

Adventure Tandem®

How to manage this learning method with a linguistic partner in a varied and realistic way.

The Tandem method needs two learners with the same goal: each wanting to learn the mother tongue of the other. To this end they meet regularly, using first one and then the other language, helping each other.

Each partner acts as an expert in their own mother tongue and supports the other in their learning.

1 Tandem — a freefall...

... into the unknown? Hopefully not!

It's certainly challenging to take responsibility for your own learning, particularly when you've relied on the guiding hand of a teacher.

This short guide should cushion you against landing too hard on the ground of self reliance!

In contrast to other brochures, which are linked to certain Tandem organisations, this booklet addresses the learner who would like to use Tandem on his own account.

We look at ways to find a partner and assess your progress. Anyone who already has a Tandem partner, but would like to work with this guide, can happily skip the first part and start with the chapters about working in Tandem.

Besides specific tips on learning in Tandem, general tips are repeated from time to time and are marked as "training wheels".

And now...

Hold onto your hats and prepare for fun on the Tandem!!!

2 Every beginning...

... is difficult. Certainly.

But don't be discouraged. A good way into Tandem work is to jot down a few thoughts about your own motivations and think about how you have learnt up to now:

- Why am I learning this foreign language?
- What are my goals in learning this language and when do I want to reach them?
- Relating to Tandem: What goals do I want to reach with it, and above all, what do I expect especially from Tandem?
- Do I have special technical language needs (law, medicine, business, etc.) that I want to fulfil by means of Tandem ?
- Questions on your learning history: What are my strengths/weaknesses, how/when/where do I learn best of all?

- How much time can I devote to Tandem? On which days and at which time of day I am available? How long do I want to work in Tandem?
- What are my concrete aims for this period?

You should use the answers to these questions so as to be clear about aspects like time management, though these may change through negotiation with your partner.

3 *Training wheels: the decision matrix*

The lead-in questions on the left serve as the first point of reference for your personal learning objectives with Tandem. One procedure for helping you make decisions (such as the choice of career) is the decision matrix.

With this method you can evaluate and compare the alternatives in a table like this:

	Improve speaking	Reading ability	Law language	Cultural experience
Professional relevance	3	4	6	3
Personal interest	4	2	2	6
Need to refresh school learning	6	2	4	3
Feasible in Tandem?	6	3	2	6
Sum:	19	11	14	18

Use a point system from 1-6 (6 is the highest score) – in this case speaking ability appears the most urgent job for your Tandem learning. A weighting of the criteria allows you to draw a more precise picture.

For example for a legal language specialist:

Professional relevance (40%): $6 \times 0,4 = 2,4$

Personal interest (10%): $2 \times 0,1 = 0,2$

Need to refresh school learning (30%): $4 \times 0,3 = 1,2$

Feasible in the Tandem (20%): $2 \times 0,2 = 0,4$

Sum: 4,2

Note that cultural experience rates only 3,9

4 Finding a Partner

Once you are clear about your own needs and wishes, you can start the search for a suitable partner. Usually this is done by posting an ad on a noticeboard. What should this ad look like? An example:

Linguistic partnership English - German!!!

Law student(26) looking for German native speaker for Tandem partnership.

Special interests: Cinema, Austrian literature, football, German legalese

Mark Spencer, Tel. 0821-983666, mark1985@gmail.com

As people haven't always got a pen with them, a number of tearoff strips with your phone number or email is recommended.

The ad should be posted anywhere that people of many nations are to be found: universities, language schools, cultural centres, halls of residence, associations which look after refugees/asylum-seekers, railway stations etc. Investigate the Internet or the local yellow pages to find them. Also a newspaper advertisement under "language exchange" can work wonders. Once you have put your notice out there, it's time to hope and wait.

5 The first meeting

There's little to do before you meet. It's a good idea to suss out the partner before you commit yourself. A neutral, informal place like a cafe would certainly be a good choice of meeting place. At the first meeting Tandem rules like equal sharing of languages (see chapter 6) may be broken sometimes, in order to help decide organisational questions, for example:

- How often and how long do we want to meet? (at the beginning about 30 minutes per language and at most 2-3 meetings per week are recommended, in order to avoid overload, though this may be increased later)
- How long do we want to continue learning with each other ?
- What are our specific linguistic problems?
- What are our learning aims? Are there any special situations / contexts in which we need the foreign language?
- Do we want to sign a learning contract? (very much recommended, see 7)
- How do we want to correct each other? (see 8)
- How do we want to work? (what sort of material; mainly oral or written tasks)
- Finally: Where do we want to meet next time ? (Variety is necessary: see 10)

6 Tandem rules

Every Tandem learner commits to obeying the following regulations:

1- We meet regularly.

This rule is self explanatory; only by regular learning can you make progress so it's important to attend regularly.

2- We are alternately learner and adviser; at every meeting we both speak both languages.

It is especially important in the Tandem method to grant the learner in each case the biggest space. He decides what he wants to learn, would-be teachers are not really welcome in the Tandem, as everybody is responsible for their own learning.

3- We split the time fairly and speak only one language in each phase.

This is the most important and "most difficult" rule: If you succumb to temptation and use the easier language more often, the dialogue becomes increasingly skewed in one direction and one person loses out.

7 Learning contract

b e t w e e n :

.....

and:.....

Our aims:.....

.....

Herewith we commit to work together on our agreed aims and, in addition, to keep to the Tandem rules, namely:

- To meet regularly.
- To speak both languages at every meeting and to be alternately learner and adviser.
- To give both languages the same amount of time.
- Not to mix the languages, but to speak only one language in each phase.

In case of breach of contract we agree, that

Place:..... Date:.....

Signature:

Signature:

8 Error correction

A basic question in Tandem is adequate error correction. On the one hand constant corrections interrupt the natural flow of words, but on the other you learn by recognising your errors.

What should we do?

- Avoid the inclination to correct every mistake immediately, and concentrate only on outstanding errors which lead to considerable confusion (e.g. in vocabulary or grammar) – they should be corrected at once.
- It's a good idea to correct indirectly by questioning, or by your own correct repetition of the expression instead of painstakingly pointing out the errors.
- It's best to write down the errors and then deal with them at the end of the meeting. This final phase can also serve as a way of evaluating the whole course of the meeting together.
- Recording the conversation is also useful for later review.
- It is also possible to agree discreet gestures to point out mistakes (see 9).
- Above all - the learner decides: ask him/her when and how he would like to be corrected, give him/her time for questions.

9 *Training wheels*: body language

Some people claim that about 55-70% of human communication is non-linguistic. Even if the percentage is debatable, one can't dispute the importance of body language. In a situation like Tandem, in which you are trying to understand each other face to face, body language is particularly important:

- How does my partner behave while I'm talking? Is he/she facing me with good eye contact, or does he/she turn away, looking anxiously around? Does he/she seem to be confused? Even if your interpretations could be wrong, you need to pay attention to body language.

- Body language also contributes to the understanding of linguistic statements, such as by accompanying gestures or word explanations by gesture (drawing a spiral in the air for 'spiral staircase')
- Body language and gesture is different from culture to culture and may even become the subject of conversation. Discuss with your partner: What do these gestures mean in your country?
- Try on one occasion to communicate completely without words. This is quite possible using sign language. It is also possible to agree certain signs for grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction error and thus correct very gently!

Example: Hold the five fingers of the right hand, palm outwards, at the height of your shoulders. The five fingers are extended and point upwards. Turn the hand 2-3 times from the wrist. According to situation this means What? Why? Where? or When?
(from: *William Tomkins: Indian Sign Language*)

10 Speaking and listening

Now some suggestions for the training of skills in Tandem, beginning with speaking and listening:

- While talking in the mother tongue: Adapt the degree of difficulty to your partner (e.g. no complicated sentence constructions), but speak in a natural way (this trains your partner's listening comprehension) – not in simplified "Pidgin English".
- In the foreign language: Courage is the most important! Dare to make mistakes. If you don't know a word or expression, keep speaking in the foreign language and try to work your way around it.
- With your partner, build up a collection of linguistic functions for expressing opinions, asking for explanation or clarification, talking about grammar, using helpful link words (Now..., I mean... What I wanted to say...)
- Vary the topics of conversation: not only personal matters, but also culture, politics, sports etc.
- Listening comprehension: try to change the places that you meet, the intrusive background noise in clubs, cinemas and in public places promote concentration on what is being said.
- Simply record your learning partner so he/she accompanies you as a language expert for the whole week and not just when you meet.

11 Reading and writing

Face-to-face Tandem is mostly speaking and listening which is fine. However, reading and writing skills must not be ignored:

- Bring several different original texts, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, letters etc. to the meetings. If you run out of conversation, they can provide fresh topics.
- While reading, begin with a rough understanding. First try to make out the subject, the crucial point of the text. After that, you can start on the details, e.g. discuss any structures or expressions that your partner didn't understand.
- At this point try to avoid translation. Encourage your partner to explain in the foreign language what you did not understand.
- Writing: Before the meeting, write various types of text (articles, personal letters, complaints etc.) and discuss them in the meeting. Focus in particular on the specific characteristics of particular types of text, such as letterheads, salutations, typical empty phrases ... (I would like to point out the fact that...)

- A rational linking of listening, understanding and writing: Let your partner dictate something in the foreign language to you.

12 “After a game...

... is before a game”, as the German national football coach Sepp Herberger wisely said. This means that a good evaluation of a Tandem meeting implies the preparation of the next.

Think:

- What did I learn in this meeting?
- Am I on the right path to reach my stated learning aims?
- What problems have come up ? Why?
- Have we kept to the Tandem rules?
- If not: When not? And: Why not? How can this be resolved?
- What have we talked about? Have we alternated topics ?
- Did we only speak? Or also write, read, and listen to something together?
- Did we work with materials? How were they? Interesting, boring, too easy, too difficult?
- How was the distribution of roles? Equal? Was one of us dominating ?
- How did I feel in the adviser and learner roles?
- Was there something I couldn’t explain? Was there a little bit which I did not understand? When exactly was this the case ?
- What are the consequences for next time?
- Other topics? Materials? What shall I do during this week to prepare?

13 *Training wheels*: command of words

Learning vocabulary is a task that probably all students dislike. It makes sense, however, that you must know words to control the foreign language actively, especially if you want to speak. Some tips for dealing with vocabulary:

- Every word has 3 aspects you need to know about: Meaning, pronunciation and usage. From this it follows: Learn words not only in 1:1 translation, but always add relevant examples (context) to the word.
- The Tandem partner is your model for pronunciation: Ask him/her to record words and listen to them over and over again.
- Learning with all senses is the catchword! Plays on words, thinking of images that sound like the word, can help you to remember them (see the following example):

An English student remembers the French word ‘*chou*’ for cabbage by imagining a cabbage in a shoe (sounds like ‘*chou*’).

A German pupil learns Latin words, while she makes a mental pictures of them.

So *cubare* (lie) gives her a picture of a cow on a stretcher (German: *Kuh*, sounds like ‘*coo*’, and ‘*bare*’ sounds like ‘*Bahre*’ which means ‘*stretcher*’)

Last example from: *Ute Rampillon, Aufgabentypologie zum autonomen Lernen*

- Linguistic mnemonic aids achieve the same effect, for example in English spelling “*I before E except after C*”.
- Unfortunately, it does not work without repetition. A home-made card index has often proved successful.

- As we have said, similar rules apply to the adviser in the Tandem : it's better to explain words with gesture, mime or drawings than translate. Other explanation techniques are:
 - give synonyms (*speaking - talking*),
 - antonyms (*beautiful - ugly*),
 - particular/general (*raven - bird*),
 - concepts of the same category (*rose - lily*),
 - derivations or other forms (*fly - flight*),
 - associations (*beach - holiday*) or
 - personal observations (*you have a bald head*)
- Basically the dictionary has to come into play only if necessary, as a last resort.

14 Some thoughts

Besides the short follow-up sessions of every meeting it is advisable to carry out a major evaluation after some weeks of working together. Maybe you know an impartial person, possibly a teacher or foreign language student, who could act as adviser. Someone from the outside often sees what you do not.

Consider above all:

- Has the learning contract been kept so far?
- Have the learning aims been reached (partly)?
- In which areas have we improved?
- Where are there problem areas?
- What have we absorbed from our partner? Have we really "learnt" our "stuff", i.e. used it again later in the right way?
- Which learning techniques did we use? Did we know and apply new ones?
- Did we change topics and methods or did we only use one? Was this appropriate?
- Did we vary the places for learning?
- How was the cooperation? Did we get enough help from each other ?
- Was the chemistry right? Did we do things together -, cinema, meals...?
- Do we want to change something in the future? How shall we proceed ?

15 *Training wheels*: Learning diary

In answering these questions it helps if the partners regularly record their impressions of the meetings (and their remaining learning) in a diary in their leisure time.

You can use the following 3 steps:

Learning: What was interesting? Where did I note progress? Special achievements? Defeats? What's working for me? What isn't?

Emotions: How did I feel? Did anything please me particularly? Annoy me? Was I self-conscious or inhibited at all? How was the relationship with my partner? How did the roles of adviser/learner suit me?

Ideas for the future: How I will consolidate what I've learnt in the coming week? What should I concentrate on? How should I prepare for the next meetings? What should we change? What do I take with me from today?

16 Appetisers

Did you acquire a taste for it?

Here are some suggestions or deepening the experience and for the further learning in the Tandem:

Books about learning techniques:

Barry Farber: How to Learn any Language: Quickly, Easily, Inexpensively, Enjoyably and on your own

Gill James: The Complete Guide to Learning a Language: How to Learn a Language with the Least Amount of Difficulty and the Most Amount of Fun

Horst, Uwe; Ohly, Karl Peter: Lernbox: Lernmethoden - Arbeitstechniken. Seelze/Velber: Friedrich-Verlag, 2000

A book which deals intensely with the planning of your own learning and also includes tips about the right way of reading and writing.

Kleinschroth, Robert: Sprachen lernen. Der Schlüssel zur richtigen Technik. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000

Presentation of learning techniques for all areas of skills.

Rampillon, Ute: Lernen leichter machen. Ismaning: Hueber, 1995

Very clear presentation of learning techniques for learning planning and for single skills (also more details about body language and card index).

Tomkins, William. Indian Sign Language. Toronto: Dover, 1969

Learn that Indian sign language!

Tandem on the Internet:

<http://www.slf.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/Tandem/inh01-eng.html>

If you run out of topics of conversation: A collection of tasks for Tandem.

<http://www.slf.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/eTandem/etindex-en.html>

Tandem by email! This site provides "electronic" Tandem partners all over the world free of charge.

<http://www.palabea.net>

Here you can find yourselves exchange partners by internet or face to face .

<http://www.tandem-schools.com>

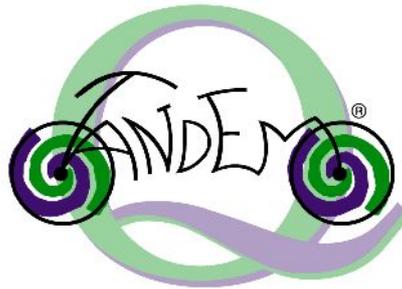
Language schools who offer Tandem, on the Internet. Includes a "Tandem Community", with information about the method and the possibility of contacting other Tandem learners.

interested students receive partners. Partnerships can also be assigned independently of participation in a language course.

The current maximum fee per person for 3 intermediations per year is no more than the equivalent of a teacher's salary for 1,5 hours.

Supplementary offers may be billed extra.

You can also identify them by the quality seal:



www.tandemcity.info/info/tandem/en45_quality-warranty.htm

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Author: Matthias Baumann

Translator: Jürgen Wolff

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