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Native/ intercultural speaker: Evidence from tandem learner conversations

Tandem learning is defined as a language learning activity involving two native speakers and learners of each others' language who get together to learn from each other and to help each other learn. Based on the principles of autonomy & reciprocity, the tandem activity is assumed to be 'intercultural' in nature (Brammerts 1995). This paper will consider evidence from tandem learners with regard to the notion of the native speaker.

In an activity focused on the discussion of word meaning, tandem learners are found to adopt a variety of positions with regard to the word meaning, themselves, their partner, their language, and country. This paper will focus upon interlocutors' positioning of themselves as native or non-native speaker (NS-NNS) through drawing in particular on instances of repair which clearly identify these roles in the tandem partnership. The points in the conversation when NS-NNS identification happens and ceases to happen are considered, as are the purposes for which such identification takes place.

It appears that while NNSs will request support from native speakers on issues relating to linguistic accuracy and vocabulary, word meaning is not an issue on which NNSs systematically defer to their partner. This raises interesting questions with regard to interlocutors' understanding of the task, the role of the native - or intercultural - speaker and implications for ownership of the language.

Brammerts, H. (1995). 'Tandem learning and the internet. Using new technology to acquire intercultural competence'. In A. Aarup Jensen, K. Jæger, & A. Lorentsen, (Eds.), *Intercultural competence: A new challenge for language teachers and trainers in Europe Vol. II. The adult learner* (pp. 209-222). Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.