

Adapting and Developing the Tandem Exchange Program in Cuenca, Ecuador

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Abstract

The Tandem program at the Universidad de Cuenca in Ecuador pairs two students together, one from an international university and one from its own, to have conversational language exchange over the course of several weeks or months. The goal of our project was to promote and strengthen the participant experience. Since there are many factors that influence the Tandem participant experience, there are a variety of ways that the program can be framed. We determined where needs and interests of stakeholders lie, and found participants are most interested in improved partner matching, conversation, and activities. We created supplemental materials for participants and administrators to improve and strengthen the Tandem program.

Resumen

El programa Tandem de la Universidad de Cuenca en Ecuador une a dos estudiantes, uno de una universidad internacional y otro de la propia, para tener un intercambio de idiomas conversacional durante varias semanas o meses. El objetivo de nuestro proyecto fue promover y fortalecer la experiencia del participante. Dado que hay muchos factores que influyen en la experiencia del participante de Tandem, hay una variedad de formas en que se puede enmarcar el programa. Determinamos dónde se encuentran las necesidades y los intereses de las partes interesadas y descubrimos que los participantes están más interesados en mejorar la búsqueda de compañeros, la conversación y las actividades. Creamos materiales suplementarios para los participantes y administradores mejoraran y fortalecieran el programa Tandem.

Adapting and Developing the Tandem Exchange Program in Cuenca, Ecuador

Executive Summary

Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin and Emily Mahoney

The Universidad de Cuenca hosts Tandem language exchange programs with other universities to give students from both institutions the opportunity to learn their target language. Tandem programs pair native speakers of different languages together and incentivizes them to meet regularly to practice their target languages. Unlike traditional study abroad experiences, there is less set-up and maintenance involved, making it accessible to many participants and offering a deeper-rooted opportunity for cultural exchange and language learning.

The structure and objectives of the program have built a strong community surrounding the program and the Tandem program administration at UCUENCA, aims to create fruitful experiences for all students who participate. While the program is described to be quite successful, student experiences and outcomes vary tremendously.

Methodology

The goal of this project was to promote, broaden and strengthen the Tandem program and was achieved through the following three objectives.

- 1. Understand** the effectiveness of the current Tandem program and past participant experience.
- 2. Determine** needs and expectations of different stakeholder groups.
- 3. Develop** and receive feedback on effective materials to support the Tandem program.

We interviewed stakeholders including 20 past and current participants, and 10 program administrators in order to assess

their perspectives. We also engaged all participants in surveys and reflections to gain a deeper understanding of the Tandem experience, and determined areas for improvement. We evaluated program materials like the topic conversation guide and Tandem orientation presentation to explore the objectives of the program. Finally, we used data from all methods to formulate materials that could improve the Tandem experience and enlisted a focus group and convenience sampling to get feedback on the materials so we could make needed adjustments.

Findings

Finding 1: The Tandem program is flexible in accommodating different student motivations.

Analysis of our participant interviews showed that students have various motivations behind participating in the Tandem program. Language acquisition was the most frequent motivation, followed by companionship and cultural learning. While there are major categories that emerged, the motivations differed between international and UCUENCA students. International students specifically valued cultural immersion and companionship, while the UCUENCA students were motivated by practicing conversational English.

Finding 2: The Tandem program is flexible in accommodating different program needs.

We learned that the Tandem program is a complementary experience to various study abroad programs. The administration's

philosophy is that the “program will only continue if ... [we] meet ... expectations and program requirements, so we work hard to keep that in mind.” There are many universities with whom UCUENCA collaborates and the Tandem program is able to adapt to each university’s disparate needs and focuses.

Finding 3: A successful Tandem experience is dependent on compatible partner matching.

Increased compatibility stems from having similar language levels, schedules, and interests with their partners. The priorities are sorted in order of decreasing importance, as reflected in Figure A.

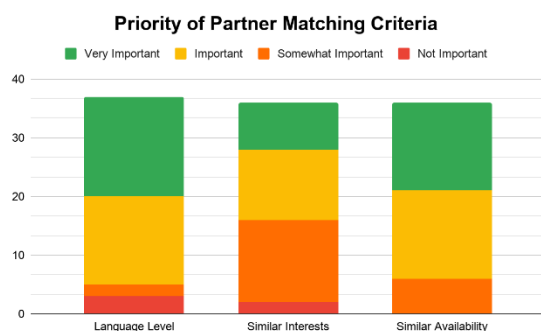


Figure A: Priority of matching criteria from surveys

Despite language compatibility matching being the highest sought-after quality in a partner, surveys showed that in the past, language compatibility among Tandem partners was not always ideal. Through interviewing the Tandem program administrators, it became clear that there is not an organized partner matching process.

Finding 4: Tandem participants want more group and partner activity programming.

Through interviews and program evaluations, we discovered that there is a strong desire amongst program participants for more group activities. While both the in-person and the virtual student participants had radically different program experiences,

the two groups actively wanted to meet the broader cohort through group activities. Group-wide events also serve as an alternative to the partner experience for students in less successful partnerships. In addition to group programming, Tandem participants also wanted more partner activity options, emphasizing their importance (Figure B). Furthermore, both in-person and virtual program participants would have appreciated more structured help when it comes to doing activities with their Tandem partner.

Suggestions for Optimizing the Tandem Experience

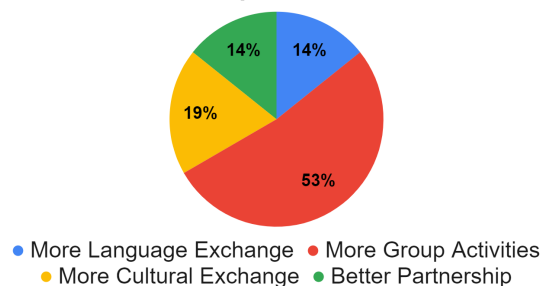


Figure B: Suggestions for optimizing the Tandem experience from UCUENCA Post-Program Survey

When we inquired in administrator interviews about the types of program materials that Tandem participants are provided with, they explained that some visiting groups and all UCUENCA students receive an orientation presentation. All participants receive a conversation guide. Participants wanted a more in-depth conversation guide which discusses social norms and culture, because they viewed cultural learning as a key aspect of their experience. Coordinators and participants saw the need for a standardized orientation presentation, due to the drastic differences in preparation between universities.

Finding 6: Cultural learning is valued by Tandem participants.

Administrators claimed that teaching about culture was a central focus of the Tandem program. Cultural learning is emphasized in the resources created by Tandem administrators, such as initial emails about the program, the suggested conversation topics, as well as the orientation slides. This emphasis prepares participants for the cultural learning aspect of the Tandem program. Participants voiced that the Tandem experience is unique because they learn about the lifestyle of someone their age in a very different location. Multiple participants stated that the program broadened their view on the U.S., the world, and themselves.

Recommendations

Based on our findings, we recommend specific ways that the Tandem program at UCUENCA can initiate improvements and continue supporting successful experiences.

Recommendation 1: Develop a more intensive partner matching system.

While schedules and interests are not prioritized by administrators right now, effective partner matching practices should prioritize them, after language level. For language level matching, we recommend that the administration of the Tandem program implement a third party, online language assessment test that verifies a student's language ability and listening comprehension. Based on the results of the assessment, we recommend that people of similar fluency be paired together.

We recommend that interests be assessed with two methods: a personality test and a participant biography. A personality test asks about extraversion and levels of dedication, traits that had a significant impact on past participants' experiences. The participant biography will

be a resource for the Tandem administration to use when making pairings. Its intended use is to give future partners insight about their Tandem before their first meeting. Additionally, pairing based on majors creates an opportunity for connection based on shared interest.

For scheduling, we recommend that the Tandem administration administer an availability survey. We made a template survey for Tandem administrators to use for partner matching.

Recommendation 2: Assign and encourage Tandem group activities.

We recommend assigning and encouraging Tandem group activities. Based on interview data, there are benefits for groups of Tandem partners to engage in activity and conversation with one another in addition to meeting with their Tandem partner one-on-one. The Tandem group could be assigned at the same time as the Tandem partner, and all contact information could be provided.

With the addition of Tandem groups, we recommend that there are more opportunities and guidance for which activities Tandem partners can do together. An activities list should include restaurants, museums, shops, or sight-seeing locations in and around the city, at an appropriate price point. We created an updated list that also includes general suggestions like playing basketball, soccer, baseball, frisbee, or any other accessible sporting activities together.

We recommend that events are planned by administrators for the whole cohort and Tandem partners. Some examples are attending a Tandem partner's play and the Carnival celebration that WPI coordinators organized because they allow for supplemental cultural exchange. It is important to have planned events so that there is an underlying guideline for groups to participate.

Recommendation 3: Implement a cultural guide and culture-focused conversation topics.

We determined that the Tandem program should focus on implementing more cultural education for all students. We first recommend that the program orientation, whether in-person or virtual, include both UCUENCA and international students, and begin with a general overview of the program. Following this, we recommended adding a time during orientation to have open conversation about cultural differences. We also recommend that the topic conversation guide include cultural conversation topics for participants to talk about in paired conversation or group settings. This would encourage conversation to be facilitated between partners regarding social norms, customs, and niche differences.

We created a draft conversation guide, based on the previous conversation guide provided by Tandem administration, and added cultural conversation topics. Additionally, we formulated a standardized orientation presentation with additive cultural questions that can be addressed to all participants in the initial group meeting.

Project Conclusion

The goal of this project was to help promote, broaden, and strengthen the Tandem program at UCUENCA, and that was accomplished through the materials we created. The partner matching assessment, excursion guide, and more robust conversation guide will provide long term support to participants. The provided recommendations will address the needs of Tandem participants and administration, as well as successfully prepare the program for future expansion.

Adaptando y desarrollando el programa Tandem de intercambio en Cuenca, Ecuador

Informe Ejecutivo

Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin y Emily Mahoney

La Universidad de Cuenca organiza programas de intercambio de idiomas en Tandem con otras universidades para brindar a los estudiantes de ambas instituciones la oportunidad de aprender su segundo idioma. Los programas Tandem combinan a hablantes nativos de diferentes idiomas y los incentivan a reunirse regularmente para practicar sus segundos idiomas. Unas diferencias de las experiencias tradicionales de estudio en el extranjero, hay menos configuración y mantenimiento, lo que lo hace accesible a muchos participantes y ofrece una oportunidad más arraigada para el intercambio cultural y el aprendizaje de idiomas.

La estructura y los objetivos del programa han construido una comunidad fuerte en torno al programa y la administración del programa Tandem en UCUENCA, tiene como objetivo crear experiencias fructíferas para todos los estudiantes que participan. Si bien se describe que el programa es bastante exitoso, las experiencias y los resultados de los estudiantes varían enormemente.

Metodología

El objetivo de este proyecto fue promover, ampliar y fortalecer el programa Tandem y se logró a través de los siguientes tres objetivos.

1. Comprender la efectividad del programa Tandem actual y la experiencia pasada de los participantes.

2. Determinar las necesidades y expectativas de los diferentes grupos de interés.

3. Desarrolle y reciba comentarios sobre materiales efectivos para apoyar el programa Tandem.

Entrevistamos a las partes interesadas, incluidos 20 participantes pasados y actuales, y 10 administradores de programas para evaluar sus perspectivas. También involucramos a todos los participantes en encuestas y reflexiones para obtener una comprensión más profunda de la experiencia Tandem y determinar áreas de mejora. Evaluamos los materiales del programa como la guía de conversación temática y la presentación de Tandem orientación para explorar los objetivos del programa. Finalmente, usamos datos de todos los métodos para formular materiales que podrían mejorar la experiencia de Tandem y reclutamos un grupo de enfoque y un muestreo de conveniencia para obtener comentarios sobre los materiales y poder hacer los ajustes necesarios.

Hallazgos

Hallazgo 1: El programa Tandem es flexible para acomodar diferentes motivaciones estudiantiles.

El análisis de nuestras entrevistas a los participantes mostró que los estudiantes tienen varias motivaciones detrás de participar en el programa Tandem. La adquisición del idioma fue la motivación más frecuente, seguida de la compañía y el aprendizaje cultural. Aunque hay categorías principales que surgieron, las motivaciones diferían entre estudiantes internacionales y estudiantes de UCUENCA. Los estudiantes internacionales valoraron específicamente la inmersión cultural y el compañerismo, mientras que los estudiantes de la

UCUENCA estaban motivados por la práctica del inglés conversacional.

Hallazgo 2: El programa Tandem es flexible para adaptarse a las diferentes necesidades del programa.

Aprendimos que el programa Tandem es una experiencia complementaria a varios programas de estudios en el extranjero. La filosofía de la administración es que "el programa solo continuará si ... [cumplimos] ... las expectativas y los requisitos del programa, por lo que trabajamos arduamente para tenerlo en cuenta". Hay muchas universidades con las que UCUENCA colabora y el programa Tandem es capaz de adaptarse a las distintas necesidades y enfoques de cada universidad.

Hallazgo 3: Una experiencia exitosa de Tandem depende de la coincidencia de compañeros compatibles.

La mayor compatibilidad se debe a tener niveles de idioma, horarios e intereses similares con sus compañeros. Las prioridades están ordenadas en orden decreciente de importancia, como se refleja en la Figura A.

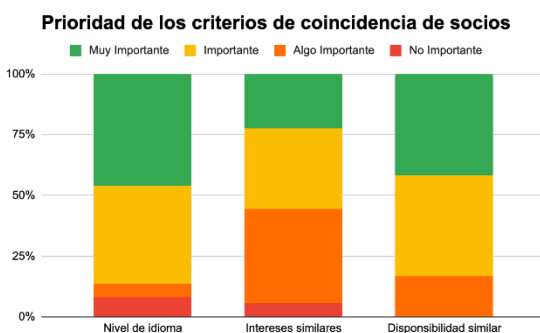


Figura A: Prioridad de los criterios de coincidencia de las encuestas

A pesar de que la compatibilidad de idiomas era la calidad más solicitada en una asociación, las encuestas mostraron que en el pasado, la compatibilidad de idiomas

entre los compañeros de Tandem no siempre era ideal. A través de la entrevista a los administradores del programa Tandem, quedó claro que no hay un proceso organizado de emparejamiento de compañeros.

Hallazgo 4: Los participantes en Tandem quieren más programación de actividades de grupo y asociadas.

A través de entrevistas y evaluaciones del programa, descubrimos que existe un fuerte deseo entre los participantes del programa de más actividades de grupo. Si bien tanto los estudiantes participantes presenciales como los virtuales tuvieron experiencias del programa radicalmente diferentes, los dos grupos querían activamente conocer a la cohorte más amplia a través de actividades de grupos. Los eventos de grupos también sirven como una alternativa a la experiencia de los compañeros para los estudiantes en asociaciones menos exitosas.

Además de la programación grupal, los participantes de Tandem también querían más opciones de actividades para compañeros, enfatizando su importancia (Figura B). Además, tanto los participantes del programa en persona como los virtuales habrían apreciado una ayuda más estructurada cuando se trata de realizar actividades con su compañero Tandem.

Sugerencias para optimizar la experiencia Tandem



Figura B: Sugerencias para optimizar la experiencia Tandem de la Encuesta Post Programa de UCUENCA

Cuando preguntamos en las entrevistas con los administradores sobre los tipos de materiales del programa que reciben los participantes de Tandem, ellos explicaron que algunos grupos visitantes y todos los estudiantes de UCUENCA reciben una presentación de orientación. Todos los participantes reciben una guía de conversación. Los participantes querían una guía de conversación más profunda que analizara las normas sociales y la cultura, porque vieron el aprendizaje cultural como un aspecto clave de su experiencia. Los coordinadores y participantes vieron la necesidad de una presentación de orientación estandarizada, debido a las drásticas diferencias en la preparación entre universidades.

Hallazgo 6: Los participantes de Tandem valoran el aprendizaje cultural.

Los administradores afirmaron que la enseñanza de la cultura era un enfoque central del programa Tandem. El aprendizaje cultural se enfatiza en los recursos creados por los administradores de Tandem, como los correos electrónicos iniciales sobre el programa, los temas de conversación, así como las diapositivas de orientación. Este énfasis prepara a los participantes para el aspecto de aprendizaje cultural del programa Tandem. Los participantes expresaron que la experiencia Tandem es única porque aprenden sobre el estilo de vida de alguien de su edad en un lugar muy diferente. Varios participantes afirmaron que el programa amplió su visión de los EE. UU., el mundo y ellos mismos.

Recomendaciones

Basado en nuestros hallazgos, recomendamos formas específicas en que el programa Tandem en UCUENCA puede iniciar mejoramientos y continuar apoyando experiencias exitosas.

Recomendación 1: Desarrollar un sistema de búsqueda de compañeros más intensivo.

Mientras que los administradores no priorizan los horarios y los intereses en este momento, las prácticas efectivas de emparejamiento de compañeros deben priorizarlos después del nivel de idioma. Para igualar el nivel de idioma, recomendamos que la administración del programa Tandem implemente una prueba de evaluación del idioma en línea de una tercera parte que verifique la capacidad lingüística y la comprensión auditiva del estudiante. Basado en los resultados de la evaluación, recomendamos que las personas con fluidez similar se emparejen.

Recomendamos que los intereses se evalúen con dos métodos: una prueba de personalidad y una biografía del participante. Una prueba de personalidad pregunta sobre la extraversión y los niveles de dedicación, rasgos que tuvieron un impacto significativo en las experiencias pasadas de los participantes. La biografía del participante será un recurso para que la administración de Tandem utilice al hacer emparejamientos. Su uso previsto es brindar a los futuros compañeros información sobre su Tandem antes de su primera reunión. Además, el emparejamiento basado en especialidades crea una oportunidad de conexión basada en intereses compartidos.

Para programar, recomendamos que la administración de Tandem administre una encuesta de disponibilidad. Realizamos una encuesta de plantilla para que los administradores de Tandem la utilicen en la búsqueda de compañeros.

Recomendación 2: Asignar y fomentar actividades de grupo en Tandem.

Recomendamos asignar y fomentar actividades de grupo para participantes Tandem. Según los datos de la entrevista, existen beneficios para que los grupos de compañeros de Tandem participen en

actividades y conversaciones entre sí, además de reunirse con su compañero de Tandem uno a uno. El grupo Tandem podría asignarse al mismo tiempo que el compañero Tandem y podría proporcionarse toda la información de contacto.

Con la incorporación de los grupos en Tandem, recomendamos que haya más oportunidades y orientación para las actividades que los compañeros de Tandem pueden realizar juntos. Una lista de actividades debe incluir restaurantes, museos, tiendas o lugares para hacer turismo en la ciudad y sus alrededores, a un precio adecuado. Creamos una lista actualizada que también incluye sugerencias generales como jugar baloncesto, fútbol, béisbol, frisbee o cualquier otra actividad deportiva accesible juntos.

Recomendamos que los administradores planifiquen los eventos para toda la cohorte y los compañeros de Tandem. Algunos ejemplos son la asistencia a la obra de teatro de un compañero de Tandem y la celebración del Carnaval que los coordinadores del WPI organizaron porque permiten un intercambio cultural complementario. Es importante tener eventos planificados para que haya una guía subyacente para que los grupos participen.

Recomendación 3: Implementar una guía cultural y temas de conversación centrados en la cultura.

Determinamos que el programa Tandem debería enfocarse en implementar más educación cultural para todos los estudiantes. Primero recomendamos que la orientación del programa, ya sea en persona

o virtual, incluya tanto a UCUENCA como a estudiantes internacionales, y comenzar con una descripción general del programa. Después de esto, recomendamos agregar un tiempo durante la orientación para tener una conversación abierta sobre las diferencias culturales. También recomendamos que la guía de conversación temática incluya temas de conversación cultural para que los participantes hablen en conversaciones en compañeros o en entornos de grupos. Esto alentaría la conversación entre compañeros con respecto a las normas sociales, costumbres y diferencias de nicho.

Creamos un borrador de la guía de conversación, basada en la guía de conversación anterior proporcionada por la administración de Tandem, y agregamos temas de conversación cultural. Además, formulamos una presentación de orientación estandarizada con preguntas culturales aditivas que pueden dirigirse a todos los participantes en la reunión inicial del grupo.

Conclusión del proyecto

El objetivo de este proyecto fue ayudar a promover, ampliar y fortalecer el programa Tandem en UCUENCA, y eso se logró a través de los materiales que creamos. La evaluación de emparejamiento de compañeros, la guía de excursiones y una guía de conversación más sólida brindarán apoyo a largo plazo a los participantes. Las recomendaciones proporcionadas abordarán las necesidades de los participantes y la administración de Tandem, así como también prepararán con éxito el programa para una futura expansión

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Chapter 1: Language Learning and Language Exchange Programming

1.0 Introduction

In learning a second language, a world of opportunity opens to you. Making new friends, creating networks, and expanding cultural horizons are a few of the infinite advantages that can be discovered by learning a new language. Language acquisition is influenced by your own learning style, cultural ties and the people who speak the language (Priya, 2019). With more people connected worldwide, providing language learners with effective programs to build both their language capacity and their sense of connection to new cultures is more important and feasible than ever before.

One of the best ways to promote language learning is through programs that include interaction with native speakers (Long, 2014). Instead of focusing on grammar drills and memorization, these programs facilitate direct communication between students who speak different languages. This could be through a casual conversation over lunch or participating in activities together. The experience gained through getting to know a native speaker has the potential to rapidly improve learning in a meaningful way (Bogdanova et al., 2020). An example of this is the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca (UCUENCA), in Cuenca, Ecuador, which provides an opportunity for students to create intercultural connections that promote a better understanding of cultures and improved fluency.

Ms. Ana Loja oversees the Tandem program and is a professor in the Institute of Languages at UCUENCA. We worked with Dr. Loja to focus on promoting, broadening, and strengthening the Tandem Program at UCUENCA. In the project background, we explain the Tandem program structure, alternative language exchange experiences, and how motivation and community building are integrated in language learning. In our methodology chapter, we outline the specific objectives and methods utilized to achieve our project goal. We identified and interviewed diverse populations within the Tandem program to identify major interest and improvement areas. We also conducted surveys, participant reflections, and focus groups to gain perspectives on the needs of the Tandem program and to determine potential supplemental materials. Finally, we discuss our collected data, and the resulting recommendations for UCUENCA formulated from our findings. With this information, we equipped UCUENCA with deliverables and recommendations based directly on the needs and suggestions voiced by the stakeholders of the Tandem program.

1.1 Language Exchange Programs

Aside from learning in a traditional classroom setting, some students opt to enhance their language learning experience through participation in language exchanges. These programs offer students the means to overcome many academic challenges, such as the pressure that they may face in a classroom environment (Wolf & Phung, 2019). Language exchange programs also offer the students the opportunity to gain confidence in their speech ability and become comfortable utilizing their target language with native speakers (Wolf & Phung, 2019). Additionally, these programs allow for natural learning, as students combine vocabulary and grammar with the critical thinking used in conversations (Terehoff, 2000). In short, language exchange programs

are an effective and immersive way to overcome the many difficulties encountered in the classroom.

These programs also give students an environment to “understand differing views of a particular foreign culture” which encourages the continuation of language learning (Terehoff, 2000, p. 83). In addition to language exchange, studying abroad engages and affects participants’ “worldview, personal development, cultural interests, [and] influence[s] decision-making process decisions” (Tamila & Ledgerwood, 2008, p.64). Students who choose to enroll in such programs are typically motivated by “improving intercultural awareness, personal growth, professional development and intellectual growth” (Tamila & Ledgerwood, 2008, p.65). Even language exchange programs that may not necessarily offer a drastic improvement in conversation abilities give students higher levels of confidence and self-perceived ability, which in turn motivates students to continue the learning process (Tamila & Ledgerwood, 2008; Terehoff, 2000). There are various language exchange programs that exist to supplement traditional language learning in the classroom. While the countless programs have a variety of differences, the most general groupings are non-immersive student exchange programs, immersive student exchange programs and Tandem programs, which are detailed below.

1.2 Comparing Student Exchange and Language Exchange Programs

While both student exchange and language exchange programs offer language learners the opportunity to expose themselves to their target language, the differences amongst these programs leads to varied experiences (Atalar, 2020; O’Reilly et al., 2015). In student exchange programs, language learners visit another university or institution abroad and take classes alongside other international students. They can be split up into non-immersive and immersive experiences, and they generally incorporate a structured language learning element to incentivize program participants to improve their target language (Atalar, 2020). In language exchange programs, the language learners communicate or work with the students of other institutions to actively learn their target language. While these two separate program categories allow for language learning, there are various differences between them.

Students who participate in non-immersive student exchange programs are able to improve their language learning through studying abroad, but do so surrounded by peers who speak their native language. While this provides language learners with the opportunity to learn in a familiar community, they would still be actively engaged with their native language. Despite the comfort that comes with this, students are not able to learn their target language as quickly because they are not required to actively use it (Coleman, 2015). For example, they do not live with a host family or roommates who speak their target language. Non-immersive student exchange programs offer students an in-person language learning experience, but fail to be as effective as other approaches due to a lack of consistent foreign language exposure (Bogdanova et al., 2020).

This is contrasted by the experience of students who participate in immersive student exchange programs, where they are completely immersed in their target language through opportunities like staying with host families or forming friend groups. While participants of both types of student exchange program are able to study a foreign language abroad, those in the immersive program are more likely to find opportunities to integrate into the local culture and surround themselves with native speakers (Hernández, 2021). When faced with a lack of exposure to speakers of their first language, students are able to learn their target language much faster. This leads to the creation of friendships that provide students with natural and meaningful

cultural exposure (Coleman, 2015). Furthermore, students who make an active effort to integrate into the local culture and immerse themselves with native speakers have much better results with language acquisition than those who do not. While immersive student exchange programs offer students effective and meaningful language learning experience, they can be difficult and expensive to implement (Hernández, 2021).

Another variant of language exchange program are Tandem programs, wherein two language learners of different native languages work together to help the other learn their language of interest. Tandem programs can operate either online or in-person and, unlike other language learning programs, do not have strict structured curriculums. Tandem programs are built around “different purposes, from developing language skills to fostering friendships” and the principle of language improvement through engaging and memorable student-led conversation (Wang, 2018, p. 45). The focus on providing both language learners with a partner to practice with allows both students to learn in a natural way that is conducive to effective language acquisition (Resnik & Schallmoser, 2019). When students lead the conversation themselves, a flexible and comfortable environment is created which facilitates language learning. Language acquisition is much easier in this setting because students focus on speaking about commonalities and their interests, so they learn how to use their target language in a real-life context (Bogdanova et al., 2020). Furthermore, the student-led nature of Tandem programs ensures ease of implementation because administrators do not have to incorporate a strict curriculum. Aside from gathering interest from prospective participants and pairing them, the administrators do not have to put any additional work into program upkeep. The student-centric aspect of Tandem programs provides students with an environment to easily practice using their target language and has the potential to drastically improve their language acquisition (Cziko, 2004).

Based on research of these program types, six major characteristics were identified to compare the different language exchange programs, as seen in Table 1 (Bogdanova et al., 2020; Coleman, 2015; Cziko, 2004; Hernández, 2021).

Table 1: Language Exchange Program comparison table

Features	Student Exchange (Non-immersive)	Student Exchange (Immersive)	Tandem Program
Ease of implementation			X
Virtual			X
In-person	X	X	X
Cultural exposure		X	X
Language exposure	X	X	X
Social network		X	X

Of the six different categories listed in the comparison table, Tandem programs encompass all of them. Its ease of use and immense flexibility across potential implementations and communication methods results in a program that allows students to improve their language acquisition (Bogdanova et al., 2020). While the program allows for meaningful and natural language learning, it is also dependent on the motivation of the students who utilize it and the challenges they will face.

1.3 Culture and Language Learning

Practice and skill in intercultural interactions are integral parts in second language learning. Intercultural awareness is something you must have before you can demonstrate intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Intercultural awareness is when you are mindful of the role that you and your culture play in your conversations and when you can learn from interactions (Almarza et al., 2015). ICC is when you have “the ability to interact successfully with others across cultural differences” and the only way you can learn ICC is through practice (Almarza et al., 2015, p. 75). Byram’s model of ICC has five components to help people become more interculturally competent: *attitude* involves realizing how your own cultural practices might look from the host culture’s perspective; *knowledge* is noticing what members of the host culture find meaningful; intercultural *skills* are practiced in cultural contexts; *critical cultural awareness* is being able to assess the outlooks, practices, and goods of cultures; and *taking action* is taking initiative in making change for good (Almarza et al., 2015; Vu & Dinh, 2021). ICC has proven to be important not only to second language learning, but influences the motivation behind second language learning (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013). Each of the five ICC factors are major traits that show how language learning motivation varies on an individual basis. ICC is an example of how understanding cultures and wanting to have a connection with speakers of a target language is a source of drive. Each of the five ICC factors are major traits that show how language learning motivation varies on an individual basis. ICC is an example of how understanding cultures and wanting to have a connection with speakers of a target language is a source of drive.

The relationship between language learners and the setting is also an important factor in successful language learning programs. Opposed to environments where students would practice their target language on their own, language learning that stems from genuine personal relationships increases motivation and acquisition (Chik, 2019). Peer-to-peer language learners are able to make personal improvements towards communication in these partnerships without the feelings of apathy towards learning (Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbelaiz, 2014). Furthermore, natural language acquisition offered through conversation assists in interest beyond rigid classroom curriculums and encourages deeper curiosity towards culture and customs (Chik, 2019). The challenges of learning a new language can be alleviated through effective partner matching and community involvement.

1.4 Community Building in Tandem Programming

When students have a strong community, it provides them with more opportunities for connection, informal interactions, and makes participants feel more comfortable around each other. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the community has the structure and cultural education it needs to create a strong support system. Partner matching and intercultural communication are two key components of this.

Partner-matching is an aspect of collaborative learning that strongly impacts the overall experience. Students with similar learning styles have a learning process that is more productive and results in less conflict (Kuo, Chu, & Huang, 2015). Compatibility of teammates is based on the participants' "individual characteristics, what they look for in peers, and preferences in learning partners" (Thanh et al., 2019, p. 1102). One method to match students is the Learning Partner Recommender System (LPRS), which was developed to counteract the downfalls of Online Learning Communities as education becomes increasingly virtual (Thanh et al., 2019). The LPRS is based on six traits: personality, willingness to communicate, learning styles, skills, motivation, and self-efficacy (Thanh et al., 2019). These categories are "derived from best pedagogical practices" and are therefore catered to the learning characteristics of the students and promote qualities that the teacher values in the project work or collaboration (Thanh et al., 2019, p. 1103). To determine suitable pairings, the LPRS calculates the similarities in traits and preferences of students. Another benefit of the LPRS is that it counteracts "motivation loss, increased course attrition rates and poor learning experiences" in a virtual setting (Thanh et al., 2019, p. 1102).

Another team formation system takes just three factors into account: knowledge of the topic, personality, and preferences (Spoelstra et al., 2013). "When preferences do not overlap at all, this...blocks user inclusion in a team", so more overlap suggests a better pairing (Spoelstra et al., 2013, p. 1481). One potential downside to this system is that it was designed for use by Social Learning Networks (SLN), which means that it does not have a teacher in charge of a curriculum who could sense which students would learn well together. In this way, this system is particularly student-driven and students must direct and organize themselves. However, the system could benefit a program by its providing rules for team formation depending on whether the pairing should be "productive, creative, or learning" (Spoelstra et al., 2013, p. 1490). These respectively correlate with prioritizing one of the three factors of knowledge, personality, or preferences.

A different approach to groupings could be a focus on the characteristics that friends share. The Friend Affinity Finder (FAFinder) is an application that is focused on the Big Five personality traits: "Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Emotional range and

Openness” (Chakrabarty et al., p. 53). The FAFinder is an application made for the purpose of connecting people from the increasing disconnect that has arisen from social media. Harris and Vazire’s study shows that the Big Five traits that “have the biggest impact on friendship” are Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Harris & Vazire, 2016, p. 661). However, each of the Big Five traits comes into play differently. Extraversion is “the strongest trait predictor of being liked by others” when first meeting and agreeability is only a valuable trait later on in the friendship (Harris & Vazire, 2016, p. 653). Another study found that Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Openness are traits that, when similar in people, yield better friendships (Selfhout et al., 2010). If the students make friends, then traits like Conscientiousness are “useful in keeping friendships going once they start” and make for better conversations (Harris & Vazire, 2016, p. 660). A potential downside to the FAFinder implementation is that students would self-rate the traits on a number scale, which would require trusting that the user is honest.

Taking all these program types into consideration, there is the chance to find a happy medium between them. The number of traits for determining ideal partnerships shows how much data there would be to consider. Depending on the size of the group, a process like the LPRS might be favored for small groups and a service like Spoelstra’s could be preferred for larger groups. Determination of the size of a group is just the amount of data that can be handled when considering a number of factors. Something that more of these formats have in common is a consideration for a virtual platform, which is important in matching the flexibility of a given program. The first two methods were developed with consideration for a virtual environment, while the FAFinder was not. Another part to consider is how tailored the characteristics should be to a specific program. The LPRS is quite focused on the traits of learners, the FAFinder is concerned with just personality, and Spoelstra’s method is somewhere in between. Depending on what extent the pairings depend on learning styles versus personalities, the factors for matching will change.

The relationships students form depend on the quality of their intercultural communication, so it is essential to address difficulties that will inevitably arise from having differing cultural experiences. Facilitating cross-cultural communication includes taking into account the sensitive nature of the topic as well as incorporating an intercultural view into curriculum (Zaidi et al., 2016). Some notable barriers that impede communication between people of different cultures include fear of impropriety, social norms, and relatability (Pazyura, 2016). People often defer to silence when they are scared that there will be “misunderstanding or (...) confrontation” when talking about another culture (Zaidi et al., 2016, p. 6). Due to the social stigma surrounding open dissent and conflict, people opt to listen to what the group’s opinions are before softening their own accordingly. If participants do not have any experiences or knowledge with which to relate to the presented topic, they tend not to contribute to discussion (Zaidi et al., 2016). The Tandem program includes making students comfortable approaching cultural discussions, so addressing these potential problems will help students to talk more freely. Teaching people how to start a cultural dialogue, “pose clarifying questions... and how to navigate...sensitive” cultural topics are ways that students will gain more cultural knowledge from conversations (Zaidi et al., 2016, p. 7).

Additionally, a “curriculum map” can show how to infuse cross-cultural competence into materials (Zaidi et al., 2016, p. 6). The purpose of being culturally aware is to break from the standards of cultural normativity set up by dominating powers, known as cultural hegemony, and to promote reassessment of opinions (Zaidi et al., 2016). Cultural hegemony has permeated through pedagogical practices. In a study on Open Distance Learning (ODL) the students were

expected “to step out of their own culture and temporarily enter into the culture of the ODL practitioners” (Pitsoe & Dichaba, 2013, p. 83). This does not necessarily cause any problems, unless the pedagogical values that the ODL teacher holds are not aligned with how the student is accustomed to being taught (Pitsoe & Dichaba, 2013).

Developing relationships and forming a community between cultures are key to successful language acquisition. It is important to create effective partnerships and provide a platform for cultural exchange in order to have a successful program.

1.5 Our Sponsor and Project

UCUENCA’s Tandem program has been able to motivate students to learn languages and participate in conversation exchange by offering a unique and appealing program to students. Unlike traditional study abroad experiences, there is an ease of implementation which makes it accessible to many participants, and it offers a deeper-rooted opportunity for cultural exchange and language learning. The structure and objectives of the program have built a strong community surrounding the program, but through our research, our team learned that the program lacks in areas of effective partner matching, navigation of cultural conversations and immersive group activities. In the next chapter, we discuss methods we used to gather necessary information to develop planning and materials for the Tandem Program at UCUENCA.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The goal of this project was to promote, broaden, and strengthen the Tandem Program at UCUENCA. We reached our goal by completing the following three objectives:

1. **Understand** the effectiveness of the current Tandem program and past participant experience.
2. **Determine** needs and expectations of different stakeholder groups.
3. **Develop** and receive feedback on effective materials to support the Tandem program.

We interviewed stakeholders including past and current participants, and program administrators. We also engaged all participants in surveys and reflections. Finally, we used data from all methods to formulate materials that could improve the Tandem experience and enlisted a focus group and convenience sampling to get feedback on the developed materials so we could make needed adjustments. The rest of the chapter further explains how and why these methodologies were chosen, and what specific data analysis techniques were used.

2.1 Objective 1: Understand the effectiveness of the current Tandem program and past participant experience

2.1.1 Past Participant Interviews

We interviewed past participants of the Tandem program because their firsthand experience ensures that they have significant knowledge of what was enjoyable and what could be changed to improve the program. Our sponsor provided us with the contact information of both North American and Ecuadorian student participants from January 2020 to now. We interviewed a mix of both populations, which included both male and female students aged 19 to 23. All participants either completed the program virtually or in person. There were 13 WPI students, six UCUENCA students and one student from the University of Victoria. Interviews with past participants provided opportunities to develop a thorough understanding of relevant topics and opinions (Beebe, 2014). Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes over Zoom. Out of consideration for interviewees schedules, we tried to keep semi-structured interviews short. With permission, the interview was recorded in case the scribe missed key quotes or concepts. The conversation was guided with the pre-prepared set of questions also found in **Appendix A**. These included key questions covering how Tandem participants were impacted by their experience and ideas on what changes they would make.

Following the interviews, we began to analyze our information. First, we individually went through each interview transcription. We used the grounded theory approach to examine the qualitative data in a structured and organized manner (Chandra, 2019; Thomas, 2016). We also used an inductive coding analysis strategy to find emergent codes in the data opposed to a deductive strategy where data is scanned for evidence of preconceived themes (Stuckey, 2015). This allowed us to avoid inserting our own opinions of the Tandem program's needs in the coding process. The actual coding process began with creating a system of sorting labels, or codes, which were defined and color-coded to minimize variation in analysis (Thomas, 2016; Stuckey, 2015). We read the interview notes in conjunction with the list of codes and assigned categories. To increase credibility, two team members coded the notes for each interview and shared how they coded things to reach an agreement (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). The gaps

we found in coded interview data were noted, and surveys and participant reflection questions were adjusted to fill the gaps in knowledge (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003).

2.1.2 Past Participant Surveys

We also sent surveys via email to the same population of participants that we interviewed and received 38 responses. Surveys were used in order to gain a broader scope of the Tandem experience, to standardize themes and opinions, and to assist in triangulation of interview data. The entirety of the survey took approximately five to ten minutes to complete. Survey questions ranged from Tandem participant's experiences with partner matching, linguistic and cultural learning experience, potential pitfalls faced, and placed emphasis on new themes that arose from the interview process. A detailed list of survey questions can be found in **Appendix B**.

To analyze our surveys we utilized Google Forms, and exported all the responses to an Excel Spreadsheet. Once all the questions and responses were tabulated in a master spreadsheet, we translated the Spanish responses and grouped the similar questions and their responses together. Each survey question was then made into a chart, either a histogram or frequency chart depending on what best fit the data. We used Histograms to analyze the questions that used a likert scale, in order to visualize the distribution of responses (Nussbaumer Knaflic, 2015). We used Frequency charts to visualize the frequency of selected responses, so that we could see the relationships between common and uncommon occurrences within the Tandem program, like preferences in a partner (Nussbaumer Knaflic, 2015). This allowed for visual representation of how all responses compared. We then split up the virtual versus in person responses and made charts for each program experience for comparison.

2.1.3 Participant Reflections

We asked current participants in the program to complete an open-ended reflection halfway through the program (Lewis et al., 2005). We sent the reflections out via Google Form and included a brief set of open-ended questions to provide specific instances of particular topics explored in interviews and surveys (Bevitt, 2015; Lewis et al., 2005). We received three WPI responses and six UCUENCA responses. These questions can be seen in **Appendix C**. We also received 26 post-program surveys from Ms. Loja, which asked participants about their language practice, intercultural experience, and suggestions they have for the future.

We analyzed our participant reflections and post-program surveys in a similar way to the interview notes. The difference was that we used the coding key that we had created for the interview notes to be our deductive or a priori codes (Stuckey, 2015). Once again, we read through the notes in pairs to ensure that we agreed on how to categorize data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003).

2.2 Objective 2: Determine needs and expectations of different stakeholder groups

2.2.1 Administrator Interviews

We interviewed 10 administrators, including our sponsor Ms. Loja, to develop understanding of relevant topics and opinions in a thorough manner (Beebe, 2014). To obtain our sample, Ms. Loja provided us with a contact list of coordinators from different North American universities that collaborate with UCUENCA's Tandem program. The interview structure and strategy was identical to the past participant interviews, and a full list of interview questions and

the oral consent can be found in **Appendix D**. To collect our data, we utilized the same scribe system, and to analyze our data we used the same thematic and keyword coding strategy.

2.2.2 Document Analysis

In order to gain a broader understanding of the documents associated with the Tandem program, we conducted conventional document analysis on available resources. Ms. Loja gave us all the materials that are sent to participants in preparation for their experience, which included an orientation PowerPoint, a series of emails, and the topic conversation guide. We began by reading them over several times individually while taking notes on key concepts and themes, and then repeated the process as a group. Going through this process several times led to those key concepts getting coalesced into several codes that were sorted and categorized (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This form of qualitative data analysis allowed us to get a sense of how UCUENCA frames and promotes the program, in order to determine if the way it is depicted is in line with the experience.

2.3 Objective 3: Develop and receive feedback on effective materials to support the Tandem program

2.3.1 Focus Group and Convenience Sampling

Our sponsor at UCUENCA expressed her desire to improve the Tandem program through implementing more supporting materials. To determine the final deliverables, we made extensive use of the data we collected in prior methods. We used frequency analysis of codes to prioritize materials that would be most useful to both participants and Tandem administration. We then cross-referenced larger coded themes and categories to ensure the materials were in line with the overarching goals and objectives of the program. Once we developed mock-up conversation topics and activity guides based on our initial findings, we conducted focus groups and convenience sampling to hear feedback from past participants. Focus groups allow group interaction to produce further insights towards our developed materials and are a way to discover unexpected themes or topics brought forth by the group dynamic (Beebe, 2014; Chandra, 2019). They also allow participants to discuss personal issues with more ease if they feel that other members of the group relate to them (Beebe, 2014). We determined that UCUENCA students would be best suited for focus groups, and we would use convenience sampling on campus to reach the WPI students. We sat in the Campus Center and asked WPI students to participate in an evaluation of materials following an explanation of the Tandem program and collection of their oral consent to participate. We were able to get 35 convenience sampling volunteers, all of whom were current WPI students, and the questions we asked along with our project explanation can be found in **Appendix E**. For focus groups, Ms. Loja provided us with four students willing to participate and we set up a time over email to Zoom for approximately 30 minutes, and the questions asked can be found in **Appendix F**. In the next chapter we discuss the findings we developed from our data analysis.

Chapter 3: Findings and Discussion

The following chapter presents and interprets the findings from our research methods discussed in our previous chapter. We organized our findings around three topics: Tandem program flexibility, creating community, and program materials. We believe our samples and populations were robust enough to gather representative data and accurately reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders.

3.1: Tandem Program Flexibility

3.1.1 The Tandem Experience

We were actively participating in the Tandem program while conducting our project research. During the project prep-term, we received an introductory email explaining the Tandem program from Ms. Loja. In this email, we were told to expect to have a partner with which we would meet virtually once a week and split the time speaking in both English and Spanish. Later, we received another email reiterating this information that included the contact info of our partner, and a topic conversation guide to use during our Tandem meetings. We were expected to contact our partner to schedule meeting times. Beginning these meetings was an awkward experience, but for some of us the conversation guide helped us through it and some of us did not use it. We witnessed firsthand the variety of partnerships the program creates, with half of us having good communication and coordination and others getting discouraged. For example, one of our teammates' partner only wanted to meet on weekends or quite late at night when they would have preferred an earlier time during the week. On the other hand, another teammate found themselves losing track of time because they found conversing with their partner so easy and enjoyable. Due to COVID-19 we participated virtually in one iteration of the Tandem experience, which made all group members curious to learn how other versions work and differed from our own experience.

3.1.2 Finding 1: The Tandem program is flexible in accommodating different student motivations.

Participants have various motivations behind participating in the Tandem program, and analysis of participant interviews exposed several of these. Language acquisition was the most frequent motivation, followed by companionship and cultural learning. The entirety of our coded interview analysis can be seen in **Appendix G**. While there are major categories that emerged, the motivations differed between international and UCUENCA students. International students specifically valued cultural immersion and companionship, while the UCUENCA students were motivated by practicing conversational English. One interviewee from the United States expressed that language acquisition, intercultural companionship, and cultural learning combined in the experience were “thought provoking and curious and cool to learn.” Initially, the same interviewee thought the Tandem program would be all language focused, but by the end, got the most from “the cultural part... more than linguistic.” On the other hand, a UCUENCA student noted that they wanted to “improve communication skills in English ... like vocab and pronunciation.” Although there are varying motivations from participants as seen in Figure 1, the Tandem program’s flexibility caters to a variety of needs.

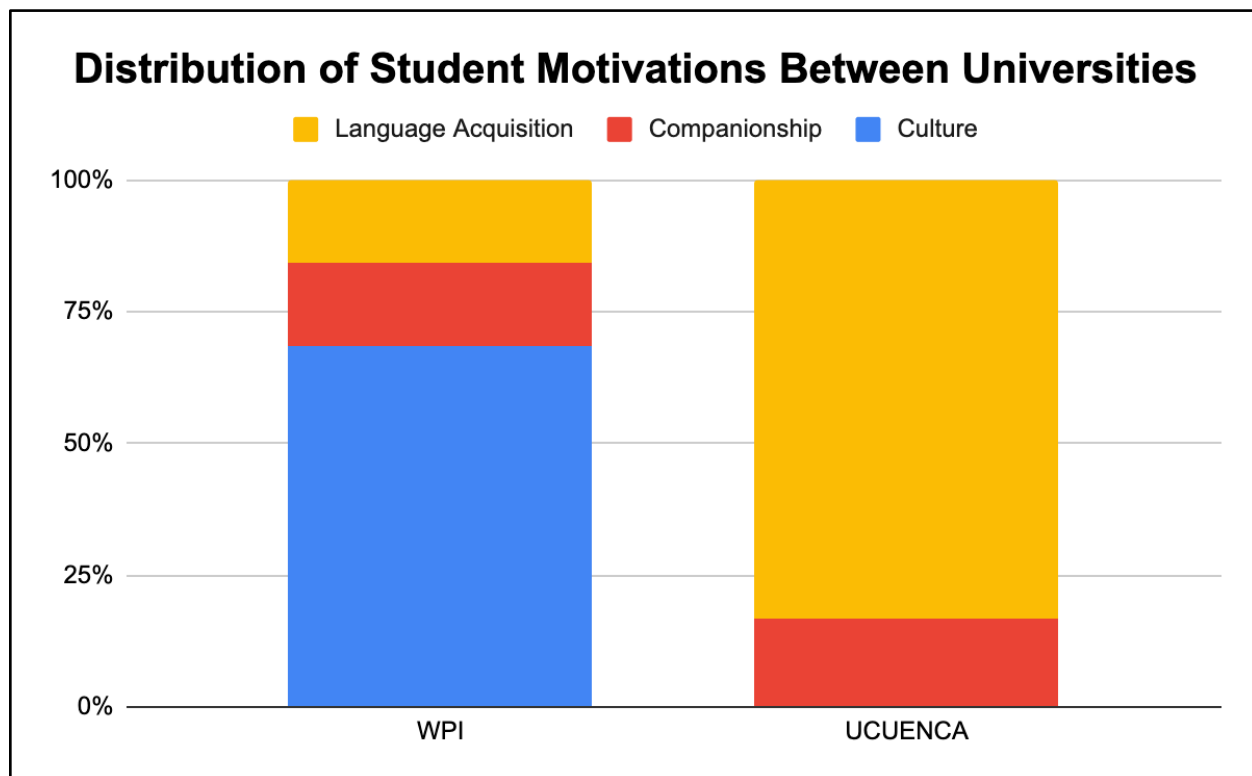


Figure 1: The motivations of students to participate in the Tandem program organized by frequency of codes for each university following interview analysis.

Aside from initial motivation to participate, we also found there were factors that encouraged retention in the program through our mid-term reflections. Participants were motivated to continue participating and finish the program by language acquisition, cultural learning and partnership, respectively. When prompted with what they were enjoying most so far about their experience, students voiced that “improving on language,” and “becoming friends with [their] tandem partner” and “cultural learning in [their] relationship” were reasons for continuing participation in the program. One student who voiced that all of their expectations were met said that they felt so because they could “practice [their] language skills and learn a bit about Ecuador and the culture, and become friends with [their] partner all at once.” Overall, the Tandem program is flexible and able to cater to different student motivations.

3.1.3 Finding 2: The Tandem program is flexible in accommodating different program needs.

The Tandem program is used alongside a variety of program structures. Through our semi-structured interviews with administrators and review of the documents from our sponsor, we learned that the Tandem program is a complementary experience to various study abroad programs. For example, one administrator focuses the experience strictly on language learning, whereas another focuses their abroad experience on teaching about food sovereignty and sustainability. The flexibility of the Tandem program allows it to adapt to each university’s

different structures, needs, and focuses. Ms. Loja has the philosophy that the “program will only continue if ... [we] meet ... expectations and program requirements, so we work hard to keep that in mind.” As displayed in Table 2, there are many universities with whom UCUENCA collaborates.

Table 2: *The universities that the UCUENCA Tandem program collaborates with and their corresponding program lengths and focuses.*

University	Program Length	Program Characteristics
Georgia Institute of Technology	5 weeks	Spanish language program
University of Maryland, College Park	3 weeks	A Science, Technology and Society program, where Tandem partners meet virtually as a group before their arrival in Cuenca
Mount Saint Mary's University	3 months	Program with emphasis on Spanish language and culture learning
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque	4 weeks	Spanish language program with focus on food sovereignty and sustainability volunteer work
The Ohio State University	2 weeks	Program with emphasis on service learning and cultural understanding. There are two conversation sessions between UCUENCA and OSU students
Pennsylvania State University	5 weeks	ESL Certificate with immersion. Emphasis on culture. Tandem partners meet virtually as a group before their trip
Stetson University	1 month	Program with emphasis on language and culture
University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada	3 months	Program with emphasis on Spanish language and culture learning
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	2 months	Program with emphasis on culture learning

Due to how widely different the foreign university programs are, the UCUENCA Tandem program adapts to accommodate their needs. While not all-encompassing, the differences between the programs conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Ohio State University show how flexible the Tandem program is. Georgia Tech's program is entirely focused on Spanish language instruction, so they incorporate the Tandem program as a supplemental graded component to their curriculum. The foreign students have a set of material and topics that they are expected to discuss with their Tandem partner, and later formally reflect on. Due to this, Ms. Loja needs to make the UCUENCA participants aware of the structured nature of this specific experience. The program conducted by the Ohio State University puts much less emphasis on the Tandem experience. The entire cohort of students only meet two to three times and English is overwhelmingly spoken. Their program has absolutely no focus on Spanish, so conversations and lasting connections between students are only made if the UCUENCA students are able to speak English well. Due to the specific needs of this program, Ms. Loja seeks students who are not looking for the commitment of a longer Tandem program and just want to speak in English with foreigners a few times.

Our own university, WPI, spends two months at UCUENCA with the Tandem program, so partners meet upwards of 10 times. Language exchange is emphasized for our experience, but we are not graded on conversation and topics covered. Ms. Loja has adapted the WPI Tandem experience to focus on language exchange by trying to pair partners with similar language levels if possible. Recently, WPI has expanded the program to last over a span of four months in an effort to make the program more successful in language acquisition and companionship. The entirety of the universities listed in Table 2 work with Ms. Loja to cater the Tandem program to their different programs.

3.2: Creating Community

3.2.1 Finding 3: A successful Tandem experience is dependent on compatible partner matching.

When we asked satisfied Tandem participants about what made their experience in the program a success, one frequent response was their compatibility with their Tandem partners. Our data revealed that compatibility stems from having similar language levels, schedules, and interests with their partners. The extent to which students deemed the importance of these factors is displayed in Figure 2, as determined from our surveys of participants. Through interviewing the Tandem program administrators, it became clear that there is not an organized partner matching process, and thus there is a need for matching criteria.

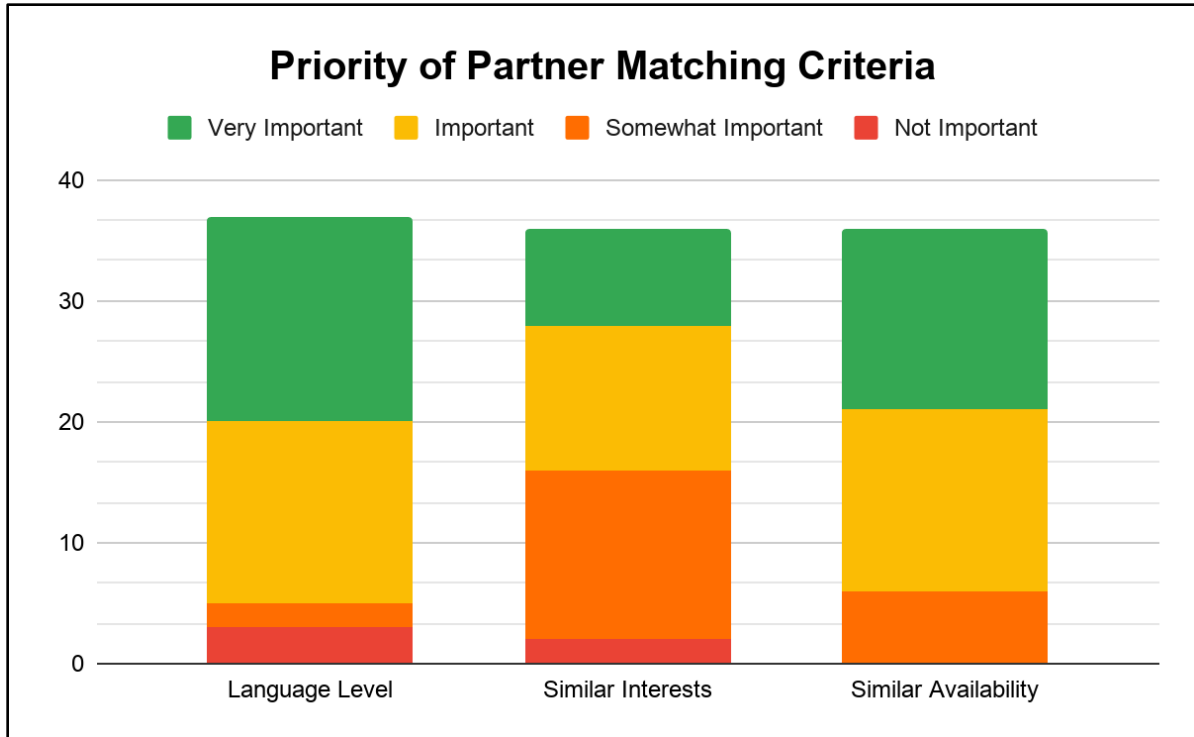


Figure 2: Participant rankings of the importance of partner matching criteria.

Approximately 89% of the Tandem participants who took our survey rated having similar language levels with their Tandem partners as either ‘Very Important’ or ‘Important’, as seen in Figure 2. An interviewee stated, “I got matched with a Tandem that spoke very little English. I spoke Spanish so that was okay, but it was 90-95% in Spanish.” While the student commented that the experience was okay, the pairing was clearly a failure since they never met again after the first meeting. Another student acknowledged that they received a lot of help from their partner in learning the language and regretted not helping their partner as much. Some interviewees also voiced that they felt embarrassed of their lack of fluency when their Tandem partner was notably more fluent than them. If partners have different language levels, it puts stress on one partner to cater to the other’s language and takes away the opportunity for language learning. Since the partner matching has not had a structured way to match language levels, it has often been the case that students felt that they relied on their own language more than the other, as shown in Figure 3.

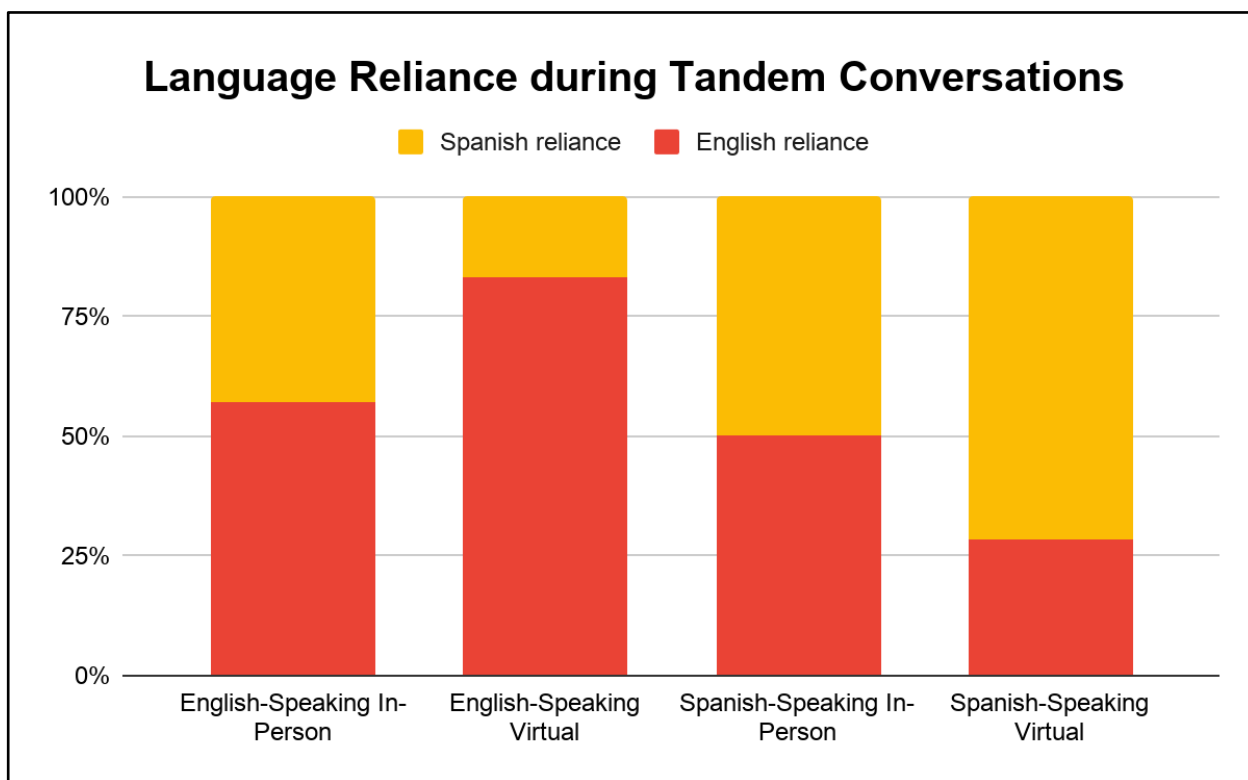


Figure 3: *Language Reliance during Tandem partnerships and conversations from past and current participant survey data analysis.*

Both the virtual and in-person Tandem participants generally experienced trouble finding time to meet with their partners due to conflicting schedules. About 83% of the Tandem participants who took our survey rated having similar availability with their Tandem partners as either ‘Very Important’ or ‘Important’ as seen in Figure 2. Scheduling difficulties varied depending on the different activities of their individual programs, the college concentration of each participant, or any additional commitments participants had. A UCUENCA student said of his partner that “At certain times it was somewhat difficult to hold meetings, [my partner] took part in a lot of activities at the university, traveling to communities and other places. And on the other hand, her host family didn’t allow her to stay outside after 7pm.” There were also several accounts of UCUENCA students saying that their exam weeks overlapped with the program and put more stress on them. The experiences of these students inform us of what occupies a student’s time and shows how critical similar schedules are.

About 54% of the Tandem participants who took our survey rated having similar interests with their Tandem partners as either ‘Very Important’ or ‘Important’ as seen in Figure 2. One interviewee stated that “It was awkward until they started talking about similar interests, this definitely helped us to speak more” and similar reports were heard in several interviews. We realized that often a person’s interests tend to influence the activities they enjoy. As one past participant said of his Tandem partner in an interview, “Her hobbies did not align with my hobbies, like going to bars and clubs. She was more introverted, so she didn’t like doing that stuff...and so we didn’t hang out as much.” Overall, if students with similar interests are paired together, they are more likely to enjoy activities together. Another benefit to having similar interests is that it helped the participants break the ice. One UCUENCA interviewee had such a

good connection with her partner that it was one of the main reasons she listed as to why she would participate again if she could.

In evaluating the factors of compatibility from our interviews, we learned that past participants have priorities about what traits they value in a partner. Participants value language matching above all else, followed by similar schedules, and similar interests. Our surveys confirmed this prioritization, with the rankings triangulating with what interviewees had voiced was important in a partner. Despite language compatibility matching being the highest sought-after quality in a partner, surveys showed that in the past, language compatibility among Tandem partners was not always ideal with 25 percent of participants commenting that their language level compatibility was ‘Bad’ or ‘Somewhat bad’. This shows an opportunity for improvement in the matching process.

3.2.2 Finding 4: Tandem participants want more group and partner activity programming.

Through analyzing the data collected throughout our participant interviews and program evaluations, we discovered that there is a strong desire amongst program participants for more group activities and vastly different motivations for this.

While both the in-person and the virtual student participants had radically different program experiences, the two groups actively wanted to meet the broader cohort through group activities or events. All in-person WPI students who had successful Tandem experiences saw group events as a way to supplement their cultural learning. Group-wide events also serve as an alternative to the partner experience for students in less successful partnerships. For that matter, the in-person students who were not able to form effective relationships with their Tandem partners saw group activities as a way to potentially salvage some of the language and cultural exchange they did not get from their assigned partner. One WPI student who participated in an in-person Tandem experience explained that they created their own groups with other Tandem pairs to explore Cuenca because they “didn’t have the most consistent relationship with [their] partner.” Despite the vastly different motives for group programming between successful and unsuccessful Tandem participants, in-person students still benefit from the in-person experience that virtual Tandem participants do not get.

Without the ability to physically meet their Tandem partners in-person, virtual participants see group-wide activity programming as a way to gain the cultural learning that even the most effective online partnerships lack. While virtual participants are still able to meet and form partnerships with a foreign student, they often stated that the inability to physically interact with their partners led to an incomplete experience. A WPI student who participated in a virtual Tandem experience said that “group activities, like introductions” would be a good opportunity to meet and interact with the wider cohort. Despite being rooted in vastly different circumstances, both virtual and in-person interviewees want group-activities so that they are able to further enjoy their Tandem experience.

While the UCUENCA students we interviewed wanted to incorporate group experiences, this sentiment was also reflected in many of the Tandem program evaluations. It was apparent that several UCUENCA students see group activities as an effective way to improve the program, as seen in Figure 4. This information came from an open-ended question to UCUENCA students for suggestions on optimizing the Tandem experience. Comments such as “it would be nice if there were meetings among all the members, so that you can socialize more among the students” and “it would be very good if there was a development of group activities by the program administration so that we could meet the whole group visiting our country”

explicitly mentioned the desire to integrate group activities into the Tandem program. All of the program evaluations were from 2019 or the beginning of 2020, when the program still operated in-person, so implementing group activities is not a new idea. In accordance with the suggestions of many of the evaluation respondents, our document analysis leads us to believe that group activities would further improve an already successful program.

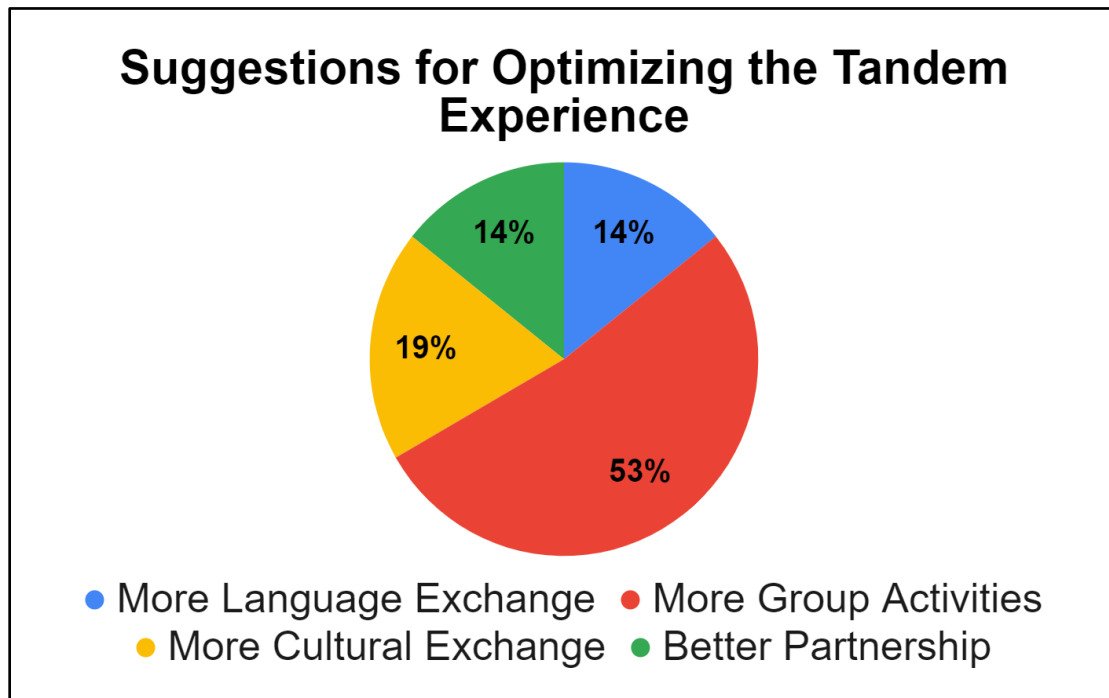


Figure 4: *Suggestions for optimizing the Tandem experience from UCUENCA Post-Program Survey.*

In addition to group programming, Tandem participants also shared the need for more partner activity options. Tandem partners frequently spoke fondly about the times they shared and the activities they did together. We found that 68% of all participants who spoke about their activities during the Tandem program, mentioned what they did with their partner. Participants prefer activities that are cost-efficient and accessible. Amongst other things, the in-person participants ate lunch together, visited cafes, and went on walks, while the virtual participants gave informal presentations about themselves or had a show and tell around their rooms. While the interviewees enjoyed these experiences, they often mentioned wanting to do more activities with their partner. The infrequency of activities is not because of a lack of time or schedule mismatch between partners, but because Tandem partners did not know what else they could do with one another. One in-person WPI student said that, “[My Tandem partner] didn’t really know what to do in the city together, so maybe a thing about places to go or things to do.” Another WPI student said that “some structure of socialization” could help Tandem partners go to more events together. Our research showed that both in-person and virtual program participants would appreciate a resource or more structured help when it comes to doing activities with their Tandem partner.

3.3: Program Materials

3.3.1 Finding 5: Participants want improved topics for conversation and a standardized orientation presentation.

When we inquired about the types of program materials that Tandem participants are provided with in our administrator interviews, we learned that there are standard materials and more flexible materials. All participants (virtual, in-person, international, UCUENCA) receive initial emails from the program coordinators before the start of the program introducing the structure, and virtual participants receive their partners and contact information in this email too. We found that the material that varied the most was the orientation presentation that participants received. Virtual participants receive no orientation presentation. In-person international students receive varied preparation from their respective universities, and UCUENCA students receive a standardized three-slide presentation about the structure and expectations of the program. When analyzing initial program emails seen in **Appendix H**, our team identified categories that were most mentioned, such as cultural learning, partnership, and conversation topics. The emails highlight these themes by mentioning them specifically, which emphasizes their importance to the program.

All participants also receive a conversation guide, or the ‘Topics for Conversation’ material **Appendix I**. UCUENCA provides participants with a list of topics such as pop culture, personal life, family life, health, and technology. When asked about possible improvements to their experience, we found that approximately 45% of our interviewees mentioned the need for a more in-depth conversation guide, which specifically discusses social norms. Our team commonly heard similar concerns from interviewees about the conversation guide, which is that “the topics for conversation were covered in the first meeting,” and this unfortunately led to it being “really easy to have repeat conversations.” Partners will be more likely to meet if they know they have something to talk about. Despite not being listed on the topic sheet, most conversations revolved around culture. Other topics that participants liked to discuss included education systems, food and health, social norms, and other societal topics. This implies that not only do participants see the need for more conversation topics for ease of experience, but for the benefit and longevity of partnerships. Certain topics will only come up naturally if they are happening in the moment. Additionally, students who were able to participate in person noted that a lot of their knowledge about Ecuadorian culture came from impromptu activities or outings. Our overall research showed that both UCUENCA and the international participants of the Tandem program viewed cultural learning and assisting materials as a key aspect of their experience.

We also found that coordinators and participants saw the need for a standardized orientation presentation, due to the drastic differences in preparation between UCUENCA students and international universities. The differences in preparation lead to further variety in motivation and retention of participation. An administrator from one North American university said that their students “have a course about interculturality and intercultural interaction...with readings and discussions around culture” before the program. They also have seen benefits to having “a virtual meeting with the tandem group with the coordinators” before actually traveling to Ecuador, such as students being more receptive to participate. Adversely, another administrator said that before traveling they “tell people about [the Tandem program] but that's about it” which means students “don't always see the value” of participating. While being required to participate, some coordinators do not enforce the program, which leads to lack of

participation. When we inquired with past participants about improvements they would like to see, more knowledge of program requirements and more cultural education were noted five times and six times, respectively. Overall, Tandem students and administrators wanted shared levels and types of preparation.

3.3.2 Finding 6: Cultural learning is valued by Tandem participants.

Through analyzing our research, we found teaching about culture to be a central focus of the Tandem program. UCUENCA advertises cultural exchange as a main facet of the program, along with language exchange. Cultural learning is emphasized in the resources created by Tandem administrators, such as initial emails regarding the program, the suggested conversation topics, as well as the orientation slides. Going into the program, participants expect cultural learning to be a very important aspect to their experience. The virtual students who are participating currently stated that the main thing they are missing out on is the cultural immersion aspect of the program. For example, in our survey of past participants, 54% of virtual WPI students only learned ‘a little’ about their partner’s culture whereas 86% of in-person students learned ‘a good amount’ or ‘a lot’. This displays a stark difference in the experience that virtual students and in-person participants have received. One administrator we interviewed stated that, “The in-person Tandem experiences have more potential for cultural impact. Students did stuff in the city, did excursions, experienced things together. In-person has the potential for deeper cultural connection because they can actually do things.” In our interviews with participants, the category of cultural learning came up in 90% of interviews, the most out of ten categories we designated while coding interview data. Participants value meeting students from another culture and learning about their lifestyle. One interviewee stated,

“I think what I was trying to achieve out of it, and I think I did achieve this, was [...] just learning from someone who [...] is] completely ... from a different background from me and is the same age as me. [It was a] weird epiphany of them being completely on the other side of the world but developed entirely different types of experiences.”

The experience is unique because participants are able to learn about the lifestyle of someone close to their age in a very different location. Throughout our participant interviews, multiple participants stated that the program broadened their view on the U.S., the world, and themselves.

3.4: Discussion

The findings provide information for us to develop a plan for UCUENCA to implement within the Tandem program. Through our research, we found that the Tandem program values the success of students and promotes language exchange and intercultural relationships. This sentiment was also reflected in the participants, who value informative and meaningful connections as well as a sense of community and support amongst their cohort. We also recognize that the current Tandem program’s strengths include encouraging a student led experience, providing supplemental materials, and facilitating cultural exchange. However, we understand our samples and populations were small and provided by UCUENCA so our findings may not reflect the interests of the entire Tandem community. With this acknowledgement, we believe the findings we have identified emphasize and amplify the strengths of the Tandem program. This was reflected in the research and data we acquired about desires to have a more

effective partner matching, enhanced topic guides and orientations, and more student-led activities. Thus, UCUENCA can move forward in their promotion and strengthening of the Tandem program by implementing materials and solutions that truly highlight the needs of stakeholders.

From our findings, we discovered the importance that partner matching, group activities, and cultural learning hold for the Tandem community. We learned that students prioritize partner matching, especially in language ability, as a key factor in the quality of their experience. In that same stream, we found that Ms. Loja usually matches Tandem partners by major and fluency if provided by the university but does not have a framework to consider other traits that participants deemed important in a partnership. Currently, Ms. Loja has had difficulty finding a system that would suit the needs of the partnerships. Determining what language level assessment would be most accurate while not being too time consuming is included in this struggle. From our analysis of certain partner matching systems, there are many ways to go about this process that take into account the number of factors to consider and the context of the program. Furthermore, we noticed a divide between the experiences of the virtual and in-person Tandem participants that was ubiquitous throughout our findings. Virtual experience participants tend to focus on language learning, whereas in-person students have more exposure to cultural learning. We learned that all participants, no matter the format of experience, felt that group activities would allow them to become acquainted with the rest of their Tandem cohort and supplement their language or cultural exchange. The implementation of group activities can also aid in circumstances where a good partner match cannot be made, allowing a participant the opportunity to still participate in the program with other group members. We also found that more partnership programming is wanted by program administrators and students due to the value of intercultural relationships. However, programming often emphasizes language over cultural exchange as represented in the lack of cultural opportunities and guidance in the topic conversation guide, program orientation and activity ideas.

Additionally, we considered the objectives of the Tandem program and the synthesis of our finding themes. Program materials like topic conversation guides and orientation presentations were of most importance to stakeholders due to their impact on partnership and program flexibility. Furthermore, participants stressed the need for group programming and activity materials, and we recognize how this addition can have an impact on themes of cultural learning and motivation.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

Based on our findings, we recommend specific ways that the Tandem program at UCUENCA can initiate improvements and continue supporting successful experiences. We have organized a detailed plan for Ms. Loja into the following three recommendations:

1. **Develop** a more intensive partner matching system
2. **Assign** and encourage Tandem group activities
3. **Implement** a cultural guide and culture-focused conversation topics

While it is critical to assess areas of improvement to meet the wide range of concerns and needs expressed by participants, it is unrealistic for all to be solved through these recommendations. Thus, we considered the feasibility of implementing our recommendations and aimed to address as many improvements and desires as possible.

4.1: Recommendation 1: Develop a more intensive partner matching system

By analyzing interview and survey data, we surmised that effective partner matching practices should prioritize language level, schedules, and interests. For language level matching, we recommend that the administration of the Tandem program implement a third party, online language assessment test that verifies a student's language ability and listening comprehension. Listening comprehension is a practical assessment of language level since communication between Tandem partners is primarily verbal. In-person Tandem partners would have even more of an impetus to speak, as opposed to texting. Our team recommends using the Spanish and English listening comprehension tests on "www.lingua.com", as seen in **Appendix J**. Both students, foreign and from UCUENCA, would take a test in their respective target language, and report their score in the partner matching form. We recommend that both students take the "B2" level test because it corresponds to an independent point in language learning where the participant is able to communicate easily and spontaneously (Carlsen, 2018). Someone who is able to get full marks on the "B2" level test will be able to understand and communicate with their Tandem partner, whereas someone who does not perform as well is known to still be developing their speaking and listening ability (Carlsen, 2018). Based on the results of the assessment, we would only recommend that people of similar fluency be paired together. As long as the pairings are made in this way, we believe that this would be very feasible and allow for other matching categories to take precedent.

We recommend that interests could be assessed with two methods: a personality test and a participant biography. A personality assessment could ask about traits that had a significant impact on past participants' experiences, such as extraversion and levels of dedication. While the participant biography could be another resource for the Tandem administration to use when making pairings, its intended use is to give future partners insight about their Tandem before their first meeting. This gives both Tandem partners the opportunity to know about their partner, and would not be required or prioritized to be sorted through by UCUENCA administration. Several interviewees suggested a participant biography as a way to list off interests and hobbies. This allows for Tandem partners to discuss their shared interests and participate in activities that they both enjoy. For ease, the personality test and participant biography could be combined into one online survey with an open response field serving as the participant's opportunity to include this brief list of hobbies and interests. We recognize that it might be too much to sort through the

participant biographies, and so the personality test would suffice to assess how similar two participants' interests and personalities are. We gathered from the participant interviews that people preferred Tandem partners with similar levels of extraversion, but we cannot guarantee that this will be the case for everyone. Therefore, prioritizing language matching will be a reliable measure for maintaining an enjoyable experience for these participants.

For scheduling, we recommend that the Tandem administration accrue data through an availability survey. From Finding 3, we believe that asking participants what their major is could be a minimal check on how much time participants can offer to the Tandem program. Although the amount of time devoted to studies varies on an individual basis, we offer the question of major as an easier option for assessing how busy a student's schedule may be. Pairing majors that are similar in time requirements could not only result in similar schedules but create an opportunity for connection based on shared interest. Building from there, questions of how many extracurriculars or what curfews a participant has could be a low-hassle estimate of how busy someone is. Additionally, we suggest that perhaps the participants could be asked in the survey if they prefer to socialize in the morning or at night. This would be a way to avoid making the participants fill out a whole schedule of when they would prefer to meet and would be a much more manageable dataset to review for matching.

In terms of the deliverables, we created a Google Forms survey to serve as an assessment for similar language levels, interests, and schedules to aid in partner matching, which can be found in **Appendix K**. The data gained from this survey would be a guide for the administrators to perform partner matching. We included a link to a listening comprehension quiz to gauge language level, with all students taking the same quiz to make it a fair judgement. This way, the student will be placed in the highest language level that they successfully completed.

4.2: Recommendation 2: Assign and encourage Tandem group activities

Based upon the themes recognized in Finding 4, we recommend that extra steps should be taken by UCUENCA and whichever foreign university is working with them to assign and encourage Tandem group activities. Based on interview data, there are many benefits for groups of Tandem partners to engage in activity and conversation with one another in addition to just meeting with their Tandem partner one-on-one. Creating a group environment for the Tandem cohort can allow for increased participation. Introverted participants can find comfort in a group setting, alleviating some of the pressure of constantly being engaged. Participants will feel less awkward and stressed when surrounded by a group of their peers, as opposed to being paired off with a stranger. In our data, it was found that the group setting also allows for an easier flow of conversation. By grouping up pairs of Tandems, participation may come more easily. In addition to having events available for the entire Tandem cohort, we recommend smaller groups made up of a few Tandem partners. This way, Tandem participants can make more acquaintances and learn even more about the local culture. If the Tandem pairs are already paired through partner matching, creating the group can be more randomized. The Tandem group could be assigned at the same time as the Tandem partner, and all contact information could be provided. UCUENCA could suggest that the Tandem group makes a group chat on WhatsApp to keep in touch.

With the addition of Tandem groups, we recommend that there are more opportunities and guidance for which activities Tandem partners can do together, so our group decided to supplement the activities list created by our sponsor. This list previously included activities for around Cuenca and other excursions and was only provided to Pennsylvania State University participants. We added more generic activity ideas in addition to the Cuenca-specific activities

seen in Figure 5, with the full version seen in **Appendix L**, and recommend this be given to all university participants. Past participants have noted that there have been times that UCUENCA students themselves, who come from more rural areas around Cuenca, do not know what to do in the city. Suggestions could include lists of restaurants, museums, shops, or sight-seeing locations. If participants are comfortable, it could be suggested to them to visit their homes or show them around their local neighborhoods as a group. On this same list of suggested activities for the city, there should also be more general suggestions. We heard of past participants participating in recreational activities such as basketball, so suggestions could include playing basketball together, soccer, baseball, frisbee, or any other accessible sporting activities. A few past participant interviewees mentioned that they enjoy hiking. A safe list of places in nature to go outside of the city could also be included.

UCUENCA TANDEM PROGRAM

OPTIONS FOR EXCURSIONS

1. **Modern Art Museum** — **Dates:** Open from Monday to Saturday — **Price:** Free Entrance
 - A contemporary art museum offering guided tours, plays, music, and workshops.**Address:** Calle Sucre and Calle Estevez de Toral
2. **Pumapungo Museum** — **Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** Free Entrance
 - Students can visit the ethnographic museum and the archaeological park (botanic garden with medicinal plants and small bird shelter).**Address:** Calle Larga y Ave. Huayna-Capac
3. **Sombrero Museum** — **Price:** Free Entrance
 - A beautiful museum about the Ecuadorian hat.**Address:** Calle Larga y Benigno Malo
4. **Amaru Zoo** — **Dates:** Open from Monday to Friday — **Price:** \$
 - A zoo with exotic animals that's a 20 minute drive from the university of Cuenca. Seeing all the animals should take around 2 hours.**Website:** www.zoobioparqueamaru.com
5. **Giron Waterfalls** — **Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** \$
 - Abundant nature and a beautiful waterfall! You can do ziplining and hikes here. A local guide charges \$30 for a group of 15 people for a one hour hike to "Segunda Chorrera." There is no need of a guide if you want to visit only "Chorrera 1."**Address:** Noroeste del Canton Giron Chorro del Carmen
6. **Indigenous Cultures Museum** — **Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** \$
 - A museum of indigenous culture with more than 5000 archaeological pieces that represent more than 20 pre-Columbian Ecuadorian cultures.**Address:** Calle Larga 5-24 entre Hermano Miguel y Mariano Cueva
7. **Las Conceptas Museum** — **Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** \$
 - A religious museum that has its beginning in 1561 as a female monastery.**Address:** Calle Hermano Miguel entre Calle Sucre and Presidente Córdoba
8. **Baños Hot Water Springs** — **Price:** \$\$
 - Students can go to one of the two spas: Piedra de Agua (recommended) and Novaqua. Students can go swimming, get massages, relax in jacuzzis, and enjoy other related activities.**Address (1):** Paseo de la Guadalupana S/N Baños
Address (2): Loma, De los Hervideros
9. **Cuenca Canopy** — **Time:** Mondays or Wednesdays — **Price:** \$\$
 - Experiences and activities full of adventure, such as canopy walks and ziplining! Students can also go camping under the stars.**Facebook:** Cuenca Canopy
Phone: +593 (99) 926 - 2269
Email: cuenccanopy@yahoo.com

Pricing Guide	
\$	0-15
\$\$	15-50
\$\$\$	50+

Figure 5: Formulated Activity Guide to be provided to all Tandem participants.

Group activities should be emphasized from the very beginning of the program. We recommended that there is some discussion about it during the orientation, with all the Tandem participants present. This will be an ideal first event for the Tandems to meet each other and learn more about what group activities they can do together. With all participants present at orientation the first meeting will not be as awkward, and the groups can get together and plan their first activity. We recommend that after the orientation presentation is given, time is given for some 'ice-breaker' activities for the group.

We recommended that events are planned by administrators specifically for the whole cohort to be invited to with their Tandem partners. These events should be optional but encouraged because the UCUENCA students have very busy schedules. Examples from previous years such as attending a Tandem partner's play and the Carnival celebration that WPI coordinators have organized in previous years are perfect examples, and also allow for supplemental cultural exchange. It is important to have planned events so that there is an underlying guideline for groups to participate.

We executed convenience sampling to get feedback on our materials for this recommendation. We saw that the overall response to this material was positive, with 48.4% of responses saying it will extremely influence cultural exchange, and 45.2% saying it will greatly influence cultural exchange. Suggestions we heard most often for improvements were adding a pricing key for clarification of what ranges to expect, and to space out the text for ease of reading. After incorporating some of these improvements into our activities and excursions pamphlet, the participants in our focus group thought that it was an effective way to introduce foreigners to the city and surrounding area. Furthermore, two of the UCUENCA students were from rural areas near Cuenca and said that the sample activities that we showed them would have helped them get to know the city. Those two students were not aware of several of the common activities listed on the document we provided them with, which shows us that it would be an effective deliverable for both UCUENCA and foreign students.

4.3: Recommendation 3: Implement a cultural guide and culture-focused conversation topics

Utilizing Finding 3, we determined that the Tandem program should focus on implementing more cultural education for both international and UCUENCA students alike. Current preparatory practices examined in our document analysis include emails introducing the Tandem program and partners for virtual participants with an explanation that they will be meeting to converse in English and Spanish. The in-person participants receive a presentation formatting how the program will work before meeting their partner, which is displayed in **Appendix M**. We believe it would be most helpful to prioritize a more intensive cultural education aspect prior to and during their time in Cuenca. Additionally, virtual participants' lack of cultural immersion indicates the need for more guided materials that can be used in a flexible manner. Ideally, this flexibility will mean the materials can be utilized by both international and UCUENCA students, with virtual and in-person programming. They should also have enough content so both Tandem partners have the ability to talk about listed topics they are particularly passionate or excited about.

We first recommend that orientation include both UCUENCA and international students in the same room or virtual setting, and begin with the general overview of the program. Following this, we recommend adding a time during orientation that emphasizes open conversation about cultural differences. The implementation of an open group discussion in orientation would allow for an 'ice-breaking' period for all students, which would mitigate one-on-one awkwardness that participants frequently spoke about in interviews. Specifically, the group orientation presentation should include audience questions to participants from both cultures regarding how you greet people, how you say goodbye, and any actions that could be seen as rude or offensive. This type of presentation is recommended to be presented to all

participants, whether their experience be virtual or in person, so all participants have equal opportunity for cultural immersion and fewer awkward encounters.

We also recommend that the topic conversation guide include cultural conversation topics for participants to talk about in paired conversation or group settings. This would encourage conversation to be facilitated between partners regarding social norms, customs, and niche differences. The best examples we heard of partner bonding and friendship stemmed from relationships that talked about cultural differences and social customs. Some of these conversations were facilitated by the environment, where partners were in settings like restaurants or plays that cued conversation about cultural differences. Perhaps the best example we heard is how shocked a participant was to learn that putting ketchup on ceviche was customary in Ecuador. Conversations like this make a satisfactory experience for participants and possible discussion topics in a guide would ensure continuity of these conversations.

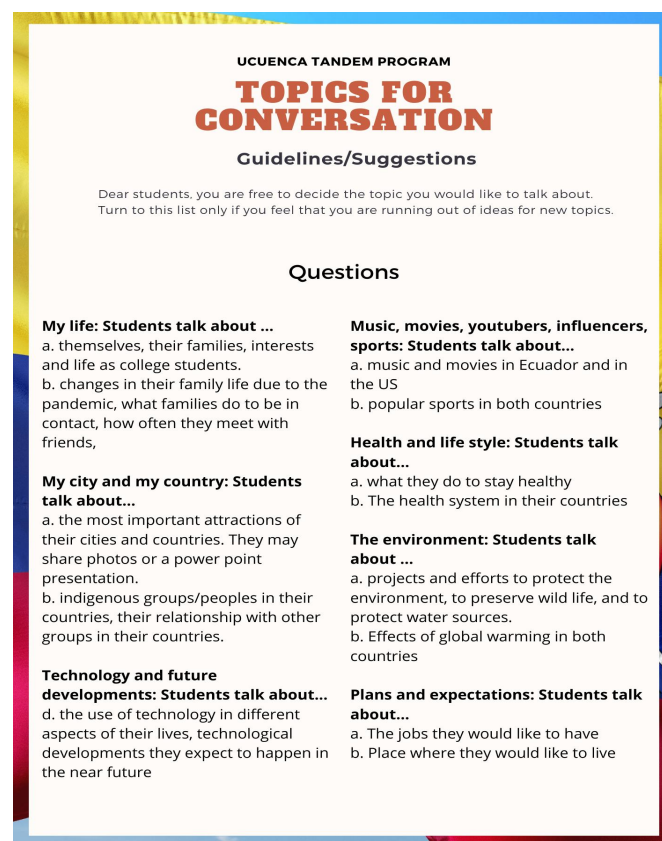


Figure 6: Formulated Conversation guide to be used by all Tandem participants.

Following this feedback, we created a draft conversation guide based on Ms. Loja's provided topics, and also added cultural conversation topics as seen in Figure 6, with the full version seen in **Appendix N**. When we executed our convenience sampling method, we saw that the overall response to this material was positive, with 72.7% of the 35 responses rating the topic guide as 'extremely helpful' and 27.3% rating the topic guide as 'very helpful'. Suggestions from participants included adding more categories so the material can be used for longer and ensuring it can be accessed through a phone or laptop. From conducting our focus group, participants also had concerns about keeping the level of difficulty in conversation topics down. One focus group

participant mentioned that “a difficulty could be having an unclear understanding between the partners if they cannot explain things to each other with their limited language fluency.” Due to this concern, we kept in mind the need to keep cultural questions on a simpler vocabulary level so that they are accessible to all students. Additionally, another focus group member voiced that culture is a key factor in getting to know one another and having more topics to choose from and offers a variety of vocabulary to practice. We discussed and made these appropriate changes before finalizing the deliverable. An additional deliverable we formulated is a standardized orientation presentation with additive cultural probing questions that can be addressed to all participants in their first initial group meeting, a few slides from this presentation are seen in Figure 7, with the full version seen in **Appendix O**.



Figure 7: Two slides from updated orientation presentation for all Tandem participants.

4.4: Project Conclusion

The goal of this project was to help promote, broaden, and strengthen the Tandem program at UCUENCA. By creating a space for stakeholders to share their experiences in interviews and surveys, we learned where needs and concerns lie. We found a lack of development in partner matching, activity programming, and cultural education, and that the Tandem community could benefit from additional materials. The materials we created, like a partner matching assessment, group activity ideas, and a more robust conversation guide, will provide long term support to participants. The provided recommendations will address the needs of Tandem participants and administration, as well as successfully prepare the program for future expansion.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Interview Questions

We are a team of WPI students researching how to promote and strengthen the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca. The participant interview will last approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to learn how past participants of the Tandem program see areas of growth and continuation, and learn about their overall experience. The data you provide us with will assist us in creating deliverable materials to program administrators that could range from curriculums, handouts or conversation guides dependent upon interview and survey data.

This interview will ask you several questions ranging from your personal experience in the program, how it could have been improved and your current involvement with the program. With your oral consent, we will tape record the interviews to review for analysis. This is an opportunity for you to tell your story about your experience in the program and provide insight so the experience can be better for those who have not yet participated. If any of these questions make you uncomfortable, you can voice to skip the question, and can withdraw from the process at any time. If you have any questions that arise at any point during the interview, please ask.

For more information about this research or about your rights as a research participant, please contact any of the involved below:

Researchers: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu
Project Advisor: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

All of your responses will be anonymous and your identity will remain confidential throughout the entirety of our study.

Questions:

1. Can you describe the impact of your Tandem Program experience?
 - a. How did the Tandem program impact your ability to speak Spanish or English?
2. Can you tell us about your experience learning about your partner's day-to-day life in the Tandem Program?
 - a. How interested was your partner in your day-to-day life/culture?
 - b. Did you feel comfortable discussing your culture with your partner?
 - i. What do you think made this difficult?*
 - c. Did you experience any issues with 'breaking the ice', or feeling awkward when first meeting with your partner?
 - i. If you experienced this, were there improvements? What did you do to combat this?
 - d. Would you have liked to know more about the social norms of where your partner is from?
 - i. Would you have liked a material to reference for this? What form?
 - e. Would you have liked a template or suggestions of topics to discuss?

- f. What interests you most about your Tandem partner's culture?
3. Can you give an example of something you would've liked to go differently?
4. Can you tell us more about your relationship with your partner and its effect on your overall experience?
 - a. Will you be keeping in touch with your Tandem partner beyond the program?
 - b. Can you tell us more about your meeting schedule?
 - c. **Virtual Participants Question:** How did you communicate with your partner? Any specific platforms?
 - d. **In-person Participants Question:** Where did you meet with your partner? Did you do any fun activities, etc.
 - e. Is there something you would specifically want in a partner in a program like this? Language levels, certain interests, similar availability, etc.
 - f. Was there any cultural miscommunications/misunderstandings you wish you would've known about?
5. What were you hoping to achieve by participating in this program?
 - a. How successful were you in achieving what you wanted out of this program?
6. Would you participate in something like the Tandem program again? Why or why not?
7. Is there anything you want to talk about that was not already mentioned?

UCUENCA student specific question (in addition to previous questions):

1. Why did you choose to participate in this program?

* Ask question as probe

Somos un equipo de estudiantes de WPI que investigamos cómo promover y fortalecer el Programa Tándem en la Universidad de Cuenca. La entrevista al participante tendrá una duración aproximada de 30 minutos. El propósito de esta entrevista es aprender cómo los participantes anteriores del programa Tandem ven las áreas de crecimiento y continuación, y conocer su experiencia en general. Los datos que nos proporcione nos ayudarán a crear materiales que se puedan entregar a los administradores del programa, que pueden variar desde currículos, folletos, o guías de conversación que dependen de los datos de entrevistas y encuestas.

Esta entrevista le hará varias preguntas que van desde su experiencia personal en el programa, cómo podría haberse mejorado y su participación actual en el programa. Con su consentimiento oral, grabaremos las entrevistas para revisarlas y analizarlas. Esta es una oportunidad para que cuente su historia sobre su experiencia en el programa y brinde información para que la experiencia sea mejor para aquellos que aún no han participado. Si alguna de estas preguntas lo hace sentir incómodo, puede expresarlo para omitir la pregunta y puede retirarse del proceso en cualquier momento. Si tiene alguna pregunta que surja en algún momento durante la entrevista, por favor pregunte.

Para obtener más información sobre esta investigación o sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación, comuníquese con cualquiera de los involucrados a continuación:

Investigadores: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Asesor del proyecto: Courtney Kurlanska

Todas sus respuestas serán anónimas y su identidad permanecerá confidencial durante la totalidad de nuestro estudio.

Preguntas:

1. ¿Puede describir el impacto de su experiencia en el programa Tandem?
 - a. ¿Cómo afectó el programa tandem su capacidad de hablar español o inglés?
2. ¿Puede contarnos su experiencia aprendiendo sobre el día a día de su compañero en el Programa Tandem?
 - a. ¿Qué tan interesado estaba su compañero en tu vida / cultura cotidiana?
 - b. ¿Te sentiste cómodo hablando de tu cultura con tu compañero?
 - i. ¿Qué crees que hizo esto difícil? *
 - c. ¿Experimentó algún problema con "romper el hielo" o se sintió incómodo cuando se reunió por primera vez con su compañero?
 - i. Si experimentó esto, ¿hubo mejoras? ¿Qué hiciste para combatir esto?
 - d. ¿Le hubiera gustado saber más sobre las normas sociales de dónde es su compañero?
 - i. ¿Le hubiera gustado un material de referencia para esto? ¿Qué forma?
 - e. ¿Le hubiera gustado una plantilla o sugerencias de temas para discutir?
 - f. ¿Que es lo que más le llamo la atención de la cultura de su compañero Tandem?
3. ¿Puede dar un ejemplo de algo que le hubiera gustado que fuera diferente? Como con las materiales que nos dieron.
4. ¿Puede contarnos más sobre su relación con su compañero y su efecto en su experiencia general?
 - a. ¿Se mantuvo en contacto con su compañero Tandem después de finalizado el programa?
 - b. ¿Puede contarnos más sobre el calendario de reuniones?
 - c. **Participantes virtuales Pregunta:** ¿Cómo se comunicó con su compañero?
¿Alguna plataforma específica?
Participantes en persona Pregunta: ¿Dónde se reunió con su compañero?
¿Hiciste alguna actividad divertida, etc.?
 - d. ¿Si tuviese la oportunidad de hacer nuevamente el programa Tandem que características en particular le gustaría que posea su compañero? Como por ejemplo....niveles de idioma, determinados intereses, disponibilidad similar, etc.
 - e. ¿Hubo algún malentendido cultural que le hubiera gustado conocer?
5. ¿Qué esperaba lograr al participar en este programa?
 - a. ¿Qué tan exitoso fue en lograr lo que quería de este programa?
6. ¿Volverías a participar en algo como el programa Tandem? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
7. ¿Hay algo de lo que quieras hablar que no se haya mencionado ya?

Pregunta específica del alumno de UCUENCA (además de las preguntas anteriores):

1. ¿Por qué eligió participar en este programa?

* Hacer una pregunta como sonda

Appendix B: Participant Survey Questions

We are a team of WPI students researching how to promote and strengthen the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca. The participant survey will last approximately 10 minutes. The purpose of this survey is to learn how past participants of the Tandem program see areas of growth and continuation, and learn about their overall experience. The data you provide us with will assist us in creating deliverable materials to program administrators that could range from curriculums, handouts or conversation guides dependent upon interview and survey data.

This survey will ask you several questions ranging from rating your personal experience in the program, how it could have been improved and your opinions on future directions. By completing this survey you are providing consent for us to use your data to formulate materials and recommendations. If any of these questions make you uncomfortable, you can skip the question as all are optional and can withdraw from the process at any time.

For more information about this research or about your rights as a research participant, please contact any of the involved below:

Researchers: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Project Advisor: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

All of your responses will be anonymous and your identity will remain confidential throughout the entirety of our study.

Questions:

1. Please rate your overall experience with the Tandem program
 - a. 1-4 (1 being bad 4 being good)
2. Initially, how many times total were you planning to meet with your partner?
 - a. Short Answer
3. How many times total did you actually meet with your partner?
 - a. Short Answer
4. How long were your meetings on average?
 - a. Less than half an hour, Around half an hour, Between half an hour and an hour, Around an hour, Longer than an hour
5. How often did you evenly split meetings between the two languages?
 - a. 1-5, with 1 being not often at all and 5 being very often (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)
6. Did you rely on one language more than the other?
 - a. Please indicate which language
7. Please rate your language level in your target language prior to enrollment in the Tandem program at UCUENCA
 - a. Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Fluent
8. Please rate the overall improvement on your language acquisition. If you believe the program took a pivotal role in your language learning, please designate a rating of 5.
 - a. 1-4, (1 being no change and 4 being optimal improvement)

9. Please rate your personality compatibility with your Tandem partner
 - a. 1-4 (1 being bad, 4 being good)
10. Please rate your language level matching with your Tandem partner
 - a. 1-4 (1 being bad, 4 being good)
11. Please designate (rating) how important each of these aspects are in a Tandem partner
(Not important, Somewhat important, Important, Very important)
 - a. Language level
 - b. Similar interests
 - c. Similar schedules/availability
 - d. Gender
 - e. Age
12. Please complete the following statement: "During participation in the Tandem program, I learned _____ about my partner's culture."
 - a. Nothing, a little, a good amount, a lot
13. Did you participate in this program in person or virtually?
 - a. In person or Virtual

IF VIRTUAL

1. What platform did you utilize most often to communicate with your partner?
 - a. Dropdown menu (Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, instagram, facebook, email, SMS texting, if other please indicate what)
2. How did you feel about starting the program during project-prep term?
 - a. Scale 1-4 (1 being not useful and 4 being optimally useful)

IF IN PERSON

1. Where did you meet with your partner?
 - a. Open-ended response
2. How often do you contact your partner now that the program has ended?
 - a. Never, Once a year, Once every 6 months, Once a month, Once a Week
3. If you do contact your partner, how so?
 - a. Dropdown menu (Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, instagram, facebook, email, SMS texting, in person, if other please indicate what)
4. How would you have felt about starting the program virtually during project-prep term?
 - a. Scale 1-4 (1 being not useful and 4 being optimally useful)

Please indicate your, ... (open ended response)

1. University
2. Age
3. Gender

Somos un equipo de estudiantes de WPI que investigamos cómo promover y fortalecer el Programa Tándem en la Universidad de Cuenca. La encuesta a los participantes tendrá una duración aproximada de 10 minutos. El propósito de esta encuesta es aprender cómo los participantes anteriores del programa Tandem ven las áreas de crecimiento y continuación, y conocer su experiencia en general. Los datos que nos proporcione nos ayudarán a crear materiales que se puedan entregar a los administradores del programa, que pueden variar desde currículos, folletos o guías de conversación que dependen de los datos de entrevistas y encuestas.

Esta encuesta le hará varias preguntas que van desde calificar su experiencia personal en el programa, cómo podría haberse mejorado y sus opiniones sobre direcciones futuras. Al completar esta encuesta, nos da su consentimiento para que usemos sus datos para formular materiales y recomendaciones. Si alguna de estas preguntas lo hace sentir incómodo, puede omitir la pregunta ya que todas son opcionales y puede retirarse del proceso en cualquier momento.

Para obtener más información sobre esta investigación o sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación, comuníquese con cualquiera de los involucrados a continuación:

Investigadores: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
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Asesor del proyecto: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

Todas sus respuestas serán anónimas y su identidad permanecerá confidencial durante la totalidad de nuestro estudio.

Preguntas:

1. Califique su experiencia general con el programa Tandem
 - a. 1-4 (1 es malo 4 es bueno)
2. Inicialmente, ¿cuántas veces en total planeaba reunirse con su compañero?
3. ¿Cuántas veces en total te reuniste con tu compañero?
4. ¿Cuánto duraron sus reuniones en promedio?
 - a. Menos de media hora, Alrededor de media hora, Entre media hora y una hora, Alrededor de una hora, Más de una hora
5. ¿Con qué frecuencia dividió las reuniones en partes iguales entre los dos idiomas?
 - a. 1-5, siendo 1 poco frecuente y 5 muy frecuente (Nunca, Rara vez, A veces, A menudo, Siempre)
6. ¿Confiaste en un idioma más que en el otro?
 - a. Indique en qué idioma
7. Califique su nivel de idioma en su idioma de destino antes de inscribirse en el programa Tandem en UCUENCA
 - a. Principiante, intermedio, avanzado, fluido
8. Califique la mejora general en su adquisición del idioma. Si cree que el programa tuvo un papel fundamental en su aprendizaje de idiomas, designe una calificación de 4.
 - a. 1-4, (1 es sin cambios y 4 es una mejora óptima)
9. Califique la compatibilidad de su personalidad con su compañero Tandem.
 - a. 1-4 (1 es malo, 4 es bueno)

10. Califique su nivel de idioma que coincide con el de su compañero Tandem.
 - a. 1-4 (1 es malo, 4 es bueno)
11. Por favor, designe (califique) qué tan importante es cada uno de estos aspectos en un compañero Tandem. (No importante, Algo importante, Importante, Muy importante)
 - a. Nivel de idioma
 - b. Intereses similares
 - c. Horarios / disponibilidad similares
 - d. Género
 - e. Edad
12. Complete la siguiente declaración: "Durante la participación en el programa Tandem, aprendí _____ sobre la cultura de mi compañero".
 - a. Nada, un poco, una buena cantidad, mucho
13. ¿Participó en este programa en persona o virtualmente?
 - a. En persona o Virtual
 - b.

SI VIRTUAL

1. ¿Qué plataforma utilizó con más frecuencia para comunicarse con su compañero?
 - a. Menú desplegable (Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, instagram, facebook, correo electrónico, mensajes de texto SMS, si es otro, indique qué)
 2. ¿Cómo se sintió al comenzar el programa durante el período de preparación del proyecto?
- Escala 1-4 (1 no es útil y 4 es óptimamente útil)

SI EN PERSONA

1. ¿Dónde se reunió con su compañero?
 - a. Respuesta abierta
2. ¿Con qué frecuencia se comunica con su compañero ahora que el programa ha finalizado?
 - a. Nunca, una vez al año, una vez cada 6 meses, una vez al mes, una vez a la semana
3. Si se pone en contacto con su compañero, ¿cómo es eso?
 - a. Menú desplegable (Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, correo electrónico, mensajes de texto SMS, en persona, si es otro, indique qué)
4. ¿Cómo se habría sentido al comenzar el programa virtualmente durante el período de preparación del proyecto?
 - a. Escala 1-4 (1 no es útil y 4 es óptimamente útil)

Por favor indique su... (respuesta abierta)

1. Universidad
2. Edad
3. Género

Appendix C: Participant Reflection Questions

We are a team of WPI students researching how to promote and strengthen the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca. The participant reflection will take approximately 10 minutes. The purpose of this reflection is to learn how current participants of the Tandem program are progressing, what is working well and where there are areas of growth. The data you provide us with will assist us in creating deliverable materials to program administrators that could range from curriculums, handouts or conversation guides dependent upon interview and survey data. This reflection will ask you a few questions ranging from your personal thoughts on the program and potential cultural exchanges. By completing this reflection you are providing consent for us to use your data to formulate materials and recommendations. If any of these questions make you uncomfortable, you can skip the question as all are optional and can withdraw from the process at any time.

For more information about this research or about your rights as a research participant, please contact any of the involved below:

Researchers: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Project Advisor: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

All of your responses will be anonymous and your identity will remain confidential throughout the entirety of our study.

Please respond with at least two or more sentences per question.

Questions:

1. Reflecting back to the beginning of the program, what were your expectations for the program? Were they met?
2. What were you looking forward to the most in participating? What were you least looking forward to in participating?
3. Can you reflect upon any moments where you felt awkward or had a miscommunication? Please explain how this impacted your overall Tandem experience.
4. Can you reflect upon any moments where you and your partner talked about cultural differences? Please explain how this impacted your overall Tandem experience.

Somos un equipo de estudiantes del WPI que investigan cómo promover y fortalecer el Programa Tándem en la Universidad de Cuenca. La reflexión participante tardará aproximadamente 10 minutos. El propósito de esta reflexión es aprender cómo están progresando los participantes actuales del programa Tándem, qué está funcionando bien y dónde hay áreas de crecimiento. Los datos que nos proporcione nos ayudarán a crear materiales entregables a los administradores del programa que podrían ir desde currículos, folletos o guías de conversación dependientes de los datos de entrevistas y encuestas.

Esta reflexión le hará algunas preguntas que van desde sus pensamientos personales sobre el programa y posibles intercambios culturales. Al completar esta reflexión, usted está dando su consentimiento para que usemos sus datos para formular materiales y recomendaciones. Si

alguna de estas preguntas le incomoda, puede omitir la pregunta, ya que todas son opcionales y pueden retirarse del proceso en cualquier momento.

Para obtener más información sobre esta investigación o sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación, póngase en contacto con cualquiera de los siguientes implicados:

Investigadores: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Asesor del Proyecto: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

Todas sus respuestas serán anónimas y su identidad permanecerá confidencial durante todo nuestro estudio.

Responda con al menos dos o más oraciones por pregunta.

Preguntas:

1. Si mira al inicio del programa, ¿Cuáles fueron sus expectativas en relación al programa?
¿Se llegaron a cumplir esas expectativas?
2. ¿Qué es lo que más buscaba en su participación? ¿Qué es lo que menos buscaba en su participación?
3. ¿Recuerda algún momento en el que se sintió raro o tuvo un problema de mala comunicación? Por favor explique cómo esto influyó en su experiencia total de la actividad de Tandem?
4. ¿Recuerda algún momento cuando usted y su compañero hablaron sobre diferencias culturales? ¿Puede explicar cómo esto influyó en su experiencia total en la actividad de Tandem?

Appendix D: Program Administrator Interview Questions

We are a team of WPI students researching how to promote and strengthen the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to learn how the Tandem program is run by administration, how they see areas of growth and continuation, and needed materials. The data you provide us with will assist us in creating deliverable materials that could range from curriculums, handouts or conversation guides dependent upon the interview and survey data.

This interview will ask you several questions ranging from your personal experience running program, how it could have been improved and your future directions with the program. With your oral consent, we will tape record the interviews to review for analysis. This is an opportunity for you to tell your story about your experience with the program and provide insight so the experience can be better for future program participants. If any of these questions make you uncomfortable, you can voice to skip the question, and can withdraw from the process at any time. If you have any questions that arise at any point during the interview, please ask.

For more information about this research or about your rights as a research participant, please contact any of the involved below:

Researchers: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Project Advisor: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

All of your responses will be anonymous and your identity will remain confidential throughout the entirety of our study.

Questions:

Their program

1. Can you tell us a little more about how your university language exchange program works with UCUENCA and how it is run?
2. What is your current role in the UCUENCA language exchange program?
 - a. Have you held any other roles in the program?
 - b. How long have you been involved?

The Tandem program (Just to clarify, your program does a Tandem program with UCUENCA?)

3. Can you describe the ideal experience for a participant in the Tandem program?
 - a. How has the Tandem program evolved/adapted in your time?
4. How do you advertise the Tandem program as a part of your specific language exchange program?
 - a. How do you gain interest from students?
 - b. What preparation do your students receive before the start of the Tandem program?
5. Do you have any favorite aspects about the Tandem program?

6. Do you see any potential drawbacks that need attention, anything you would change about the Tandem program?
7. Can you tell us about the biggest successes you hear from participants/staff who participate in the Tandem program?
 - a. What about the biggest concerns from participants/staff?

Yoli & Ana question

8. Where do you want the Tandem program to be in 1 year, 5 years?

Somos un equipo de estudiantes de WPI que investigamos cómo promover y fortalecer el Programa Tándem en la Universidad de Cuenca. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de 30 minutos. El propósito de esta entrevista es aprender cómo la administración administra el programa Tandem, cómo ven las áreas de crecimiento y continuación, y los materiales necesarios. Los datos que nos proporcione nos ayudarán a crear materiales entregables que pueden variar desde currículos, folletos o guías de conversación, dependiendo de la entrevista y los datos de la encuesta.

Esta entrevista le hará varias preguntas que van desde su experiencia personal al ejecutar el programa, cómo podría haberse mejorado y sus direcciones futuras con el programa. Con su consentimiento oral, grabaremos las entrevistas para revisarlas y analizarlas. Esta es una oportunidad para que cuente su historia sobre su experiencia en el programa y brinde información para que la experiencia sea mejor para aquellos que aún no han participado. Si alguna de estas preguntas lo hace sentir incómodo, puede expresarlo para omitir la pregunta y puede retirarse del proceso en cualquier momento. Si tiene alguna pregunta que surja en algún momento durante la entrevista, por favor pregunte.

Para obtener más información sobre esta investigación o sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación, comuníquese con cualquiera de los involucrados a continuación:

Investigadores: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Asesor del proyecto: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

Todas sus respuestas serán anónimas y su identidad permanecerá confidencial durante la totalidad de nuestro estudio.

Preguntas:

1. ¿Cuál es su papel en el programa Tandem?
 - a. ¿Ha tenido otro papel en el programa Tandem?
 - b. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas involucrado?
2. ¿Puedes contarnos un poco más sobre el programa y cómo se ejecuta?
 - a. ¿Puede describir la experiencia ideal para un participante del programa?
 - b. ¿Cómo ha evolucionado / adaptado el programa en su tiempo?
3. ¿Cómo se enteran los estudiantes del programa?
 - a. ¿Cómo se gana el interés de los estudiantes?
4. ¿Cuáles son sus aspectos favoritos del programa?
 - a. ¿Qué crees que disfrutan los estudiantes del programa?

5. ¿Ve algún inconveniente potencial que requiera atención?
6. ¿Puede contarnos sobre los mayores éxitos que haya escuchado de los participantes / personal?
 - a. ¿Cuáles son las mayores preocupaciones de los participantes / personal?
7. ¿Dónde quiere que esté el programa en 1 año, 5 años?

Appendix E: Convenience Sampling Questions

We are a team of students on IQP researching how to promote and strengthen the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca. Typically, when a cohort travels to Ecuador, students get paired with a University student from Ecuador and you meet once a week to practice conversational exchange and do activities in the city together. We have conducted past participant interviews and surveys to formulate needed materials for the program. The review of these materials will take approximately 10 minutes, beginning with reading over the materials followed by a short survey. With your oral consent, we will use the data you provide us with to make improvements to the materials. If you have any questions throughout the process, please do not hesitate to ask.

For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact:

Researchers: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Project Advisor: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

All of your responses will be anonymous and your identity will remain confidential throughout the entirety of our study.

1. Is it clear what these materials are for? (show materials)
 - a. 1 to 4 (1 being not clear at all, 4 being very clear)
2. What do you think is most effective about this material?
 - a. To what extent would this material be helpful if you participated? Explain.
3. What problems, if any, do you think we will run into if we try to implement it?
 - a. How could we improve on this?
4. How do you think these materials will influence partners talking about each other's culture?
 - a. 1 to 4 (1 being not at all, 4 being a lot)
5. How do you think these materials will influence partner matching?
 - a. 1 to 4 (1 being not at all, 4 being a lot)
6. How do you think these materials will influence conversational exchange between partners?
 - a. 1 to 4 (1 being not at all, 4 being a lot)

Appendix F: Focus Group Questions

We are a team of WPI students researching how to promote and strengthen the Tandem Program at the Universidad de Cuenca. The focus group will take approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of this focus group is to understand how the Tandem community feels about possible implementation of materials. The data collected will be used to make improvements to the program overall through implementation of cultural handouts, curriculums or conversation guides dependent upon interview and survey data.

In this focus group, all of you will be asked questions and will discuss it together. The questions will be about your thoughts on our materials and how they would impact the Tandem program. With your permission, we will tape record the focus group to review for analysis. This is a chance for each of you to share your perceived benefits and drawbacks of our materials, and any other concerns you may have. If any questions make you uncomfortable, you can choose to leave the call and skip that question or the entire focus group at any point in time. If any of you have any questions right now or at any point during the focus group, please ask.

For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact:

Researchers: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney
tandemd21@wpi.edu

Project Advisor: Courtney Kurlanska
cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

All of your responses will be anonymous and your identity will remain confidential throughout the entirety of our study.

1. Is it clear what these materials are for? (show materials)
 - a. Can someone explain how it was/was not clear?
2. What are some of your initial thoughts about the materials?
3. What is most effective about this material?
 - a. To what extent would this material have been helpful during your participation? Explain.
4. What problems do you think we will run into if we try to implement it?
 - a. How could we improve on this?
5. Have there been other Tandem materials you utilized?
 - a. Can you describe what made those materials useful?
6. How do you think these materials will influence partners talking about each other's culture?
7. How do you think these materials will influence partner matching?
8. How do you think these materials will influence conversational exchange between partners?

Somos un equipo de estudiantes de WPI que investigamos cómo promover y fortalecer el Programa Tándem en la Universidad de Cuenca. El grupo de enfoque durará aproximadamente 30 minutos. El propósito de este grupo de enfoque es comprender cómo se siente la comunidad

de Tandem sobre la posible implementación de los materiales. Los datos recopilados se utilizarán para mejorar el programa en general mediante la implementación de folletos culturales, planes de estudio o guías de conversación que dependen de los datos de entrevistas y encuestas.

En este grupo de enfoque, a todos ustedes se les harán preguntas y lo discutirán juntos. Las preguntas serán sobre sus pensamientos sobre nuestros materiales y cómo afectarían al programa Tandem. Con su permiso, grabaremos el grupo de enfoque para revisarlo y analizarlo. Esta es una oportunidad para que cada uno de ustedes comparta sus beneficios y desventajas percibidas de nuestros materiales, y cualquier otra inquietud que pueda tener. Si alguna pregunta lo hace sentir incómodo, puede optar por abandonar la llamada y omitir esa pregunta o todo el grupo de enfoque en cualquier momento. Si alguno de ustedes tiene alguna pregunta en este momento o en cualquier momento durante el grupo de enfoque, por favor pregunte.

Para obtener más información sobre esta investigación o sobre los derechos de los participantes de la investigación, comuníquese con:

Investigadores: Olivia Chiasson, Jonathan Ferreira, Brigid Griffin, Emily Mahoney

tandemd21@wpi.edu

Asesor del proyecto: Courtney Kurlanska

cbkurlanska@wpi.edu

Todas sus respuestas serán anónimas y su identidad permanecerá confidencial durante la totalidad de nuestro estudio.

1. ¿Está claro para qué sirven estos materiales? (mostrar materiales)
 - a. ¿Alguien puede explicar cómo fue o no quedó claro?
2. ¿Cuáles son algunos de sus pensamientos iniciales sobre los materiales?
3. ¿Qué es lo más efectivo de este material?
 - a. ¿Hasta qué punto habría sido útil este material durante su participación? Explicar.
4. ¿Con qué problemas crees que nos encontraremos si intentamos implementarlo?
 - a. ¿Cómo podríamos mejorar esto?
5. ¿Ha utilizado otros materiales de Tandem?
 - a. ¿Puede describir qué hizo que estos materiales fueran útiles?
6. ¿Cómo cree que estos materiales incluirán en los compañeros que hablan sobre la cultura de los demás?
7. ¿Cómo cree que estos materiales incluirán en la búsqueda de compañeros?
8. ¿Cómo cree que estos materiales incluirán en el intercambio de conversaciones entre compañeros?

Appendix G: Interview Data

The categories (in color) and codes (beneath each category) from 20 past participant interviews. The codes have frequencies assigned based on how often they were mentioned through all 20 interviews.

Cultural Learning (90% of participants)	Language Learning (85% of participants)
Mutual Learning (14x) General Culture (12x) Societal Topics & Issues (11x) Social Norms (8x) Education Systems (8x) Food and Health (5x) More Cultural Education (5x) Social Cultural Events (2x)	Improved target language (21x) Didn't Improve Target Language (8x) Collaborative Learning Process (8x) Conversation Skills Improved (7x) Pronunciation Skills Improved (5x) Vocabulary learning (4x) Corrective Feedback (2x)
Partnership (85% of participants)	Improvements/Desires (75% of participants)
Good for Partnership (18x) Conversation Topics (18x) Bad for Partnership (16x) Busy Schedules (10x) Major/Extracurriculars (7x) Language Level Mismatch (5x)	Guide for Activities & Group Outings (7x) Experience Satisfaction (7x) More Program Structure Education (6x) Partner Biography (6x) More Cultural Education (5x) Start in prep term (5x) Better Partner Matching (4x) Better Conversation Guide (3x) Group Introduction Meeting (2x)
Difficulties (55% of participants)	Partner Matching (45% of participants)
Awkward Introductions (14x) Scheduling Difficulties (10x) Virtual Difficulties (4x) Lack of Impact (4x) Awkward Interactions (3x)	Similar Interests (18x) Language Level Matching (7x) Friendship (4x) Similar Schedules (3x) Gender Preferences (2x)
Current Program Materials (45% of participants)	Motivation (40% of participants)
Conversation Guide (15x) Social Norms (4x)	Language Acquisition (8x) Companionship (4x) Culture (2x)
Activities (35% of participants)	Modes of Communication (25% of participants)
Activities with Partner (17x) Group Activities (8x)	Technology (16x) Scheduling (5x)

Appendix H: Program Emails

(These are the emails that we received before participating in the Tandem program)

Dear WPI students,

My name is Ana Loja, and I work at the Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador (UC). I'm the person coordinating an academic activity between you and a group of our Universidad de Cuenca students. This activity is called "tandem," and it is intended to give you and our students the opportunity to learn from each other's culture and countries as well as practice Spanish and English.

First, I will pair every WPI student with one of our Universidad de Cuenca students, and you will meet virtually to agree on a weekly meeting. This meeting will last 60 minutes, and you will assign 30 minutes to speak in Spanish about several topics, and the remaining 30 minutes to speak in English. In this way, you will improve your Spanish and will help our students improve their English.

Second, you have already been registered in the Universidad de Cuenca database. If you receive an email from the Universidad de Cuenca, please disregard it since it is generated automatically.

Third, I will send you an email on the week of February 8th in order to introduce your tandem partner. You should have your first online meeting with your Universidad de Cuenca partner that same week to agree on the day and time for your future meetings. In that email, I will attach a list of topics for your conversations. Those topics are optional since what is important is that you talk about topics you feel interested in.

The tandem activity is interesting and fun, and there is flexibility. If you need to reschedule or cancel a meeting, please inform your tandem partner about that. You may communicate via WhatsApp, Zoom, messenger, etc.

Hello Partner 1 and Partner 2,

My name is Ana Loja, and I work at the Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador (UC). I'm the person coordinating the tandem (conversation partners) activity between WPI students and UC students. Please read the following information carefully.

1) Purpose of the activity: You will be able to meet an Universidad de Cuenca student and a WPI student. You will have a one-hour conversation session per week starting this week (February 8th) and finishing on the week of May 3rd. Through the conversation sessions, you will learn about important cultural aspects of both countries, and you will practice 30 minutes of English and 30 minutes of Spanish.

2) Conversation session schedules: Feel free to contact your partner and agree on a day and hour for the weekly meetings. You may use Zoom, WhatsApp, or any other platform to have your weekly sessions.

3) topics for the conversations: During the first session, you will talk about yourselves, majors, hobbies, home countries. I am attaching a document with a list of topics; however, we encourage you to agree on topics that are interesting to you. Turn to the list only if you run out of topics.

4) UC and WPI conversation partners:

UC partner: _____ WPI partner: _____

Enjoy this experience!!!

Appendix I: Old Conversation Topic Sheet

TOPICS FOR THE VIRTUAL CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN WPI AND UC STUDENTS November 2020- February 2021

Dear students, you are free to decide the topic you would like to talk about. Turn to this list only if you feel that you are running out of ideas for new topics.

Topic 1: My life: Students talk about...

- a. themselves, their families, interests and life as college students.
- b. changes in their family life due to the pandemic, what families do to be in contact, how often they meet with friends,
- c. WPI student's project in Cuenca, Ecuador

Topic 2: My city and my country: Students talk about...

- a. the most important attractions of their cities and countries. They may share photos or a powerpoint presentation.
- b. indigenous groups/peoples in their countries, their relationship with other groups in their countries.

Topic 3: Technology and future developments. Students talk about...

- a. the use of technology in different aspects of their lives, technological developments they expect to happen in the near future

Topic 4: Music, movies, youtubers, influencers, sports: Students talk about...

- a. music and movies in Ecuador and in the US
- b. popular sports in both countries

Topic 5: Health and lifestyle: Students talk about...

- a. what they do to stay healthy
- b. The health system in their countries

Topic 6: The environment: Students talk about...

- a. projects and efforts to protect the environment, to preserve wildlife, and to protect water sources.
- b. Effects of global warming in both countries

Topic 7: Plans and expectations: Students talk about...

- a. The jobs they would like to have
- b. Place where they would like to live

Appendix J: Screenshot of Listening Comprehension Website

Level A1 & A2

Title	Test
La casa de mis abuelos My grandparents' house is huge	? start »
Las vacaciones de verano On holiday with my parents	? start »

Premium: 10 more Texts

Level A2

Title	Test
-------	------

Premium: 1 more Texts

Level B1

Title	Test
La granja de Beatriz My friend has a farm with several animals	? start »
Mi casa My house is big. I'll describe it to you	? start »

Premium: 20 more Texts

Level B2

Title	Test
Mi familia Carmen tells us about her family	? start »

Premium: 22 more Texts

Level C1

Title	Test
-------	------

Premium: 5 more Texts

Title	Test
María y Julia I will tell you how I met my friend	? start »
Mi abuela Juliana My grandmother is 92 years old	? start »

Title	Test
Mi nueva vida en Lima A Mexican woman living in Lima	? start »
Mis vacaciones en Barcelona My recent trip to Barcelona	? start »

Title	Test
Visita al médico I had a stomach ache and had to go to the doctor	? start »

Appendix K: Partner Matching Survey

Personality Assessment

What is your name? (*Short Answer Text*)

What is your email? (*Short Answer Text*)

Which university do you go to?

- a. Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)
- b. Universidad de Cuenca (UCUENCA)
- c. Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)
- d. Pennsylvania State University (Penn State)
- e. University of Victoria (UVic)
- f. University of New Mexico (UNM)
- g. The Ohio State University (OSU)
- h. University of Maryland (UMD)
- i. Stetson University
- j. Mount Saint Mary's University
- k. Other (*Short Answer Text If Other*)

Would you consider yourself more introverted or extraverted?

- a. Scale 1-4, 1 being introverted 4 being extraverted

Which hobbies are you most interested in? (*Check up to 2*)

- a. Sports
- b. Music
- c. Art
- d. Exercise
- e. Reading
- f. Hanging with friends

Which of these do you prefer?

- a. Going out
- b. Staying in
- c. A mix of both

How motivated are you to participate in the Tandem Program?

- a. Scale 1-5, 1 being 'Not at all' 5 being 'Very much'

Major and Availability Assessment

What is your major?

- a. Arts and Humanities
- b. Business
- c. Health and Medicine
- d. Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies
- e. Public and Social Services
- f. Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math
- g. Social Sciences
- h. Trades and Personal Services
- i. Other (*Short Answer Text If Other*)

What time of the day would you prefer to meet with your Tandem partner?

- a. Morning
- b. Afternoon

c. Evening

Participant Bio: Please provide a short description about yourself and a list of your interests.
(*Long Answer Text*)

Language Assessment

a. <https://lingua.com/spanish/listening/>

What was your score? As a reminder, this is helping you to be matched with a partner with similar language levels, so please be honest. (*Short Answer Text*)

Appendix L: Updated Activity Guide

UCUENCA TANDEM PROGRAM

OPTIONS FOR EXCURSIONS

- 1. Modern Art Museum — Dates:** Open from Monday to Saturday — **Price:** Free Entrance
 - A contemporary art museum offering guided tours, plays, music, and workshops.

Address: Calle Sucre and Calle Estevez de Toral
- 2. Pumapungo Museum — Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** Free Entrance
 - Students can visit the ethnographic museum and the archaeological park (botanic garden with medicinal plants and small bird shelter).

Address: Calle Larga y Ave. Huayna-Capac
- 3. Sombrero Museum — Price:** Free Entrance
 - A beautiful museum about the Ecuadorian hat.

Address: Calle Larga y Benigno Malo
- 4. Amaru Zoo — Dates:** Open from Monday to Friday — **Price:** \$
 - A zoo with exotic animals that's a 20 minute drive from the university of Cuenca. Seeing all the animals should take around 2 hours.

Website: www.zoobioparqueamaru.com
- 5. Giron Waterfalls — Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** \$
 - Abundant nature and a beautiful waterfall! You can do ziplining and hikes here. A local guide charges \$30 for a group of 15 people for a one hour hike to "Segunda Chorrera." There is no need of a guide if you want to visit only "Chorrera 1."

Address: Noroeste del Canton Giron Chorro del Carmen
- 6. Indigenous Cultures Museum — Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** \$
 - A museum of indigenous culture with more than 5000 archaeological pieces that represent more than 20 pre-Columbian Ecuadorian cultures.

Address: Calle Larga 5-24 entre Hermano Miguel y Mariano Cueva
- 7. Las Conceptas Museum — Dates:** Open all week — **Price:** \$
 - A religious museum that has its beginning in 1561 as a female monastery.

Address: Calle Hermano Miguel entre Calle Sucre and Presidente Córdoba
- 8. Baños Hot Water Springs — Price:** \$\$
 - Students can go to one of the two spas: Piedra de Agua (recommended) and Novaqua. Students can go swimming, get massages, relax in jacuzzis, and enjoy other related activities.

Address (1): Paseo de la Guadalupeana S/N Banos
Address (2): Loma, De los Hervideros
- 9. Cuenca Canopy — Time:** Mondays or Wednesdays — **Price:** \$\$
 - Experiences and activities full of adventure, such as canopy walks and ziplining! Students can also go camping under the stars.

Facebook: Cuenca Canopy
Phone: +593 (99) 926 - 2269
Email: cuenccanopy@yahoo.com

Pricing Guide	
\$	0-15
\$\$	15-50
\$\$\$	50+

UCUENCA TANDEM PROGRAM

OPTIONS FOR EXCURSIONS

12. El Cajas National Park — Price: \$\$

- Free entrance. Transportation service for a group of 10 people: \$ 80. The group will need a guide (guide fee \$ 60).

10. Apullacta Expeditions (Canyoning) — Price: \$\$\$

- An extreme sport for students in very good physical condition. Includes "canyoning" down waterfalls and caves! Groups of 7 maximum people.

Website: <https://apullacta.com/canyoning/> **Email:** info@apullacta.com

Phone: +593 (99) 960 - 4870

11. Biking — Price: \$\$\$

- Different options. The easiest one starts in Rio Amarillo and goes along the Tomebamba River. All the equipment is included. Identify yourself as a student from the Universidad de Cuenca and ask for discounts.

Email: marco@cazhumatours.com

13. Gualaceo and Chordeleg — Price: \$\$\$

- Una visita guiada a través de un taller de procesamiento textil, un pueblo pre-inca, y un taller de fabricación de guitarras.

Website: <https://www.cazhumatours.com/gualaceo-and-chordeleg-tour/>

14. Horseback Riding — Price: \$\$\$

- This activity takes place on a farm called Totorillas (Tarqui). The price includes transportation, equipment (helmet, boots), and a guide. For 1, 2, or three people, the price is \$60 per person. For a group of more than four people, the price is \$50.

Facebook: MontaRuna

Email: carlosm09@yahoo.com

Phone: +593 (98) 706 3098

PARTNER ACTIVITIES

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go for coffee or tea | <input type="checkbox"/> Play basketball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk in a local park | <input type="checkbox"/> Play soccer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a play, performance or movie | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop for souvenirs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to the market | <input type="checkbox"/> Try a new food |

PROGRAMA TANDEM UCUENCA

OPCIONES DE EXCURSIONES

1. Museo de Arte Moderno — Tiempo: Abierto de Lunes a Sabado — **Precio:** Entrada gratuita!

- Un museo de Arte contemporáneo que ofrecen visitas guiadas, actos, música, y talleres.

Dirección: Calle Sucre and Calle Estevez de Toral

2. Museo del Sombrero — Precio: Entrada gratuita!

- Un hermoso museo sobre el sombrero Ecuatoriano.

Dirección: Calle Larga y Benigno Malo

3. Museo Pumapungo — Tiempo: Abierto toda la semana — **Precio:** Entrada gratuita!

- Un famoso museo etnográfico y parque arqueológico con un pequeño refugio de aves y jardín botánico de plantas medicinales.

Dirección: Calle Larga y Ave. Huayna-Capac

4. Amaru Zoológico Bioparque — Tiempo: Abierto de Lunes a Viernes — **Precio:** \$

- Un zoológico con animales exóticos a 20 minutos de la Universidad de Cuenca. Ver a todos los animales debe tomar alrededor de 2 horas.

Sitio web: www.zoobioparqueamaru.com

5. El Chorro de Giron — Tiempo: Abierto toda la semana — **Precio:** \$

- La naturaleza y una gran cascada hermosa! Puedes hacer tirolesa y caminatas allá. Un guía local cobra \$30 por un grupo de 15 personas por una caminata de una hora a la "Segunda Chorrera." No hay necesidad de un guía si desea visitar sólo "Chorrera 1."

Dirección: Noroeste del Canton Giron Chorro del Carmen

6. Museo de Las Conceptas — Tiempo: Abierto de Lunes a Sabado — **Precio:** \$

- Un museo religioso que tiene su inicio en 1561 como un monasterio femenino.

Dirección: Calle Hermano Miguel entre Calle Sucre y Presidente Córdoba

7. Museo de Las Culturas Aborígenes — Tiempo: Abierto toda la semana — **Precio:** \$

- Un museo de cultura indígena con más de 5000 piezas arqueológicas que representan más de 20 culturas precolombinas ecuatorianas.

Dirección: Calle Larga 5-24 entre Hermano Miguel y Mariano Cueva

8. Baños Hot Water Springs — Precio: \$\$

- Los estudiantes pueden ir a uno de los dos spas: Piedra de Agua (recomendado) o Novaqua, y pueden nadar, recibir masajes o disfrutar de jacuzzis.

Dirección (1): Paseo de la Guadalupeana S/N Banos

Dirección (2): Loma, De los Hervideros

Guía de precios

\$ 0-15

\$\$ 15-50

\$\$\$ 50+

PROGRAMA TANDEM UCUENCA

OPCIONES DE EXCURSIONES

9. Cuenca Canopy — Tiempo: Abierto de Lunes a Viernes — Precio: \$\$

- Experiencias y actividades llenas de aventura, como el canopy (tiroleza), arborismo, o el salto de tarzan!

Facebook: Cuenca Canopy

Email: cuencacanopy@yahoo.com

Teléfono: +593 (99) 926 - 2269

13. Parque Nacional Cajas — Precio: \$\$

- Entrada gratuita, pero el servicio de transporte para un grupo de 10 personas cuesta \$80 y el grupo necesitará una guía (tarifa de guía es de \$60).

11. Apullacta Expeditions (Barranquismo) — Precio: \$\$\$

- Un deporte extremo para estudiantes en muy buenas condiciones físicas y sólo para grupos de 7 personas máximas.

Sitio web: www.apullacta.com/canyoning/

Email: info@apullacta.com

Teléfono: +593 (99) 960 - 4870

12. Ciclismo — Precio: \$\$\$

- Diferentes opciones, pero la más fácil comienza en Río Amarillo y va a lo largo del Río Tomebamba. Todo el equipo está incluido. Identifíquese como estudiante de la Universidad de Cuenca para descuentos para estudiantes.

Email: marco@cazumatours.com

10. Equitación — Precio: \$\$\$

- Esta actividad es en una granja llamada Totorillas (Tarqui). El precio incluye el transporte, el equipo (casco y botas) y un guía. El precio es de \$60 por persona para un grupo de hasta 3 personas. Para un grupo de más de cuatro personas, el precio es de \$50.

Facebook: MontaRuna

Email: carlosm09@yahoo.com

Teléfono: +593 (98) 706 - 3098

14. Gualaceo Y Chordeleg — Precio: \$\$\$

- Una visita guiada a través de un taller de procesamiento textil, un pueblo pre-inca, y un taller de fabricación de guitarras.

Sitio web: <https://www.cazumatours.com/gualaceo-and-chordeleg-tour/>

ACTIVIDADES PARA COMPAÑEROS

☐ Ir a un café

☐ Ir a caminar en un parque local

☐ Ve a ver una obra de teatro, una actuación o una película

☐ Ve al mercado

☐ Ir a jugar al básquet

☐ Ir a jugar al fútbol

☐ Ir de compras de recuerdos

☐ Pruebe una nueva comida

Appendix M: Old Orientation Presentation

PROGRAMA TANDEM

Entre estudiantes de la Universidad de Cuenca y
Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

Programa de Español para Extranjeros
Departamento de Idiomas

Objetivos:

1. Practicar el inglés y el español
2. Conocer sobre aspectos culturales de Ecuador y de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica
3. Valorar las relaciones interculturales

Características del programa tandem

1. Una reunión semanal: los estudiantes se ponen de acuerdo sobre el horario.
2. Conversaciones: 30 minutos en inglés y 30 minutos en español
3. Temas para las conversaciones: Sesión 1: información personal
4. Fecha de inicio: semana del 08 de febrero
5. Fecha de finalización: semana del 03 de mayo de 2021

Requisitos:

Responsabilidad
Puntualidad
Actitud positiva
Respeto

UCUENCA TANDEM PROGRAM

TOPICS FOR CONVERSATION

Guidelines/Suggestions

Dear students, you are free to decide the topic you would like to talk about.
Turn to this list only if you feel that you are running out of ideas for new topics.

Questions

My life: Students talk about ...

- a. themselves, their families, interests and life as college students.
- b. changes in their family life due to the pandemic, what families do to be in contact, how often they meet with friends,

My city and my country: Students talk about...

- a. the most important attractions of their cities and countries. They may share photos or a power point presentation.
- b. indigenous groups/peoples in their countries, their relationship with other groups in their countries.

Technology and future developments: Students talk about...

- d. the use of technology in different aspects of their lives, technological developments they expect to happen in the near future

Music, movies, youtubers, influencers, sports: Students talk about...

- a. music and movies in Ecuador and in the US
- b. popular sports in both countries

Health and life style: Students talk about...

- a. what they do to stay healthy
- b. The health system in their countries

The environment: Students talk about ...

- a. projects and efforts to protect the environment, to preserve wild life, and to protect water sources.
- b. Effects of global warming in both countries

Plans and expectations: Students talk about...

- a. The jobs they would like to have
- b. Place where they would like to live

UCUENCA TANDEM PROGRAM

CULTURE CONVERSATION GUIDE

Guidelines/Suggestions

- Ask more questions before sharing a related story of your own
- Be an active listener
- Ask open ended question
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification or more explanation!
- While questions are ordered in increasingly personal topics, you do not have to ask all of them

Questions

Family

What does your family do together for fun?

How important is education or good grades in your family?

Do family members have specific roles?
What are they?

What was your childhood like? (maybe like asking about family/ things you liked to do as a child or things your family did together

Social Norms

How do people greet one another?

What do people do for recreation?

What is considered a typical meal in your culture?

How is time measured and understood?

Is there anything considered rude in your country?

Are there any stereotypes of your culture?
How do you feel about them?

Personal Experience

What's your favorite holiday to celebrate? Is it specific to your country/culture? What do you like about it? How do you celebrate?

Have you ever considered moving to another country? Which countries would you like to visit or move to?

What are some major events that have happened in your country recently?

Is there something about my culture that you are curious about?

Have you ever had culture shock?

What part of your culture do you take the most pride in?

Is there any belonging you have on you or in your home that represents your culture? Could you describe it and its significance?

Are you religious?

TEMAS DE CONVERSACIÓN

Directrices/Sugerencias

Estimados estudiantes, usted puede decidir el tema del que le gustaría hablar. Utilizar esta lista sólo si se está quedando sin ideas para nuevas temas.

Preguntas

Mi vida: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- a. ellos mismos, sus familias, intereses y la vida de estudiante universitario
- b. cambios en su vida familiar debido a la pandemia, lo que las familias hacen para estar en contacto, la frecuencia con la que se reúnen con amigos,

Mi ciudad y mi país: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- a. las atracciones turísticas más importantes de sus ciudades y países
Tal vez compartir fotos o una presentación de PowerPoint
- b. grupos/personas indígenas en sus países, su relación con otros grupos en sus países

Tecnología y desarrollos futuros: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- d. el uso de la tecnología en diferentes aspectos de sus vidas, los desarrollos tecnológicos que esperan que ocurran en un futuro próximo

Música, películas, YouTubers, personas influyentes, deportes: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- a. música y películas en Ecuador y en los Estados Unidos
- b. deportes populares en ambos países

Salud y estilo de vida: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- a. lo que hacen para mantenerse sanos
- b. el sistema sanitario de sus países

El medio ambiente: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- a. proyectos y esfuerzos para proteger el medio ambiente, preservar la vida salvaje y proteger las fuentes de agua
- b. efectos del calentamiento global en ambos países

Planes y expectativas: Estudiantes hablan sobre...

- a. los trabajos que les gustaría tener
- b. lugar donde les gustaría vivir

GUÍA DE CONVERSACIÓN CULTURAL

Directrices/Sugerencias

- Haga más preguntas antes de compartir una historia propia relacionada
- Sea un oyente activo
- Haga algunas preguntas abiertas
- ¡No tengas miedo de pedir aclaraciones o más explicaciones!

Preguntas

Familia

¿Cómo fue tu infancia? (tal vez como preguntar sobre la familia/las cosas que te gustaban hacer de niño o las cosas que tu familia hacía junta))

¿Qué hace su familia para divertirse?

¿Qué tan importante es la educación o las buenas calificaciones en su familia?

¿Los miembros de tu familia tienen funciones específicas? ¿Qué son?

Normas sociales

¿Hay algo que se considere de mala educación en su país?

¿Existen algunos estereotipos de su cultura? ¿Qué opina de ellos?

¿Qué hace la gente para divertirse?

¿Cómo se saluda la gente?

¿Qué se considera una comida típica en su cultura?

¿Cómo se mide y se entiende el tiempo?

Experiencia personal

¿Hay algo de mi cultura por lo que sienta curiosidad?

¿Ha sufrido alguna vez un choque cultural?

¿Ha pensado alguna vez en mudarse a otro país? ¿Cuáles son los países que le gustaría visitar o a los que le gustaría mudarse?

¿Es usted religioso?

¿De qué parte de su cultura se siente más orgulloso?

¿Cuál es su día de fiesta favorito? ¿Es específica de su país/cultura? ¿Qué te gusta de lo? ¿Cómo lo celebra?

¿Cuáles son algunos de los acontecimientos importantes que han sucedido en su país recientemente?

¿Hay alguna pertenencia que tengas sobre ti o en tu casa que represente tu cultura? ¿Podría describirlo y su significado?

Appendix O: Updated Orientation Presentation (This will be done in Spanish and could be followed by an icebreaker)



DISCUSIÓN CULTURAL

Compartir prácticas culturales para prepararse para asociaciones tándem

Programa de Español para Extranjeros Departamento de Idiomas

Objetivos

1. Comprender las diferencias culturales
2. Aprender sobre costumbres y normas sociales
3. Valorar las relaciones interculturales



PREGUNTAS Y DISCUSIÓN ABIERTA

Levantar la mano,
Respetar a los demás,
Escuchar



¿CÓMO SALUDAS A LA GENTE?



¿CÓMO SE DESPIDE DE LA GENTE?



¿CÓMO SE TRATA EL ESPACIO PERSONAL?



**¿QUÉ HACEN LAS
PERSONAS DE TU
EDAD POR DIVERSIÓN?**



**¿HAY ALGO
CONSIDERADO GROSERO
EN TU CULTURA?**

¿Preguntas?

