Tandem

App Redesign Case Study

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Origin Story/History

Created in 2015 by three friends who wanted to help connect the world through language learning
Based in Berlin
Introduced Tandem Pro in 2018, allowing members to access exclusive features through a subscription
The name was inspired by Tandem language learning, a method of learning that is done through language exchange

Audience

Tandem boasts over 10 million members across 180 countries
Tandem is made for those looking to take the next steps in the language learning process by speaking with native speakers
Target Market: People of all ages who have access to technology and are wanting to connect with users around the world to learn and share their languages

Brand Goals/Mission

Tandem strives to connect users around the world through language learning
Tandem hopes to help users learn their target languages by speaking with native speakers

General Brand Research

Services and Features

Application-based membership, each application is viewed individually to ensure security and the safety of users

A wide variety of partners with which users can exchange languages

Allows messaging, voice memos, and calling (both video and audio)

Users can filter their matches to find a partner that fits best for them

Users can join language parties, where they can meet and speak with vast groups of people about a variety of topics

Users can leave and receive reviews/references after chatting with a partner

Users can add language certificates for further verification, language partners can see these on their pages

Currently offers over 300 languages

Competitors:

Apps: HelloTalk, Italki, HiNative, Speaky

Websites: MyLanguageExchange

Other: Reddit, Discord

Competitor Benchmarking

	Format	Languages	Users	Messaging	Audio Messaging	Audio Calling
Tandem	Both	300	10,000,000	✔	✔	✔
HelloTalk	Both	150	30,000,000	✔	✔	✔
Italki	Both	130	5,000,000	✔		
HiNative	Both	113	6,000,000			
Speaky	Both	110	1,000,000	✔		
MyLanguageExchange	Website	164	3,000,000	✔	✔	✔
Reddit	Both		1,600,000,000	✔		
Discord	Both		196,200,000	✔	✔	✔

Competitor Benchmarking (cont.)

	Video Calling	Lessons	Forums	Language Aids	Posts	Profiles	Starting Cost
Tandem	✔			✔	✔		Free
HelloTalk	✔			✔	✔	✔	Free
Italki		✔					$4.00-30.00/hr
HiNative			✔	✔	✔		Free
Speaky		✔					Free
MyLanguageExchange		✔		✔		✔	Free
Reddit			✔		✔	✔	Free
Discord	✔						Free

Hypotheses

By creating more in-depth user profile pages, users will feel more connected to the app

By creating more specific filters, people will feel safer when finding partners on the app

By adding forums, users would feel more connected to the community

Allowing users to make posts on their profiles will make connecting with other users feel easier

Giving users conversation prompts could make the app less intimidating to use and make starting a conversation easier

Adding in better matching features (i.e. topic, language level, etc.) could help users feel more comfortable and connected to the person they are talking to
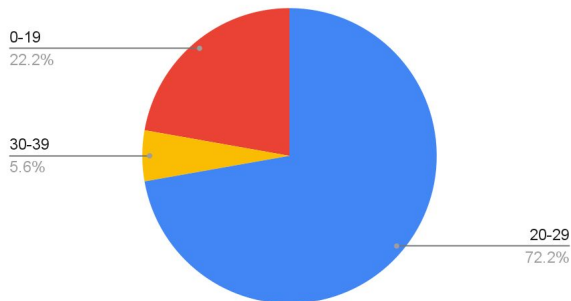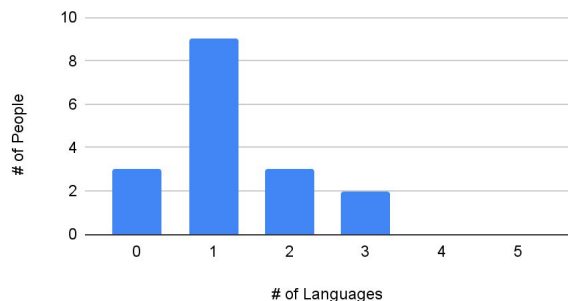
User Research

User Surveys
User Personas
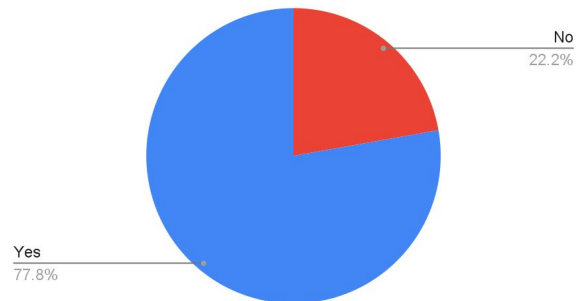
User Survey Results | User Demographics

Age

0-19
22.2%

30-39
5.6%

20-29
72.2%

How many languages are you learning?

# of People

# of Languages

Do you use apps or websites to learn languages?

No
22.2%

Yes
77.8%

A majority of users surveyed were between the ages of 20-29, with the next largest group being users where were under the age of 19. Many of the people interviewed use apps or websites to learn languages, with only 22.2% not using them. The average audience member was learning one language, with a few people actively learning as many as 3.

User Personas

Finn Baker
19 / Seattle / Student

Finn is a college student currently attending the University of Washington in Seattle. Finn is majoring in business, and is interested in learning languages so he can someday work in international trade or for an international company. Finn is currently learning French and Spanish, but hopes to learn German someday in the future. Finn has been using Tandem for about a year now, and uses it to hopefully speed up his language learning process. Alongside Tandem, Finn also takes college courses in his target languages.

Goals	Pain Points	Needs
Meet other people who are fluent in the language he is wanting to learn Learn a language to help with his future careers after college	Finn often finds starting the conversation quite difficult Keeping up with partners outside of the conversation is hard, especially as a college student who can't chat all the time	A broader picture of who he is chatting with for a more personable conversation More in-depth correction tools so he can get a better idea of who he is chatting with

User Personas

Alyson Brant
32 / Houston / Architect

Alyson is an architect based in Houston, Texas. Alyson is currently learning French to better connect with her grandmother, and some of her family who live in Belgium. Alyson has been using Tandem for a couple years now, to gain better experience speaking with native speakers. Alyson really enjoys the voice memo and calling features available on Tandem.

Goals	Pain Points	Needs
Learn French to connect to her family Expand her speaking skills with live conversation Meet new people who speak her target language	Alyson finds that finding a partner to talk to can sometimes take up more of her time on the app than actually chatting with people Alyson can find starting a conversation very intimidating	Quick and easy matches with language partners

User Personas

Mia Young
24 / New York / Video Game Designer

Mia is a recent college graduate in New York, who is now working as a video game designer for a large company. Mia started learning languages as a hobby a few years ago, starting with Spanish, which she started learning in high school. Mia enjoys using Tandem to meet new people and practice learning languages in a judgement-free space.

Goals	Pain Points	Needs
Learn languages to expand her knowledge of the world	Mia finds spending a lot of time on the app to be difficult, especially with a demanding job	Better matching services, to make finding a language partner easier
Meet new people and make friends through language-learning	She finds meeting new people on the app to be quite intimidating, especially with very few filters	Chat forums, similar to the language parties, for a less personal experience and a wider range of help

User Personas

Shane Harman
38 / San Diego / Software Developer

Shane is a software developer in San Diego, CA, where he lives with his wife and their two dogs. Shane has started learning Korean to connect with his wife and her family. Shane has been using Tandem for a few months and has been enjoying it, but he isn't sure if he will continue with it much longer. Keeping up with conversations while spending time with his family and working can be quite difficult on top of the basics of language learning.

Goals	Pain Points	Needs
Practice speaking through calling and voice messages Get advice and tips from native speakers on speaking his target language	Navigating the app for the first time can be quite difficult Struggles with keeping up conversations with users	Shane wishes the experience was more personalized than it is A place where he can interact and keep up with his language partners without having to constantly chat, especially since he's often busy with work

Product Research

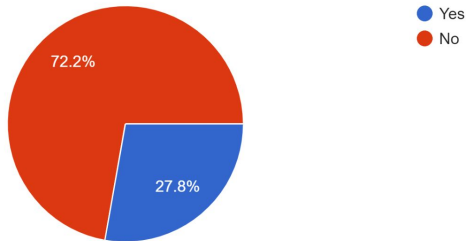Product Surveys
User Journey Maps
Site Maps
User Flows

Product Surveys

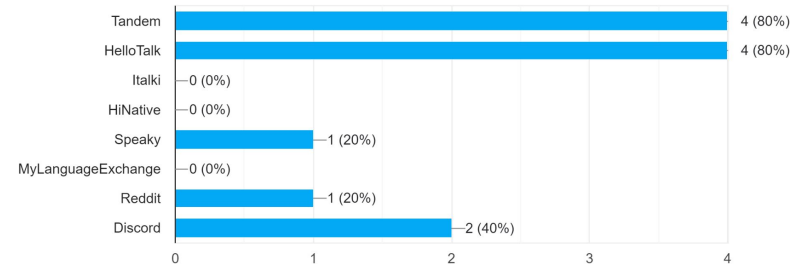The product survey was conducted alongside the user interviews/surveys.

Do you use any language exchange apps or websites?
18 responses

● Yes
● No

72.2%

27.8%

What language exchange apps/websites do you use?
5 responses

App	Value
Tandem	4 (80%)
HelloTalk	4 (80%)
Italki	0 (0%)
HiNative	0 (0%)
Speaky	1 (20%)
MyLanguageExchange	0 (0%)
Reddit	1 (20%)
Discord	2 (40%)

Of those that had used language exchange apps before, many preferred Tandem and HelloTalk. Many of the people who took the survey had never used a language exchange app before. Many users stated that language exchange apps can often feel intimidating or complicated. One goal for this project would be to make Tandem more welcoming and friendly, rather than feeling like a lot of pressure, or like a dating app like one user stated.

Product Surveys

When asked what features users liked seeing on language exchange apps some users stated:

> "Direct messaging, the ability to filter through users, the ability to interact with native speakers who can help correct grammar."

> "Voice chat allows me to practice my listening skills, I like how I can be matched with partners in some of the apps"

> "Option to do video/audio calls"

> "Voice chat, direct messaging, forums make connecting with other language learners super helpful!"

> "Accessible information"

Direct messaging and voice chats seems to be the biggest draws for many users, allowing them to practice their reading and listening skills. It will be important to emphasize these in the app design. Some enjoyed the ability to be matched with language partners based on their interests and language levels/preferences.
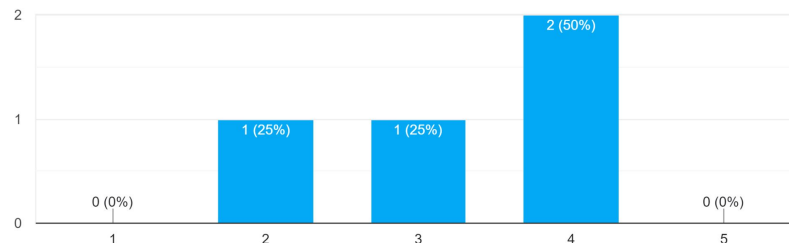
Product Surveys

What features have you utilized on Tandem?
4 responses

Direct Messaging	4 (100%)
Video Calls	2 (50%)
Audio Calls	1 (25%)
Language Parties	1 (25%)
References	2 (50%)
Language Certificates	0 (0%)
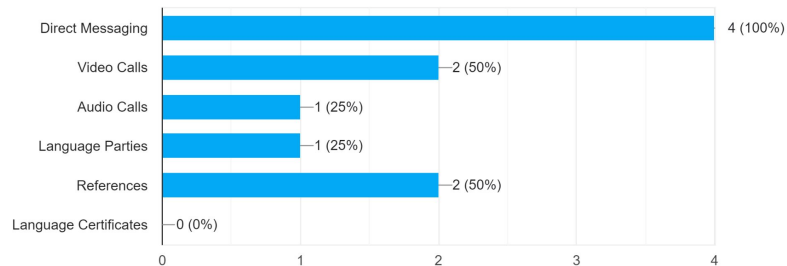
How likely are you to recommend Tandem to a friend?
4 responses

1	2	3	4	5
0 (0%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)

Those who had used Tandem before seemed to use the direct messaging feature the most, with some using video calls and audio calls, as well as references. References allow users to leave reviews for those they have spoken with, and may help people feel safer when speaking with a language partner.

Product Surveys

When asked why they don't use Tandem or other language exchange apps, some users stated that they felt unsafe, with many users stating these apps felt very intimidating. Some quotes include:

> "I think they're good in theory. I personally haven't had much success (mainly bc i'm too nervous of making mistakes), but if you're less socially anxious, then it'd be grand. My problem with them is that some people try to use them as an international dating site, and it can end up being a bit of an unsafe environment (particularly for women)."

> "They seem a bit inaccessible and feel like more energy to use than it is worth"

> "I used to use Tandem. Was too anxious to use my target language and only helped people with their English."

When redesigning this app, it will be helpful to look at these concerns many people voiced when discussing the design, usability, and accessibility. By using this feedback I can implement ways in which the app could feel safer, more welcoming, and easier to use for those who have never tried language exchange before.

User Journey Maps | Find a Language Partner

Finn Baker
19 / Seattle / Student

Scenario:
Finn is a college student currently learning languages to help boost his future career in business. Finn is looking to start a conversation with a native speaker to practice his target language.

Tasks	Open Tandem	Navigate to the community tab	Select filters and filter based on demographics	Find a partner to chat with	Select a partner and begin the chat
Pain Points			The filter button isn't super easy to find	Finding a partner can be time consuming	Starting the chat can be quite awkward and nerve-wracking
Emotions					
Opportunities			Make the filter button more prominent/obvious	Match partners based on goals and traits, with the best matching ones on top	

User Journey Maps | Update User Profile

Alyson Bryant
32 / Houston / Architect

Scenario:
Alyson is looking to meet new people and learn languages with them. Alyson is looking to update her user profile to better match her learning level and needs, so she can find a language partner.

Tasks	Navigate to the community tab	Click on your profile	Click "About Me"	Navigate to the "About Me" section	Update Profile Info	Go back to your profile, and scroll to the profile preferences	Edit profile preferences
Pain Points		Profile button is pretty small and hard to see		Finding this section can be a bit tricky		"Why is this separate from the rest of my info?"	Each of these being separate makes making changes pretty time-consuming
Emotions							
Opportunities		Making the profile page a separate tab could alleviate this				Making these available in one section could make updating a profile more efficient	

User Journey Maps | Find a Language Partner

Mia Young
24 / New York / Video Game Designer

Scenario:
Mia enjoys learning languages as a hobby. She is currently looking to join a language party so she can join other users in an open discussion.

	Tasks			
Tasks	Open Tandem	Navigate to the Parties tab	Select your target language at the top	Select a language party that interests you
Pain Points			Finding your target language can take some time	
Emotions				
Opportunities			A more organized list of language options could relieve some frustrations	

User Journey Maps | Post a Photo

Shane Harman
38 / San Diego /
Software Developer

Scenario:
Shane is learning
languages to better
connect to his wife and
her family. Shane works
a very busy job, and
doesn't have a lot of
time to keep up with his
language partners.
Shane is looking to post
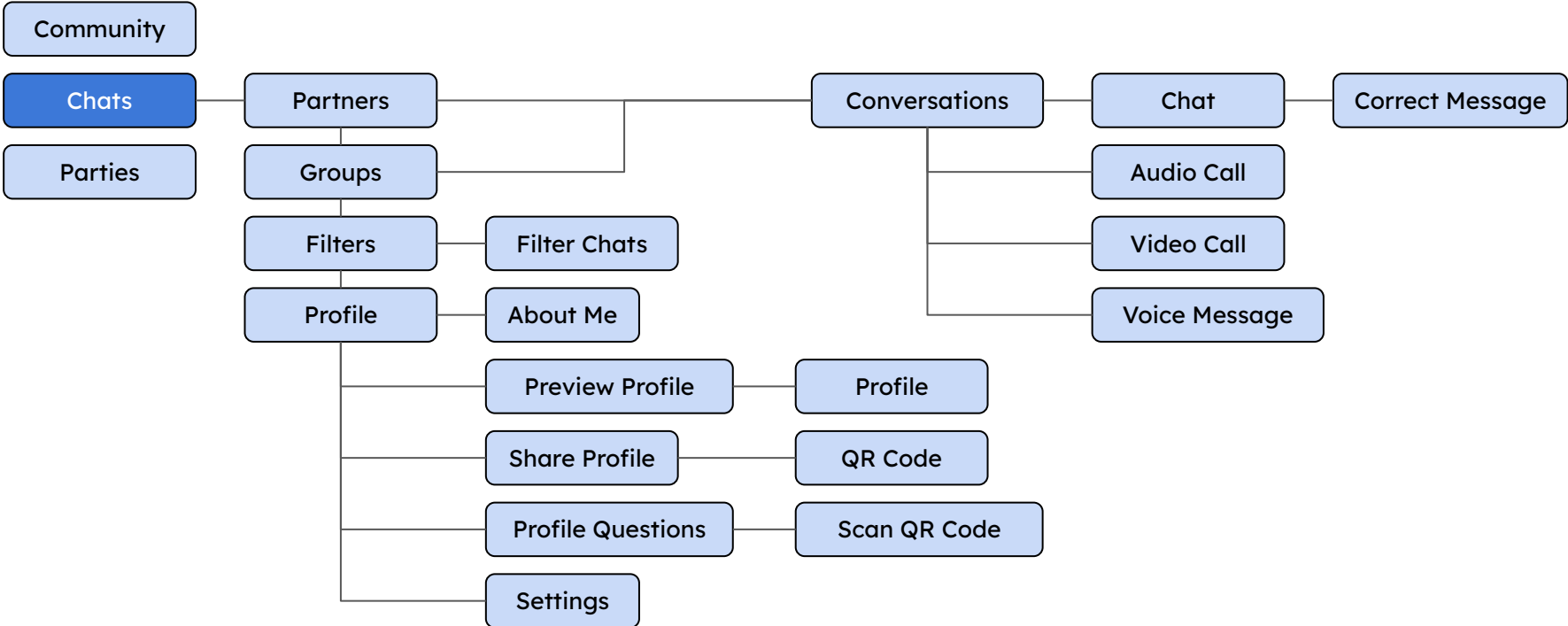a photo to his profile for
his partners to see

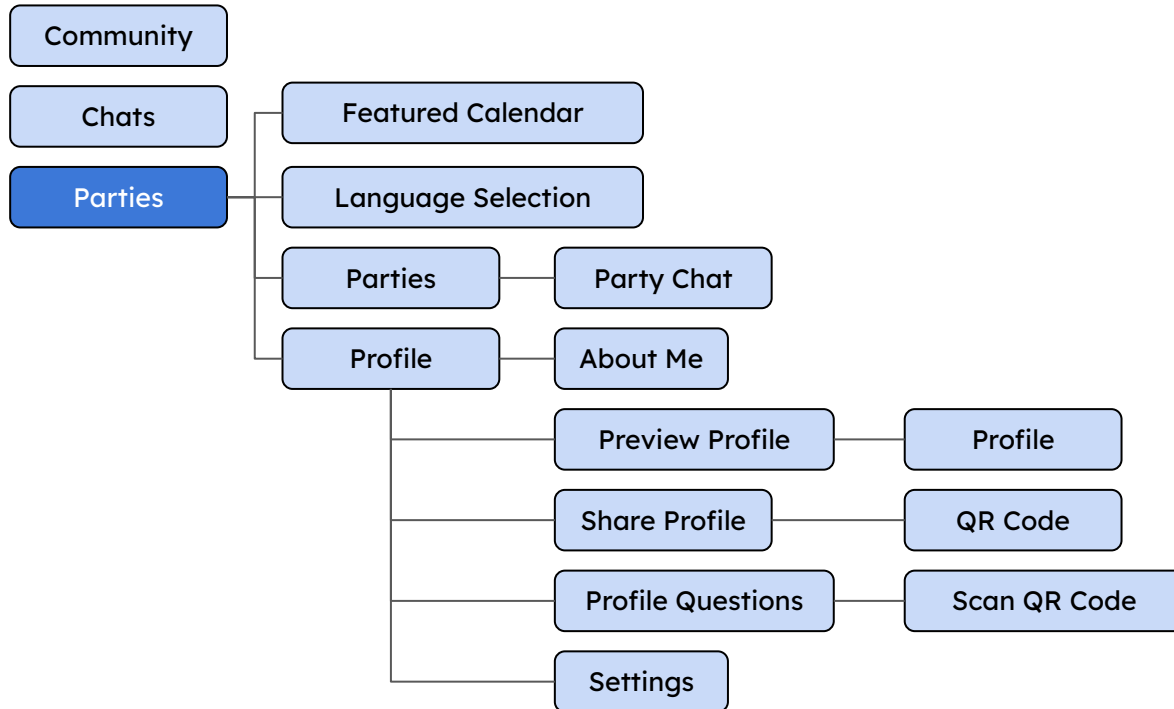|					
Tasks	Navigate to the community tab	Click on your profile	Click "About Me"	Scroll down to "Photos"	Upload a photo
Pain Points		Profile button is pretty small and hard to see		The feature is relatively hidden and can be hard to find	"Why can't I add any info to my photo when I post it?"
Emotions					
Opportunities		Making the profile page a separate tab could alleviate this		Making the profile page one page to edit/post would make navigating much easier	Allowing users to add captions to photo posts could make them feel more personal and make it feel like there is a purpose to adding these photos

Current Site Map | Community Tab

Community		All		User Profiles

Chats

Parties

Nearby — User Profiles

Travel — User Profiles

Filters — Filter Selection

Profile — About Me

Preview Profile — Profile

Share Profile — QR Code

Profile Questions — Scan QR Code

Settings
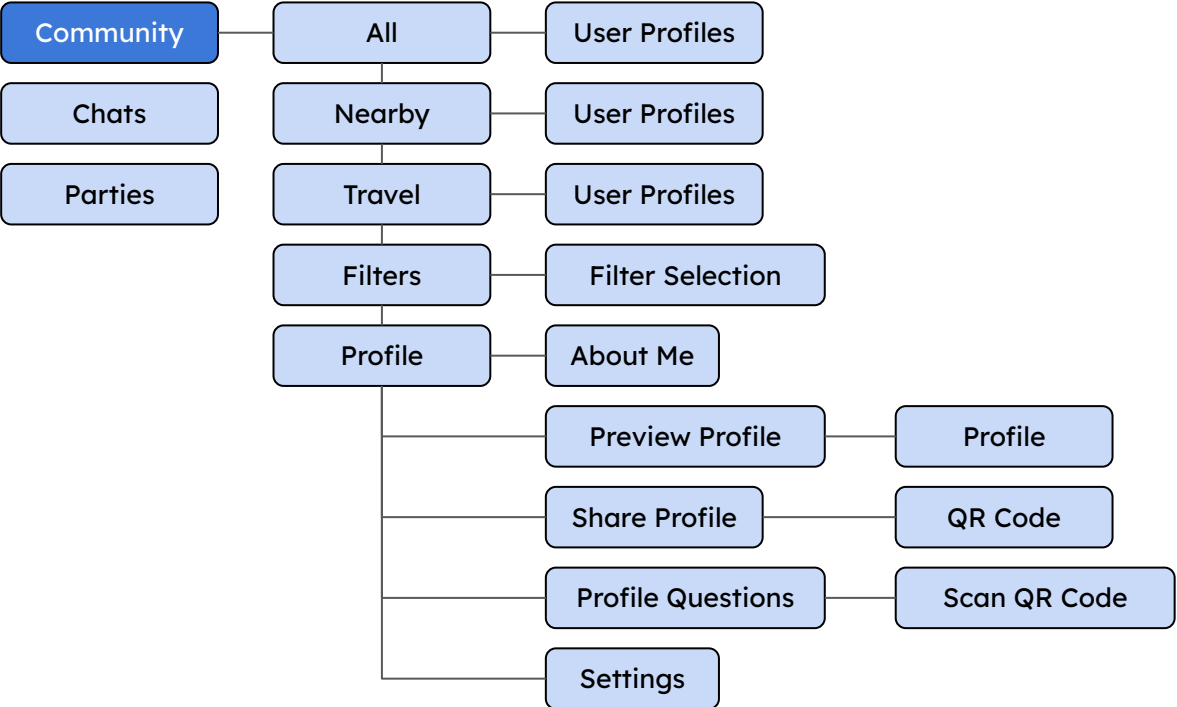
The profile page is accessible through multiple different pages

Current Site Map | Chats Tab

Community

Chats — Partners — Conversations — Chat — Correct Message

Parties

Groups

Filters — Filter Chats

Profile — About Me

Conversations — Audio Call

Conversations — Video Call

Conversations — Voice Message

Preview Profile — Profile

Share Profile — QR Code

Profile Questions — Scan QR Code

Settings

Current Site Map | Parties Tab

User Flows

Task 1: Find a partner to match with and start a conversation
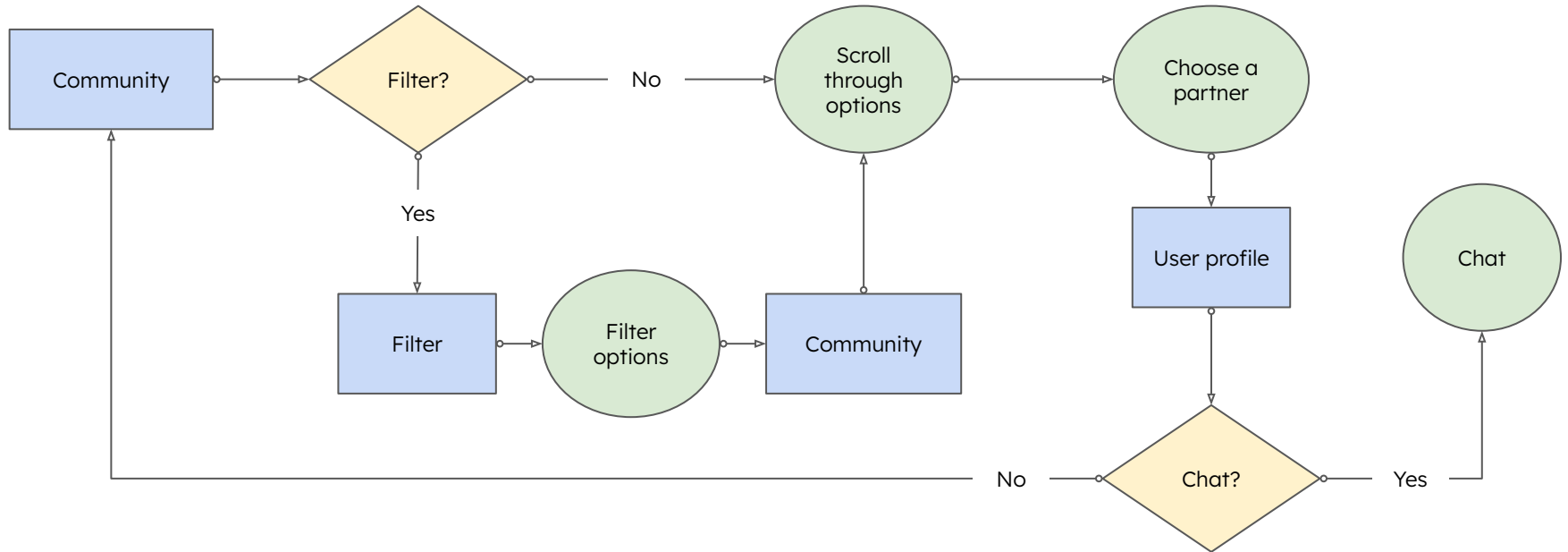
User Flows

Task 2: Update your user profile
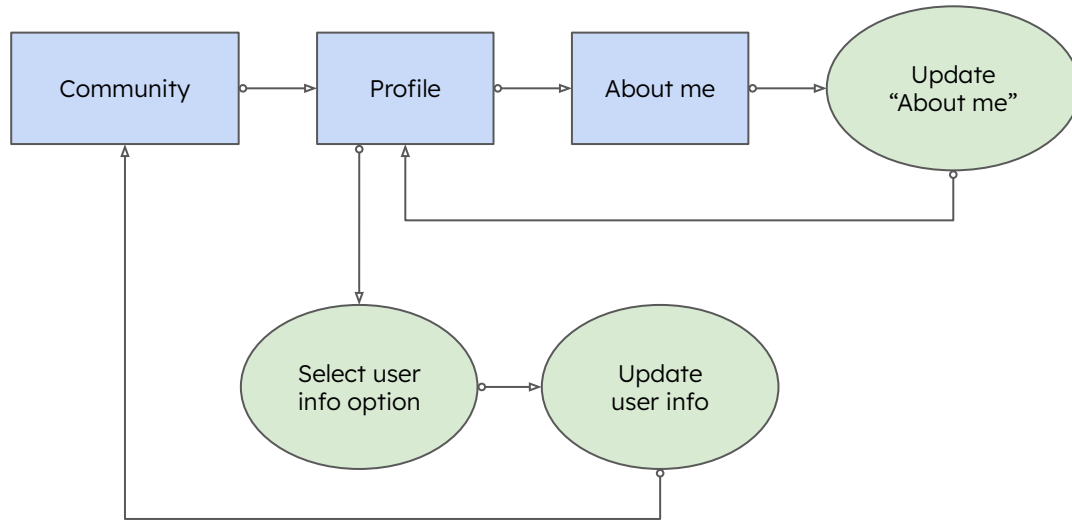
User Flows

Task 3: Join a language party in your target language

```
Community → Parties → Filter?
                        │
                      No → Scroll through options → Find party
                        │                                │
                      Yes                             Join?
                        ↓                            │    │
                   Select language → (to Scroll)    No → Find party
                                                     │
                                                   Yes
                                                     ↓
                                              Join party → Party
```
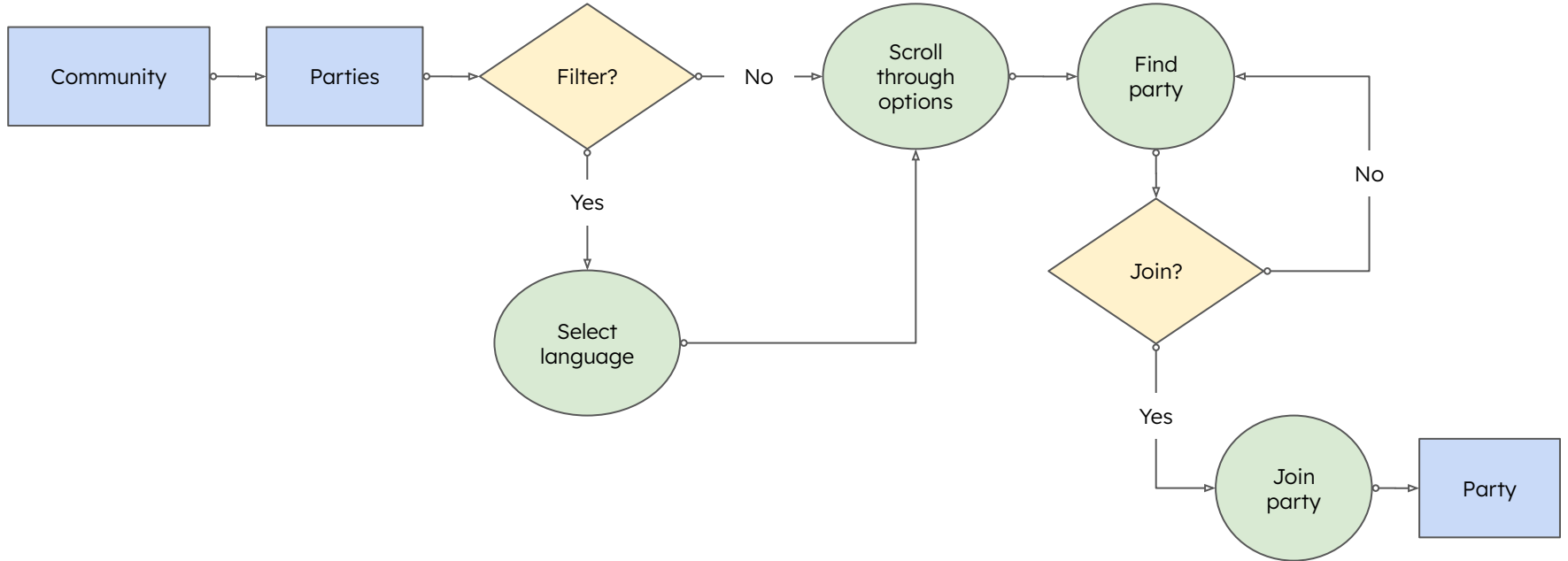
User Flows

Task 4: Post a photo to your profile page
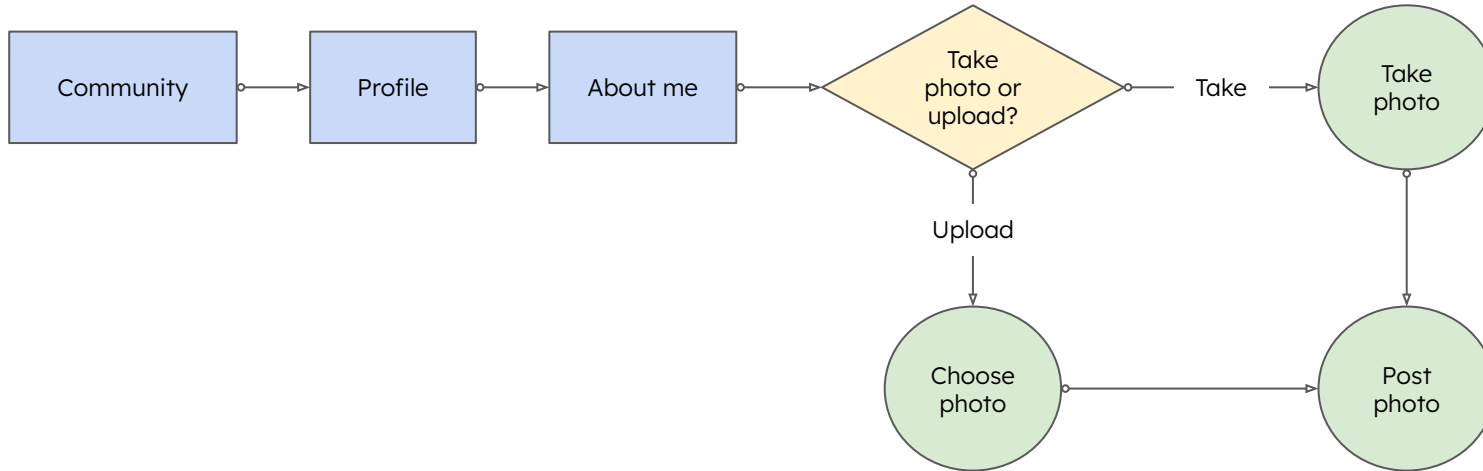
Goals & HMWs

How Might We's
Goals

How Might We's

How might we…

    Make the app more inviting for users so starting a conversation is easier?

    Make matching with a partner easier so users don't feel as overwhelmed with all their options?

    Make choosing a partner feel more secure so users feel safer when navigating conversations?

    Make the app feel more welcoming for users so starting conversations is easier?

    Make the profile page easier to navigate for users so they can best be matched with a language partner?

    Make language parties easier to find?

    Make the community tab easier to navigate?

    Make the language learning process more accessible for users who might feel intimidated?

    Make the app feel safer for our users?

Goals & Product Statement

Goals:

Make conversation more inviting and less intimidating through conversation prompts and in-depth user profiles

Make finding a language partner easier through better matching and easier more user-friendly navigation

Allow users to match through talking preferences, interests, etc.

Make language parties easier to find and less intimidating to join

Make the user-interface clearer and more consistent

Make the profile page easier to navigate and update

Make photo uploads more useful and substantial

Product Statement:

For language learners of every level, Tandem is a fun and exciting language exchange platform that allows you to quickly match with language partners to learn together and get to know each other, all in one safe and easy to use app!

Prioritized Goals

High
- Make conversation more inviting and less intimidating through conversation prompts and in-depth user profiles

Medium
- Make finding a language partner easier through better matching and easier more user-friendly navigation
- Make the profile page easier to navigate and update

Low
- Allow users to match through talking preferences, interests, etc.
- Make the user-interface clearer and more consistent
- Make language parties easier to find and less intimidating to join
- Make photo uploads more useful and substantial

Planning and Sketching

Moodboard
Lo-Fi Wireframes
Hi-Fi Wireframes

Moodboard
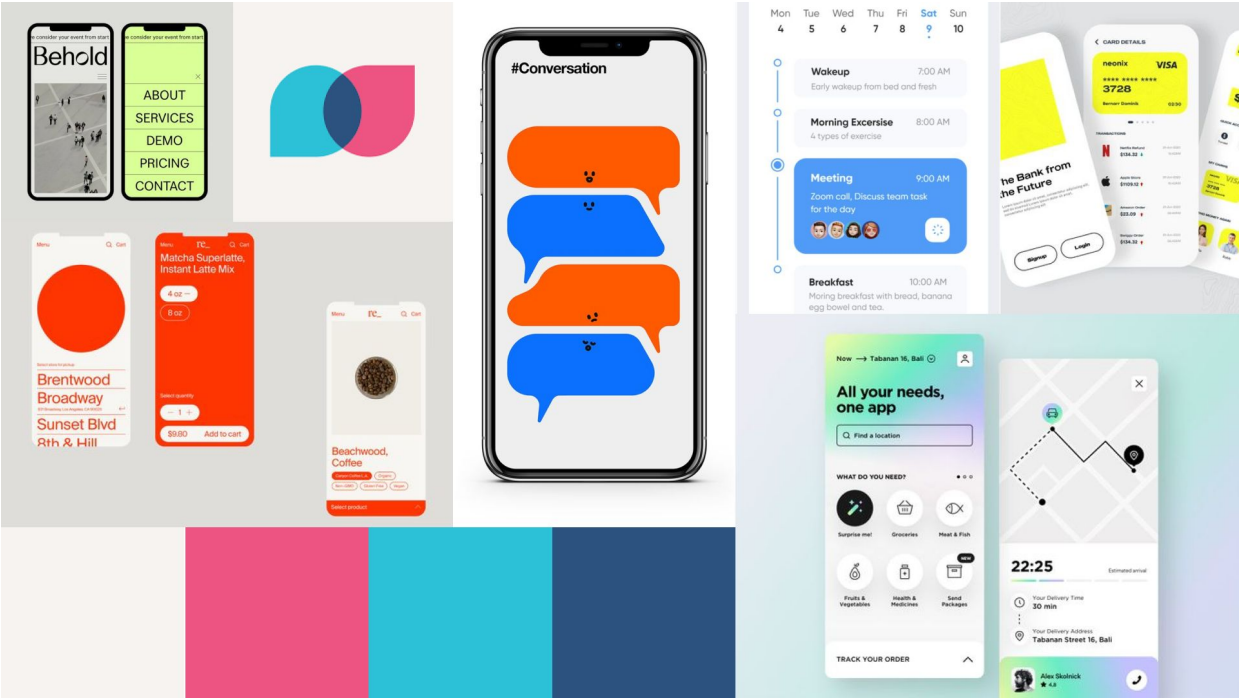
Key Terms:

Clean
Simple
Calm
Inviting
Fun

Wireframes | Sketches
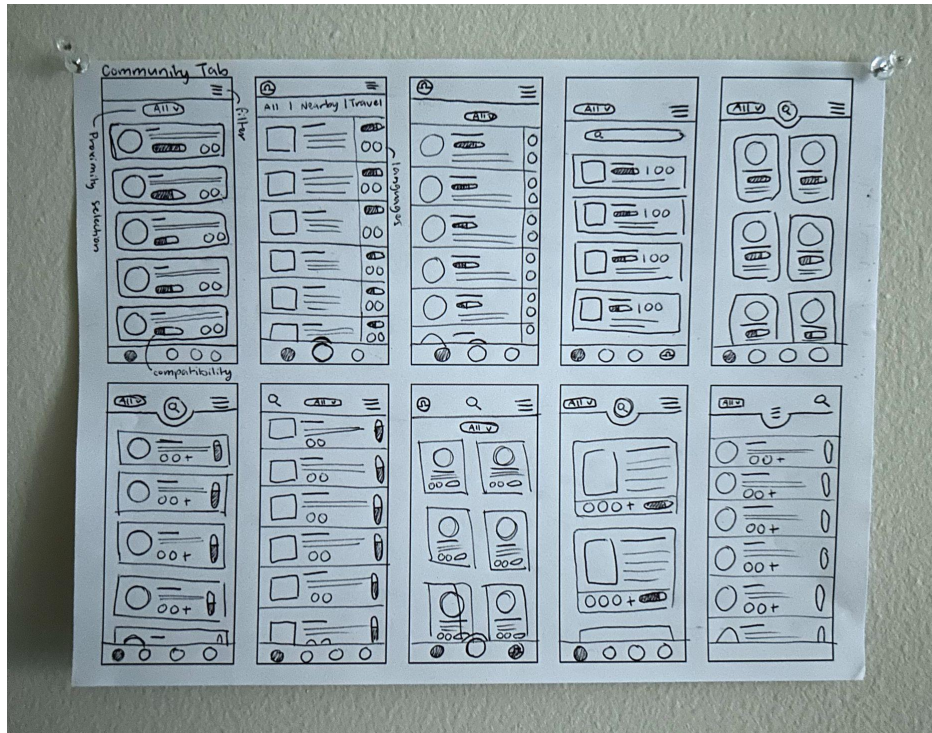
For the sketches of the community tab, I tried out many different ways to lay out the top navigation and the cards with the profiles. In the end I opted for the horizontal card format, with a condensed top navigation.

Each profile card includes a bar that represents compatibility between the users. This info would help users quickly find other learners that they could chat with and may have similar interests to.

I did my best to ideate different ways in which the options on the page could be condensed to limit the number of choices users had to make. Limiting choices could help reduce overwhelm when using the app.

Wireframes | Sketches
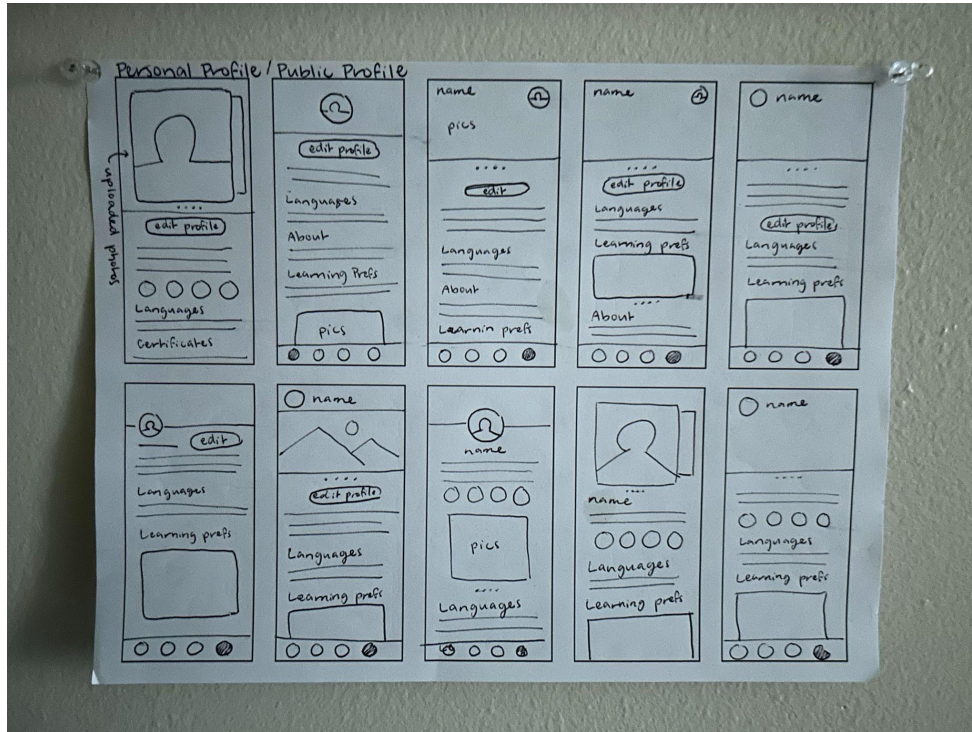
For the sketches of the profile page, I tested out many different ways to implement the photo posting feature. I wanted to make the uploaded photos more useful than just a separate section at the bottom of the profile. I also wanted to condense the profile into one page, rather than having three separate pages for previewing and editing.

Peyton Wood

Wireframes | Community Tab
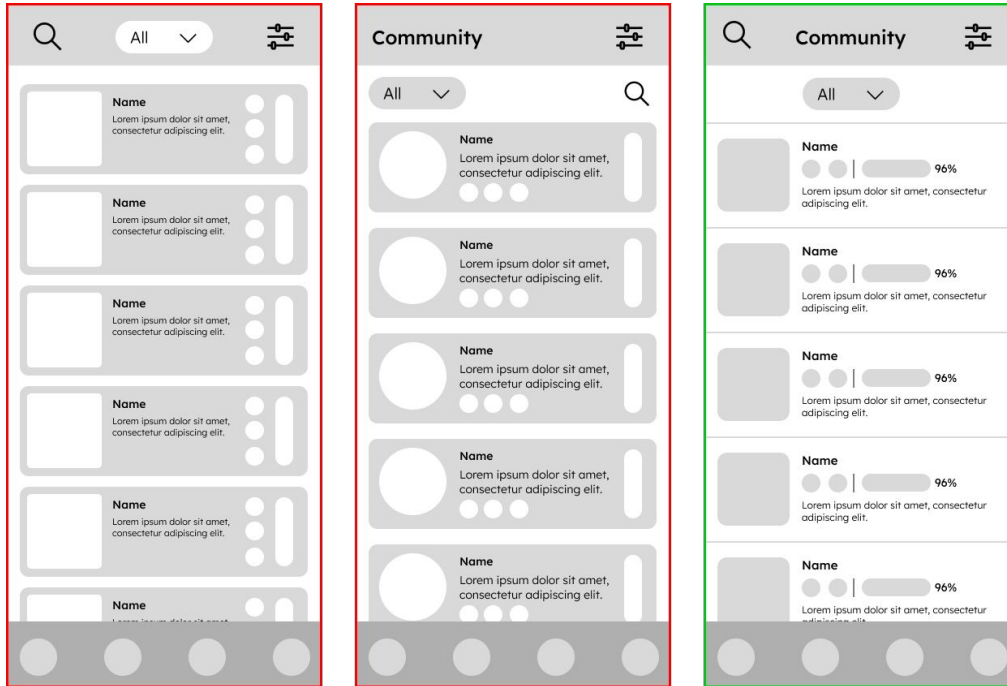
With the Community Tab, I wanted to limit the number of options users faced when trying to start a conversation. The current app design features many different ways of sorting and filtering, along with multiple access points for other pages. I worked to narrow these down so the page felt less overwhelming.

I also added a section within each user preview that can show compatibility based on how users filled out their profile preferences, so users can match much easier.

Wireframes | Personal Profile
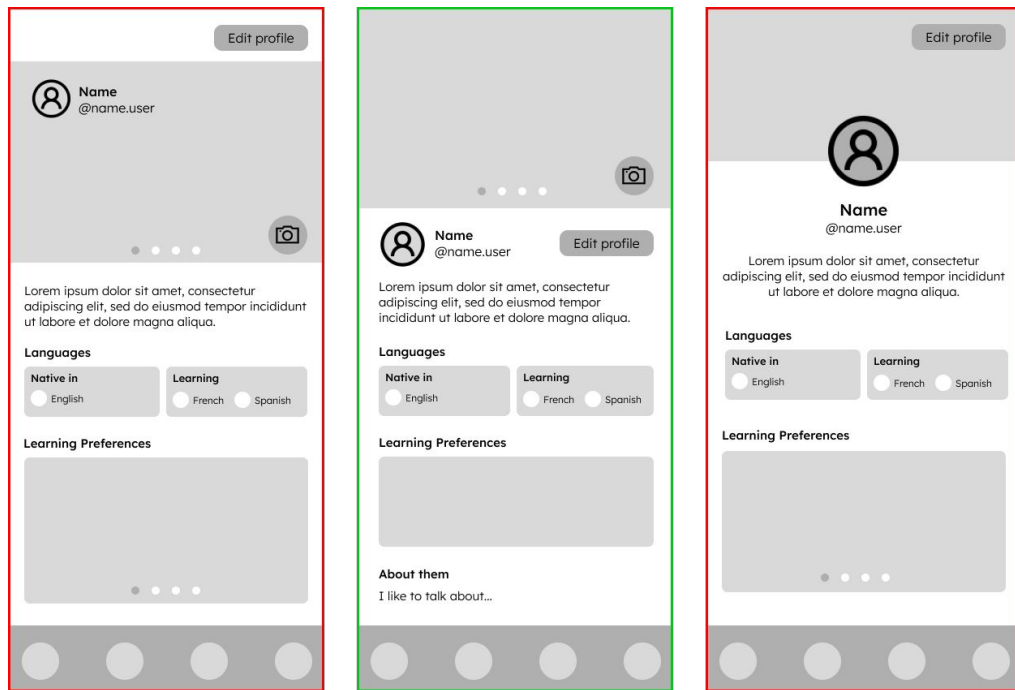
With the personal profile tab, I wanted to remove the need to click through multiple windows to view and modify your profile. Rather than having two separate editing sections and a "preview profile" button, I combined it all into one page. Users can use the "Edit profile" button to modify their profile, otherwise they view it in the same way other users do.

I also added in a swipeable photo gallery, that would make the photo uploads feature more prominent and useful, giving it more of a purpose. This would allow users to view more photos that you post, making for a better connection.

Wireframes | Public Profile
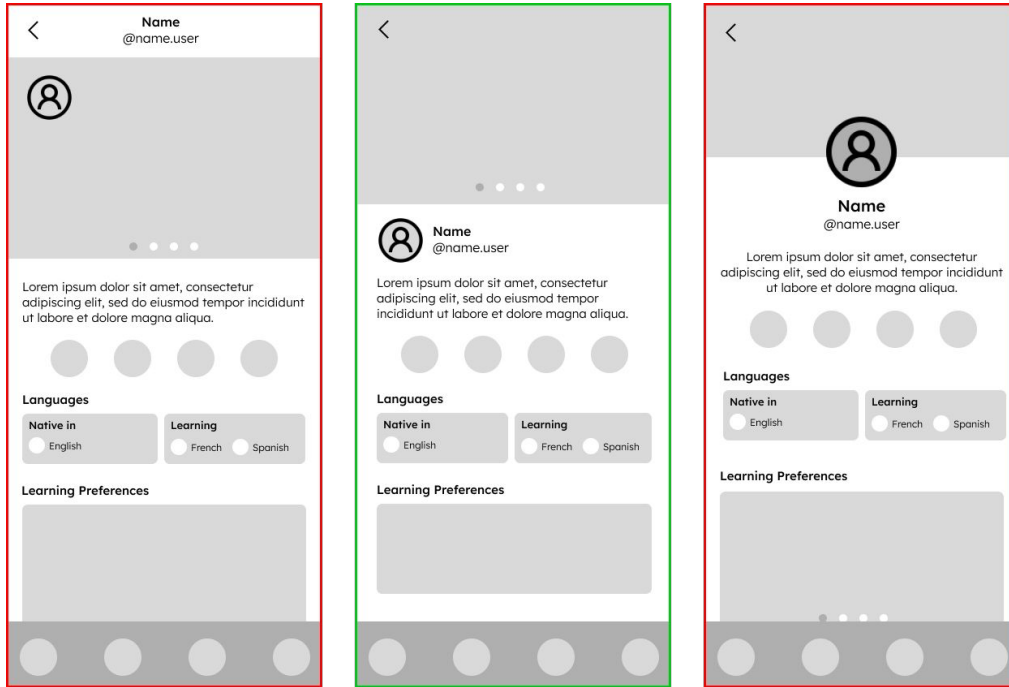
The public profile is very similar to the personal profile, but with the edit and photo upload options removed.

Wireframes | Chat

Name
@name.user

Partner's Learning Preferences

Use a prompt
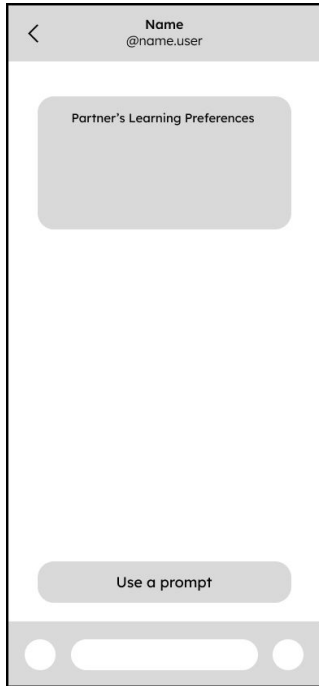
The chat page is very similar to the existing one, with the added option for users to use a conversation prompt. The updated wireframe also gives users a reminder of their partner's learning preferences, so conversations can adhere to those.

The conversation prompts could help make interaction between users feel less intimidating overall, by giving them a starting point to speak on.
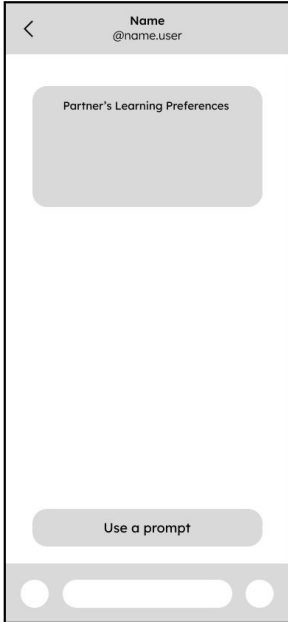
Wireframes | Final Wireframes

Community Tab
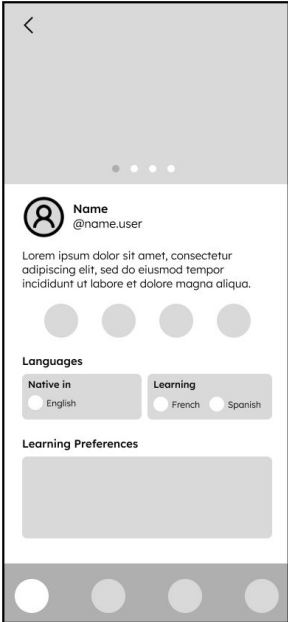
Public Profile
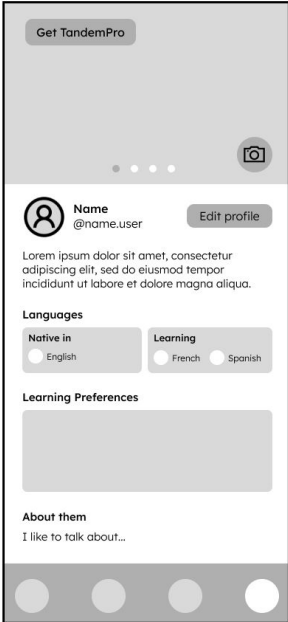
Personal Profile

Chat
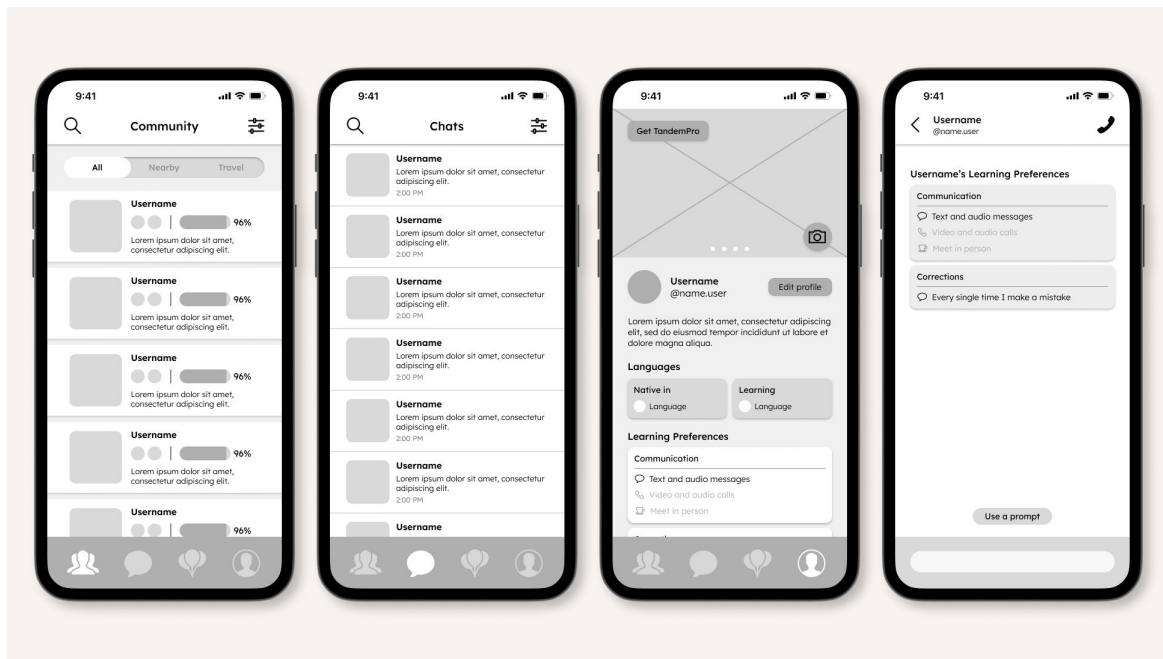
Prototyping

Lo-Fi Prototype
Hi-Fi Prototype

Lo-fi Prototype

The lo-fi prototype focused on the functionality of the app. My goal was to integrate the changes I had outlined in my wireframes.

The profile page was made into its own tab on the bottom nav bar. Rather than only being able to view a profile page as a preview, I made it its own section that was editable.

Within the chat, I added a reminder of the user's profile preferences and a variety of prompts that users could use. These prompts take away some of the fear that users might face when trying to start a conversation with a stranger.

On the community tab, users can see how closely they match with each other using percentages and a visual bar. This helps users match based on their learning and communication preferences that they fill out when joining the app.

[Try the lo-fi prototype here](#)

Hi-fi Prototype
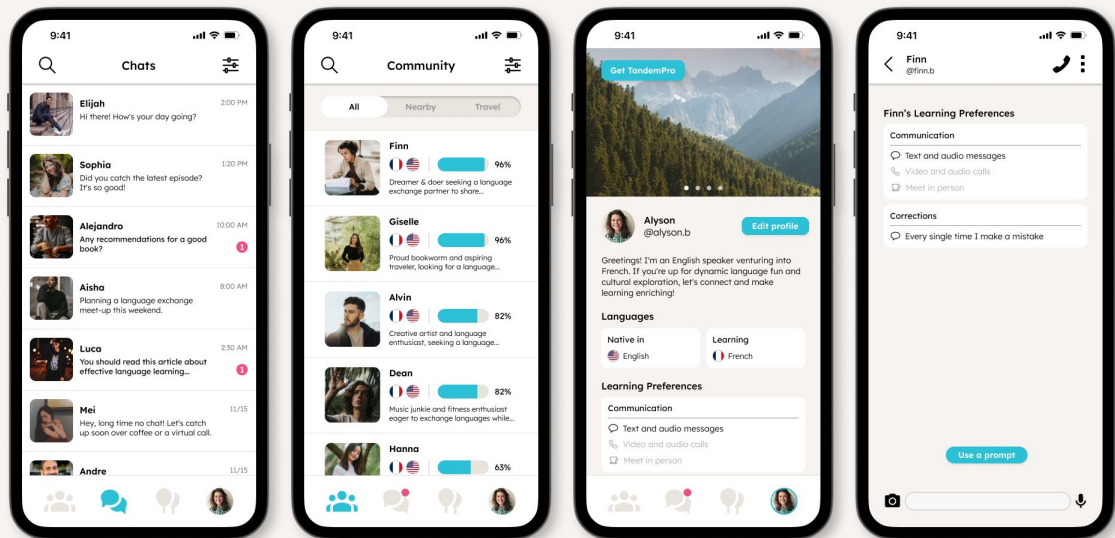
After some usability testing on the lo-fi prototype, I began work on the final hi-fi prototype. I adjusted the font sizes I originally used to ensure for better readability and adjusted the size of some buttons.
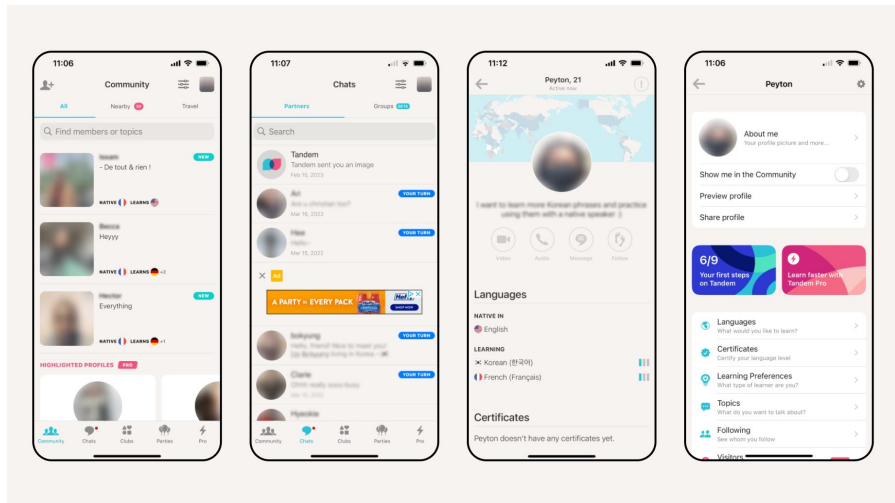
On the profile page, I further combined some of the editing options users had, taking them all down to one page.

I stuck to the original color scheme used with the app, with a mix of tans and creams. For accents I used the pink and turquoise used within Tandem's branding.

[Try the hi-fi prototype here](#)

Before and After

Before

After