre-Survey and Launch Event

- Around 50 students took part in the project launch event on October 18th 2023, to provide comprehensive information about the project and to offer an opportunity for the participants to interact with each other.
- A pre-survey was conducted to collect feedback and insights from the participants about their expectations and interests.

Oct 2023 – ongoing: Coff-Teatime

- Participants have been arranged into pairs (Japanese-English, Korean-English and Mandarin-English) to arrange their Coff-Teatime weekly. The proposed schedule includes 1 hour per week across 10 weeks per term, with each session focusing on the cultural exchange of learning experience and language practice. These regular meetings will develop previous language learning and meaningful relationships between international and UK students and encourage cultural exchange.

Nov 2023: Intercultural Student Workshop

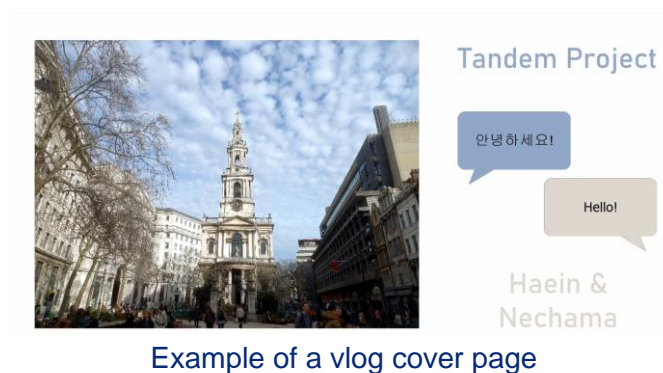
- An intercultural student workshop took place on the 15th of November 2023. The workshop focused on facilitating the exchange of the culture of learning among students from diverse cultural backgrounds to lead to a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives and methodologies that influence language education.

Feb 2024: Tandem Poster Presentation Event

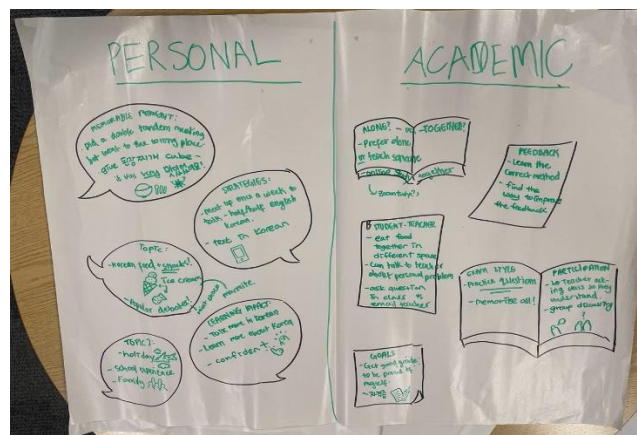
- In the Tandem Poster Presentation, about 20 students had the chance to come together again on the 7th of February 2024 to share experiences, and stories in the form of a poster presentation.

March 2024: Tandem Project Vlog Competition

- All participants have been invited to enter the Tandem Project Vlog Competition with their language partners. Students have been invited to create a 2-3-minute vlog with their partners to reflect on their Tandem project experience and share their insights and perspectives on the language and culture. 7 vlogs were awarded for this competition.



Example of a vlog cover page



Example of students' poster presentation

PROJECT FINDINGS

The post-project survey results provide a comprehensive overview of the participants' feedback on various aspects of the Tandem Project. The survey includes several key metrics rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction or agreement. Here's a detailed analysis of each metric:

➤ **Overall Satisfaction with the Project (4.8/5):**

The highest score in the survey indicates a very high level of overall satisfaction among participants. This suggests that the project met or exceeded the expectations of most students, reflecting the success of the initiative in achieving its goals.

➤ **Development of Language Skills: Speaking and Listening (4.6/5):**

This high score shows that the project was effective in helping students improve their speaking and listening skills in the target language. The tandem learning approach, which emphasises conversational practice, likely contributed significantly to this positive outcome.

➤ **Development of Language Skills: Reading and Writing (4.1/5):**

While still a good score, this is the lowest among the metrics, indicating that reading and writing skills may not have been as strongly emphasized or developed as speaking and listening skills. This could be an area for future improvement, perhaps by incorporating more structured reading and writing activities.

➤ **Expansion of Vocabulary (4.6/5):**

Students felt that their vocabulary in the foreign language expanded considerably. This high score is indicative of the frequent and varied interactions that likely exposed students to new words and phrases in context, enhancing their vocabulary.

➤ **Development of Interpersonal Skills and Self-Confidence (4.6/5):**

➤ The project also significantly helped students develop their interpersonal skills and boost their self-confidence. Engaging in regular, structured interactions with language partners appears to have fostered these important personal growth areas.

➤ **Learning About New Cultures and Reflecting on Own Culture (4.7/5):**

This high score reflects the project's success in facilitating intercultural learning. Students appreciated the opportunity to learn about new cultures and reflect on their own, highlighting the importance of intercultural dialogue in the tandem learning model.

➤ **Recommendation to Other Students (4.8/5):**

Matching the overall satisfaction score indicates that participants are highly likely to recommend the project to their peers. This endorsement suggests that students found significant value in their experiences and believe others would benefit similarly.

The very high overall satisfaction and willingness to recommend the project are strong indicators of the project's success. These scores suggest that the project not only met educational goals but also created a positive and enjoyable learning environment. The development of interpersonal skills and self-confidence highlights the project's impact beyond language learning. Students likely gained valuable soft skills that will benefit them in various contexts.

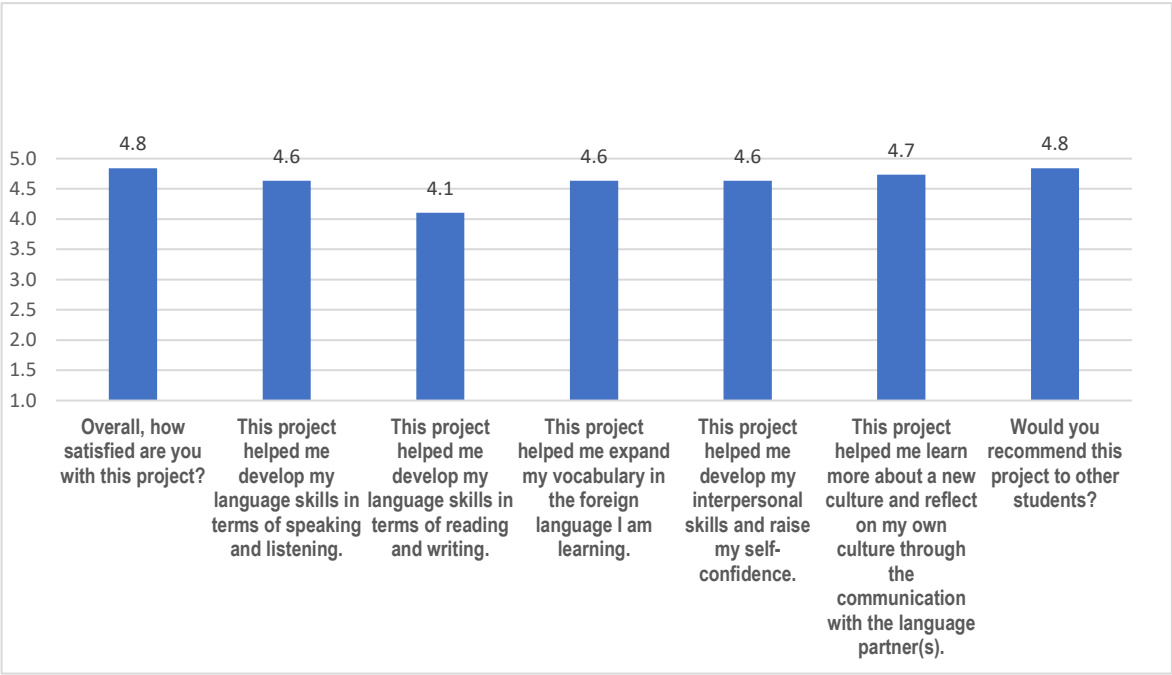
The project was particularly effective in developing speaking and listening skills and expanding vocabulary. These aspects are critical for practical language use, indicating that the interactive, conversational focus of the project was well-received and effective. The comparatively lower score for reading and writing skills suggests a potential area for enhancement and future development of the project could incorporate more balanced activities that also target these skills.

The high score for cultural learning and reflection underscores the importance and effectiveness of intercultural communication within the project. Students valued the opportunity to engage with different cultures, which enriched their learning experience and fostered greater cultural awareness.

In conclusion, the post-project survey results indicate that the Tandem Project was highly successful in achieving its goals. The high levels of satisfaction, improvements in language skills, and significant gains in intercultural awareness and interpersonal skills suggest that the project provided a valuable and enriching experience for participants. Future enhancements could better integrate reading and writing activities to provide a more balanced language-learning approach. Overall, the positive feedback and high

recommendation rate point to the project's strong impact and potential for continued success.

POST-PROJECT SURVEY:



REFLECTIONS:

➤ **This project enhanced students' intercultural competence and language skills**

The Tandem project incorporated in-person workshops and events that significantly contributed to its success. These gatherings allowed students to come together, share their experiences, and build connections beyond their immediate language partners. The in-person nature of these events fostered a sense of community and belonging, which was crucial for the project's goals. Intercultural workshops were instrumental in enhancing students' intercultural awareness. Through structured activities and discussions, participants gained deeper insights into different cultures and perspectives. This not only broadened their understanding but also helped them develop more nuanced views on intercultural interactions and learning. Overall, the in-person workshops and events were critical components of the Tandem project, facilitating community building, enhancing intercultural awareness, and encouraging reflective practice among students.

➤ **This project enriched students' academic learning experience**

Students mentioned that they often shared feedback received from their language classes with their language partners, and helped them improve and prepare their assignments, highlighting a beneficial dynamic between classroom learning and peer support. Through this project, students mentioned that there was a significant increase in confidence in speaking the language they study, attributing this improvement to the supportive tandem learning environment.

The poster presentation event provided a platform for students to reflect on their learning experiences at King's. They shared their reflections and strategies for overcoming challenges they encountered. This activity encouraged critical thinking and allowed students to articulate their learning journeys, fostering a deeper engagement with the material and with each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The results of this project indicate exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with the intercultural experience and positive feedback regarding language immersion. Based on these findings, I recommend the following enhancements:

➤ **Diversify Student-Led Activities:**

Expand student-led activities to include additional languages, attracting a broader range of participants to the program.

➤ **Promote Intercultural Workshops and Activities:**

Implement more intercultural workshops and student activities to foster intercultural awareness and encourage reflective practices among participants.

➤ **Leverage Output Activities (e.g., Vlogs):**

Encourage collaborative output activities, such as vlogs, to provide students with opportunities to share their experiences and cultural insights.

➤ **Enhance In-Person Workshops and Events:**

Continue and expand in-person workshops and events, as they were highly effective in helping students build connections beyond just their language partners. These sessions played a key role in raising awareness and understanding of different cultures, offering a structured environment for meaningful intercultural exchanges.

➤ **Encourage Reflective Practices:**

Continue the poster presentation events, which encouraged students to reflect on their experiences and share practical strategies for overcoming challenges. This reflective practice helped consolidate their learning and provided valuable insights for their peers.