**‘*So they’re actually real?*’ Integrating e-tandem learning into the study of Language for International Business**

**Abstract:**

Tandem learning involves learners with complementary target and native languages communicating for the purpose of learning each other’s languages and cultures. Studies indicate that it can function as a powerful complement to formal language learning classes with regard to the development of both language proficiency and cultural intelligence. This paper reports on an intervention designed to create a basis for integration of tandem learning into language modules for undergraduate students of international business. The exercise involved 32 students from higher education institutions in Ireland and Austria who completed letters of application and Curriculum Vitae in their target languages and engaged in peer review with one another. This paper describes this process in more detail, discussing learning outcomes, successes and obstacles, and outlining plans for enhancement.

**Key Words:** Tandem learning, language learning, language for international business, cultural competence, intercultural competence, cultural difference

**Introduction:**

It seems that the course of global business education has been “re-charted” (Aggarwal and Scherer, 2013: 151), in other words that there has been a significant growth in international business programmes. Many of these programmes involve an element of student mobility in the form of a study abroad element to the programme. However, while there has been a focus on the design, implementation and outcomes of study abroad programmes (Aggarwal and Goodell, 2011), research and scholarship in this area has tended to neglect the role of foreign language teaching and learning on many of these programmes, particularly for those based in Anglophone countries (Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014). This gap in the research is reflected in a lack of research on the role of foreign language teaching and learning within international business programmes more generally. This is partly owing to the dominance of English as a *lingua franca* in the field of international business (Janssens and Steyaert, 2014).

There is, on the other hand, a recognition of the need for the teaching of international business to be both integrative and cross-disciplinary (Aggarwal and Goodell, 2011) and for it to explicitly develop cultural and intercultural competence, or cultural intelligence (deLourdes Dieck-Assad, 2013; Tuleja, 2014). In the study of international business, the development of such competence is often approached from an apparently monolingual perspective, decoupled from the study of foreign languages (Brannen, Piekkari and Tietze, 2014). However, research in the field of applied linguistics shows that one of the most effective ways of developing cultural and intercultural competence is by engaging with the study of foreign languages (see for example Byram, 2011; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Liaw, 2006; Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004). Therefore, alongside the inherent value associated with the development of interlanguage competence and increased proficiency in a foreign language, there is also considerable potential for the development of intercultural competence.

One example of an interactive exchange component of foreign language learning is tandem learning. A tandem learning framework involves groups of learners, or more commonly individual learners, with complementary target and native languages, communicating for the purpose of learning each other’s languages (Vassallo and Telles, 2006) and cultures (Stickler and Lewis, 2003). Such tandem learning can take the form of face-to-face interaction or can take place by virtual means including email, Skype or a myriad of other platforms. It occurs in an environment that is, to varying degrees, reciprocal, in other words of mutual benefit, collaborative and autonomous (Vassallo and Telles, 2006) with autonomous referring here to the fact that learners are responsible for their own and their partner’s learning (Stickler and Lewis, 2003).

In the opinion of many researchers in this field (for example O’Rourke, 2005; Cziko, 2004), tandem learning is an underexploited but nonetheless potentially powerful tool in second language pedagogy. Particular reasons for this include the fact that tandem learning offers the benefits of authentic, ‘culturally grounded’ (O’Rourke, 2005: 433) interaction. As such, it has the potential both to develop the intercultural dimension of language learning and to motivate the language learner (Cole and Silencio, 2013; Kinginger, 2000).

The overarching purpose of this paper is to contribute to attempts to address the need for research-informed approaches to the teaching of foreign languages on programmes for international business. It stems from reflection on the experience of implementing preliminary elements of e-tandem learning into modules on *German for Business* offered to students on the BA in Global Business at an institute for higher educationin Ireland, and *Business English* offered to students of Business Management (*Unternehmensführung*) enrolled in an institute for higher education in Austria. The intervention involved students on both modules selecting advertisements for jobs and writing letters of application in response to these in their target languages of German and English respectively. This particular task was chosen for this project, primarily owing to the fact that both researchers/lecturers involved had noted an absence of engagement and motivation around this task in previous years. In addition, in light of the discussion above around the ‘added value’ of language learning, the intention was also that awareness of cultural difference and the intercultural competence of the participants would be enhanced as a result of the highlighting of cultural differences in the preparation of letters of application.

The materials for the project including guidelines, assessment criteria and the letters themselves, were made available to the students and exchanged by means of a website generated for this purpose using *Google Sites* and a shared *Dropbox* folder. Student-to student feedback was provided by each group to the other with the process facilitated by the lecturer in each location. The remainder of this paper describes this process in more detail considering its outcomes and assessingways in which it could be enhanced.

**Intervention**

*Institutional contexts*

Language teaching in the two higher education institutions involved in this study shares certain common features and principles. This is something which has been recognised as of importance when selecting tandem partners (Wang-Szilas, Berger and Hubei, 2013). These shared features include an emphasis on linguistic and intercultural competence and the existence of a module taken by students enrolled for similar degree programmes at relatively similar levels of proficiency that includes a similar focus or task, in this case the preparation of an application for a job, internship or work placement.

*Participants*

A group of 16 Irish second year undergraduate business students studying German for Business in Ireland and 16 second year undergraduate Austrian business students studying Business English in Austria were selected for participation in this project. The proficiency levels for the Irish group were on average B2 in German according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR contains a framework of proficiency levels describing the abilities of language speakers from complete beginners to those with native-speaker like competence. The proficiency levels of the Austrian students in English, on the other hand, was on average B2+, in other words, slightly higher. This discrepancy in proficiency levels and its potential impact are the subject of discussion in the later sections of this paper.

*Process*

Two contact hours of preparatory work were carried out in class in both Ireland and Austria on the language of advertisements and the writing of formal letters of application. For the purpose of the project, a website was created on Google Sites containing the guidelines and assessment criteria for the task, the assessment criteria for the task having been developed and agreed by the two module coordinators in advance (Figure 1).

Figure 1 near here

Once the students had completed their letters of application, they were uploaded into a shared Dropbox folder to which both module coordinators/lecturers had access. Each group was given access to the other’s letters as follows: The students were divided into pairs and each pair was given two letters to read and comment upon. Their comments, or the ‘student-to-student feedback’, was collated using slightly different approaches in each country. These different approaches were used in gathering the student-to-student feedback in order to determine what, if any, impact the different approaches might have on the learning outcomes and to inform the design of future such interventions. The Irish pairs read the Austrian letters in class and each pair compiled a list of comments. During a group discussion which followed involving the whole class, the lecturer/researcher compiled a list of representative comments illustrated by examples which was shared with the Austrian students (Appendix 1). The Austrian cohort remained in pairs throughout and provided individual feedback which was written on each letter. The annotated letters were scanned and uploaded to the Dropbox folder. A list of general comments illustrated by examples was subsequently drawn up by the lecturer/researcher and this list was shared with the Irish students (Appendix 2). No individual students were identified in the student-to-student feedback which was exchanged during this exercise. This was partly to protect the privacy of the individual students. It was also felt to be unnecessary as the objective was to provide general feedback to all of the students on the different issues raised by them.

 *Student-to-student feedback*

The student-to-student feedback generated by the Austrian students and the Irish students was analysed using thematic content analysis. It became clear that the student-to-student feedback could be classified under two broad headings: culture-related and language-related. The former, relating to culturally-bound differences associated with the writing of applications for jobs in Ireland and Austria generated the greater level of interest and subsequent class discussion among the students themselves in both Austria and in Ireland. The student-to-student feedback provided under both of these headings, and the related sub-themes which emerged, is described in more detail below for each of the student cohorts in turn:

*Student-to-student feedback from the Austrian to the Irish students: Culture-related*

Letter tone: The Irish student group tended to begin their letters with a reference to where they had seen the advertisement and to follow this immediately with information on their educational backgrounds and work experience. The functional and practical tone of the letters of application was noted in the feedback from the Austrian students.

Letter structure: There was student-to-student feedback provided by both the Austrian and the Irish students regarding the use of chronological order or reverse chronological order in presenting educational qualifications and work experience. There was no general consensus on either side on which was preferable or more common in their respective cultures. In addition, both cohorts felt that their counterparts’ letters were of an appropriate length.

Elements suitable for inclusion: Student-to-student feedback from the Austrian students highlighted the need to substantiate claims made using examples where claims related for example to an ability to work in teams or to ‘solve problems creatively’.

Culture-specific concepts and terminology: The need to explain culture-specific concepts/terms associated with examinations, titles and qualifications was stressed by both the Austrian and the Irish students. Terms identified as being in need of explanation on the part of the Irish cohort included “Leaving Certificate” [school leaving examination] and the different types of degree classifications such as “first class honours degree” [highest grade possible] and ‘second class honours degree grade 1’ [second highest grade possible].

*Student-to-student feedback from the Irish to the Austrian students: Culture-related*

Letter tone: The relatively abstract and “philosophical” early paragraphs of the Austrian letters of application were commented on by the Irish students. In particular, they expressed surprise at the expression of more abstract and general “life-goals” at the beginning of letters of application such as “I want to be successful in life and I want to have a job I love.”

Letter structure: As noted in the feedback provided by the Austrian students, additional issues raised concerned the use of reverse chronology or otherwise for work experience and education.

Elements suitable for inclusion: Several Irish students commented on the Austrian tendency to list favourite subjects at school or university mentioning in their student-to-student feedback that they felt this to be unusual. Additional cultural differences noted by an Irish student related to an Austrian letter which listed parents’ and siblings’ occupations and described parental influence on career choice.

Culture-specific terminology: As in the case of the student-to-student feedback provided by the Austrian cohort to the Irish cohort, the need to explain what is meant by such terms as *Abitur* [the final Austrian higher level school examination] and *Betriebswirt* [the Austrian equivalent of a business studies graduate] was emphasised.

*Student-to-student feedback from the Austrian to the Irish students: Language-related*

Suitability and range of vocabulary: Language-related issues concerned the suitability and range of the vocabulary used, for example, with regard to the opening formal greeting which proved a particular source of error on both sides.

Register: The inappropriate use of informal register and language was commented upon by both the Irish and the Austrian cohort. It was a more pressing problem for the Irish students, however, possibly owing to the lack of differentiation between formal and informal verb forms in English. A key issue noted by the Austrian cohort was the use by Irish students of the informal *Du* form in place of the more appropriate formal *Sie* form of verbs. An example highlighted includes: ‘Du kannst dich gern bei mir melden [You’re more than welcome to get in touch with me].’

Sentence structure and complexity: There was discussion around the appropriate length and number of clauses in a sentence with the Austrian sentences on average considerably longer and more complex. This may also have been related to the proficiency discrepancy referred to above or to the nature of the target languages, English and German.

Repetition: Some of the Austrian students also noted overuse of repetition of vocabulary and particular sentence structures (for example, *ich habe*….[I have…]) in the English language letters. This may again be a point which can be related to the proficiency discrepancy which existed between the two groups.

Direct or literal translation: Comprehension-based errors also arose and included, for example, the difficulties faced by the students in Austria when confronted with the Irish concept of a “full, clean” driving licence[[1]](#footnote-1).

*Student-to-student feedback from the Irish to the Austrian students: Language-related*

Suitability and range of vocabulary: Here also the opening address was an issue with for example “Ladies and gentlemen” used in error instead of the more suitable “Dear Sir/Madam”.

Register: As referred to previously, the inappropriate use of informal register and language was commented upon by both the Irish and the Austrian cohort. Examples of informal language on the part of the Austrian cohort included, ‘I would dearly like to’, ‘for sure’, ‘I reckon’. This may possibly have arisen from a greater familiarity on the part of the Austrian students with American English.

Sentence structure and complexity: Generally the Irish students expressed admiration for the complex sentence structure and variety of clause types used in the Austrian letters.

Repetition: This was not an issue raised by the Irish students.

Direct or literal translation: Similarly, this issue appeared only in the student-to-student feedback provided by the Austrian cohort to the Irish cohort.

 *Student-to-student feedback: Comparison*

Both the Austrian and the Irish cohorts devoted more of their student-to-student feedback to cultural differences in the writing of letters of application. The more functional and direct nature of the Irish letters was commented upon by the Austrian students whose slightly more abstract letters surprised the Irish students as did reference to less tangible factors such as family and favourite subjects. On the other hand, the need to substantiate claims made was stressed by the Austrian students. The length and structure of the letters did not generate significant feedback. Considerable attention was paid, however, to the elements suitable for inclusion or otherwise and the need to explain culture-specific concepts and terminology.

The second broad theme emerging from the student-to-student feedback provided by the two cohorts centred on language-specific issues. It encompassed such areas as the need to avoid literal translation and repetition on the part of the Irish students, as well as issues around register, suitability and range of vocabulary on the part of both cohorts.

There was no obvious difference observed between the student-to-student feedback which could be related to the different approaches taken in the collecting of the student-to-student feedback (see *Process*). However, as discussed in more detail in the *Discussion, Evaluation and Concluding Remarks* section of this paper, it is intended to explore the possibility of a more direct tandem relationship between the individual students in future interventions of this kind. In this preliminary exercise, the tandem exchange operated between the groups rather than between the individual students.

*Avoidance of negative feedback:*

Finally, an additional feature of the student-to-student feedback itself was that each group was extremely positive towards the other and produced almost exclusively constructive feedback. Indeed, there was a sense that students in both Austria and Ireland were a little reluctant to directly criticise their peers. This could be seen in the way that negative feedback was almost exclusively couched in positive terms with the positive stressed and tentative suggestions for improvement made. Emoticons were also used, for example “…you might look at your sentence structure in some places ☺”. A possible tendency to frame feedback positively has been noted in the literature (for example Van der Pol, van den Berg, Admiral and Simons 2008; Guardado and Shi 2007).

**Discussion, evaluation and concluding remarks**

This final section considers the learning outcomes associated with this intervention, both intended and unanticipated. It also outlines challenges encountered and proposed enhancements for future semesters.

As noted at the beginning of the paper, one of the principal, initial reasons for engagement with this process on the part of the lecturers/researchers was to increase levels of motivation and interest on the part of the students with the task at hand, previous experience having indicated that lower levels of interest were displayed by students in preparing applications for jobs than in other areas of the course such as, for example, developing an advertising campaign. Thus, a key positive outcome was the deeper level of engagement with the process of preparing job applications observed by the module coordinators in both institutions involved. The Irish students, for example, expressed surprise and pleasure at the fact that the letters they were reviewing were ‘actually real,’ noting that this was not something they had experienced in the past. Previous studies have reached similar conclusions emphasising that learners enjoy the novelty aspect of tandem learning and the fact that it is “significantly different from anything offered by previous language learning experience” (Little, Ushioda, Appel, Moran, O'Rourke, Schwienhorst, 1999: 51).

Heightened engagement could be seen from the start of the process, for example, with all of the students registered for the module in Ireland preparing letters to exchange with their partners in Austria. This is despite the fact that the actual letters prepared for the tandem exercise were not assessed as part of the formal assessment for the module in Ireland and participation in the exercise was not compulsory although it was carried out during class time[[2]](#footnote-2). The letters prepared by the Austrian cohort did actually constitute a percentage of the formal assessment for the module in question and were worth 25% of the total grade. The fact that the Austrian letters were formally graded and contributed to the final grade for the module and the Irish letters were not, did not appear to significantly impact the learning outcomes. The may have been owing to the fact that the final assessment for the Irish module also contained a letter of application for a job and the tandem exercise may have represented a “dry run” at the assessment for the Irish students.

The fact that letters of application were core to both modules is likely also to have facilitated the integration of tandem e-learning into this module. Previous research on the integration of e-learning elements into curricula has indicated that the integration of such elements is unlikely to succeed unless the online element is embedded in the module and is formally assessed. Where this is not the case, studies have shown that the likelihood is greater that students will not engage with it sufficiently and that it will remain peripheral to the course (see for example, Bruen, Péchenart and Crosbie 2010; Little and Ushioda, 1998; Wang-Szilas, Berger and Hubei, 2013).

The student-to-student feedback from the two groups of students also indicated that as well as encouraging active learning, the process also resulted in actual learning (for similar findings, see Kinginger, 2000) in the form of a heightened awareness of the importance of cultural factors and cultural differences fulfilling the second objective of this study. This finding supports the argument put forward in the *Introduction* that language learning can contribute to the development of intercultural competence. Thus, this approach can be viewed as beginning to address the need identified by de Lourdes Dieck-Assad (2013) for programmes in international business to produce interculturally competent graduates who can “navigate countries and cultures as well” and does so using foreign language teaching and learning as a vehicle. This supports arguments in favour of benefiting from the intercultural dimension of foreign language teaching and learning in the development of the intercultural competence and cultural intelligence of the business undergraduate.

An additional welcome and not entirely surprising outcome given the close connections between language and culture, was a heightened sensitivity on the part of the students to language issues including the need to use an appropriate register. The importance of “formulas” such as greetings and conclusions was also emphasised. In addition, both groups of students expressed a greater personal interest in their counterparts during informal discussion around the exercise in class.

As noted previously, despite both groups being in their second year of an undergraduate degree, there was a difference in average proficiency levels between them with the Irish students at level B1-2 and the Austrian students displaying an average level in English of B2+[[3]](#footnote-3). The discrepancy in proficiency levels did not prove to be an obstacle to the completion of the task. However, it is likely to have been one of the reasons for a predominance of English over German in the provision of feedback by both groups. As this was the first time this particular approach had been used by these groups, the lecturers did not attempt to influence or ‘force’ the use of a particular language but instead allowed the discussions to progress naturally in the language chosen by the students. This resulted in the Austrian students giving feedback in a combination of English and German and the Irish students predominantly in English (for a similar observation, see O’Rourke, 2005: 441; Vassallo and Telles, 2006). This observation corroborates the claim that partners ought to be as closely matched in proficiency as possible (O’Rourke, 2005: 458) where one of the objectives is to ensure equal use of both languages.

It is likely that the proficiency gap may be unavoidable in cases where undergraduates at the same stage of their studies participate in a tandem. Pairing final year Irish students with students in earlier years in Austria might be one way to resolve this issue but would result in logistical and content-related issues of its own. Another alternative, where the proficiency gap is unavoidable, is the use of other strategies such as pushed or scaffolded communication in the target language on the part of the relatively lower proficiency grouping, in this case the Irish students. In other words, with the help of their lecturer, the relatively weak group could be pushed to provide feedback in the L2 with assistance provided in the form for example of appropriate meta-language and additional vocabulary.

Additional changes and enhancements suggested by this exercise include further development of the tandem nature of the process itself. As discussed at the outset, particular features of tandem learning include reciprocity and autonomy. Both of these features require the individual pairs to take responsibility for the learning process. In addition, the definition of tandem learning emphasises the notion of the learners working in pairs. In order to ensure more frequent and direct interaction between the language pairs in the future, each pair will be asked to share a first draft of their letter of application and curriculum vitae at an earlier point in the semester and to develop a second and subsequently final draft based on feedback. The plenary review of the letters would take place after this has been completed. It is proposed also to include an interview element to the module via Skype or an alternative platform with selected groups from each country acting as the interview panel for their counterparts and providing feedback. In these ways, it is hoped to further develop the e-tandem element of the modules in question and enhance the students’ overall learning experience. Finally, in line with the recently expressed view of Stanford President, John Hennessy (Reis 2014), that experiments are key to understanding the impact on learning of the introduction of elements of online learning, it is proposed to monitor the impact of these elements in future semesters.

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Appendix 1

**Feedback from the Irish students to the Austrian students**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Positive | Negative |
| **Our overall impression of the CVs and letters of application was extremely positive and we very much enjoyed reading them and contributing to this exchange of materials. We hope that our letters will live up to the high standard set (but please remember that we are levels B1 and B2 while we get the impression that your levels are higher).**The vocabulary used was appropriate and wide-ranging as was in almost all cases a correct, formal register was employed.The CVs in particular were very well structured and this made it easy to process the information provided quickly. In many cases, they looked impressive and very professionally formatted.German words/terms were well explained providing the necessary context for non-German speakers.One or two letters were very interesting with lots of examples of relevant experience, well explained, but the problem was then that they ended up being too long. Clearly, a balance needs to be found, something we find difficult too.Excellent use of paragraphs. | In a limited number of cases, informal language was used, e.g. “*for sure*”, or “I would *dearly* like to discuss…” which would not really be appropriate in a context such as this one.Generally, we would always be told to put education and work experience in reverse chronological order and this was not always the case in the letters and CVs we looked at.Sometimes claims regarding skills and abilities were not substantiated using concrete examples, for example, the statement that the candidate works well in teams with no examples backing up the claim to illustrate where they might have learnt or demonstrated this.We have learnt that it is better to give the names of referees rather than to say that references are “available upon request”, however, this may be something that is culture-specific. |

Language-Specific Comments:

* ‘But’ at the start of a sentence.
* Greeting: Dear Sir or Madam is perfect or Dear *Name* but we would avoid ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’, ‘Dear Sirs or Mesdames’ etc.
* ‘I would like to contest for the role of’ should read ‘I would like to apply for the position of’.
* ‘I am looking forward to hear from you’ should read ‘I look forward to hearing from you’ and similarly ‘I was working in different companies’, ‘I worked in different companies’.
* We have also learnt that when you know the name of the person you are writing to, you use ‘yours sincerely’ at the end and when you don’t, you use ‘yours faithfully’. Maybe we are wrong?!
* No capital letters at the start of sentences.
* Some errors in choice of prepositions.
* Some punctuation errors.
* Spelling mistakes.
* Inappropriate use of ‘arrange’.
* Some sentences can be quite long with a number of clauses which is less usual in English and can reduce their impact.

Appendix 2

**Feedback from the Austrian students to the Irish students**

**Der Gesamtausdruck der vorliegenden Lebesläufe und Bewerbungsschreiben ist durchwegs positiv. Wir haben es sehr genossen, die Schreiben durchzulesen. Das genutzte Vokabular war äußerst umfangreich und größtenteils passend gewählt. Die Lebensläufe sind professionell strukturiert und klar aufgebaut. Der “Rote Faden” ist eindeutig zu erkennen. Im Großen und Ganzen sind die Schrieben sehr zufriedenstellend und können durchaus für Bewerbungsschreiben verwendet werden.** [The overall impression made by the Curriculum Vitae and letters of application is very positive. We really enjoyed reading them. The vocabulary used was extremely wide-ranging and for the most part appropriate. The CVs are professionally and clearly structured. The train of thought is clearly recognisable. Overall the material is very satisfactory and could genuinely be used for job applications.](translations into English, researcher’s own)

**Well done ☺**

**Zum Notieren:**

* Layout: Immer 2 zwei Adressen angeben, sowie auch das Datum, die Stadt und den Betreff. [Layout: Always give two addresses, the date, the city and the reference]
* Immer konkret sein und Behauptungen begründen. *Ich habe meine Kenntnisse ausbauen können.* Wo und wie haben Sie das gemacht? [Always be concrete and substantiate claims. *I was able to expand my knowledge*. Where and how did you do that?]
* Satzanfänge wiederholen sich (ich….ich….ich….). [Repetition at the beginning of sentences, I…I…I]
* Nicht unsicher sein Ich interessiere mich für eine Tätigkeit *vielleicht* in der Automobilindustrie. [Don’t be tentative. I *might* be interested in working in the automobile industry.]
* ‘Voll saubere Führerschein’??? Was bedeutet das? [‘Full clean driving license’??? What does that mean?]
* Vocabulary very well.
* German is generally very good for this level.
* Good describing of skills
* ‘Ich habe ein hohes (nicht ‘gutes’) Niveau in **D**eutsch.’ [I have a high (not ‘good’) level of German.]
* Descriptions of self generally clear and well constructed. The ‘Fälle’ [cases] are sometimes wrong.

Figures:

|  |
| --- |
| **Assessment Criteria** |
| Content (50%) | Language (50%) |
| * *Task Completion:* a realistic CV and covering letter dealing with the points raised in the job advert. Some issues to consider:
	+ How successful are you at "selling" yourself?
	+ Are all the requirements of the position covered?
 | * *Own language.* No "chunks" from the job advert (although terms and vocabulary may be used)
* *Appropriate register.* Formal English/German
* *Appropriate vocabulary.* This applies particularly to usage, range and spelling.
* *Comprehensibility.* This requires a clear and logical structure, use of "linking" words etc.
* *Accuracy.* Correct grammar and punctuation.
 |

Figure 1: Assessment Criteria

1. That is, one which has not been endorsed as a result of driving offences. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In contrast, other tasks set over the twelve weeks of the module were completed by only a proportion of the students. These included, for example, reading comprehensions, translations and pieces of free writing. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is most likely the result of differences in the perceived value of the target languages in Austria and Ireland and the place of foreign languages in general in the education system in both countries. Further discussion on this issue is, however, beyond the scope of this paper (see Bruen (2013) for further commentary on the Irish situation in this regard). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)