



## SEA-EU Tandem Language Learning

### Guidelines

The main goal of the tandem language partnership is mutual benefit for both partners. Since there is no teacher or fixed curriculum, you are free in the arrangements for your partnership. All the important decisions are taken by yourselves. Your plan and work as well as the control of your learning process will be independent. This gives you the opportunity to adjust your working process if necessary, so you can be responsive to each other's learning needs.

The most important basis of your language partnership should be self-responsibility, fairness, reciprocity, and respect. You can and should expect the same commitment from your language partner as you are willing to invest yourself. The more the two of you communicate and help each other, the greater the mutual benefit for your learning progression will be. Give yourselves time to get settled into the language partnership.

### Where and when do we meet?

- You and your tandem partner will set a date for your first meeting. Perhaps a public setting might be appropriate for the first meeting; Perhaps even a virtual meeting; you jointly decide.
- During that first meeting, in addition to the usual introductory small talk and getting-to-know one another, you may want to share with each other your expectations of the tandem partnership.
- It is important that you also agree on how often you want to meet, the duration of your meetings, and how for long you wish to participate in the tandem together. Meet regularly, if possible, at a fixed time.
- **IMPORTANT** Complete the Protocol of that first meeting (either which you can find on the website or which will be sent to you at the start of the partnership) and return it to [Tandem\\_SeaEU@kms.uni-kiel.de](mailto:Tandem_SeaEU@kms.uni-kiel.de).
- At the end of the first meeting, agree on when the next meeting will be.

We all have different personalities and two people meeting for the first time might turn out to be awkward. Please keep in mind that it is possible for us to re-match you. Think about it carefully and please get in touch if you wish to be re-matched. We suggest to first discuss it openly with your tandem partner.

### What do I/we talk about?

Communication is at the core of tandem language learning. You might want to discuss different important questions that will help you and your tandem partner to smoothly progress in of your language partnership. The conversation can be about anything. There are no constraints on your creativity. Ideally the conversation is fluid, however should you find it challenging to find topics, here are some ideas:

- <http://www.seagull-tandem.eu/material/>
- <https://www.ofaj.org/resources/flipbooks/tete-a-tete-travail-arbeitsblaetter/2/index.html>
- <https://ruhr-uni-bochum.sciebo.de/s/rjzVoiZ1diCCYCZ>
- <https://www.tandemmadrid.com/es/espanol-online/recursos-profesores-ele/>



## What is my role?

In a tandem you will both take turn to learn and teach. Mutual respect and understanding are key throughout the partnership.

- You are a learner: Your knowledge of the language is already at least at B1 ([CEFR](#)) level. As a learner you have all the freedom to decide what and how you would like to learn. To help your partner understand your objectives, you might want to first think of why are learning the foreign language; to what end? Keep your previous learning experiences in mind and respect your own learning achievements from the past. Don't hesitate to ask questions related to language and culture - that's the point of it all! Let your tandem partner know how to best help you. For each meeting, decide on the topic of conversation.
- You are a teacher: You either native or know the language at least at C2 ([CEFR](#)) level, making you now the expert. In this role it is important to accept the wishes of the learner. You should be responsive to the learning needs and learning desires of your tandem partner.
  - Be an [active listener](#).
  - Clarify any open questions of vocabulary or understanding.
  - Make courteous suggestions if you see your partner struggling to find the right words.
  - Provide your opinion and personal insights on questions about culture.
  - Correct pronunciation, grammar or short written exercises (more on that below).
  - Make the learning of your language interesting with the help of diverse teaching aids.
  - Look for solutions in order to cover the occasional language barriers

It cannot be repeated enough: communication is at the core of tandem language learning. Together with your language partner you have to continuously adjust your respective goals and the learning process, and discuss and reflect upon them. Be open-minded!

## What language(s) will be spoken?

Usually, you speak your mother tongue as a teacher and the language you seek to learn as a learner. You should make sure that both languages are spoken approximately the same amount of time for mutual benefit. Make sure you keep track of the time. In order to do so, one possibility is to set a timer on your phone. You can discuss and specify any exceptions individually. Try to avoid using a *lingua franca*, such as English, if it is not the language one of you intends on practicing.

## Should we correct each other? If so, how?

'Learning by doing' is another central aspect of tandem language learning. Correcting each other, if done respectfully, an essential element of your language partnership. It is important for both of you, to clarify when and how you would like mistakes to be corrected. Allowing the conversation to flow is the key component here.



- As a learner, try to reformulate your sentences if you get stuck. Prompt your language partner when and how to assist. Try to avoid using a *lingua franca*.
- As a teacher, try not to focus on the small mistakes of the learner at first and be careful not to overcorrect. Corrections are sensible if your language partner can learn something from the mistakes. Support your language partner
  - if he/she/they is/are prompting for a correction,
  - if he/she/they is/are struggling to find the right word,
  - if you do not understand him/her/them,
  - if he/she/they repeatedly make(s) a type of mistake.

You might want to take (mental) notes of the most significant mistakes you notice and discuss them afterwards with your tandem partner. Don't hesitate to try different forms of correction to find out what works for each of you. The point is to allow the conversation to flow as naturally as possible. Always remember that both of you are still learning, so make sure to remain courteous, respectful and encouraging. Give positive feedback, e.g., "That was close and I see what you mean. Keep in mind that you can also say ..." instead of "Oh, this is wrong!".

### How to keep a record of activities?

You may find it useful to keep a record of your language progression. There are several options possible:

- a learning diary/protocol: this diary accompanies the learner all the way during the learning process. The learner can write down the goals, reflexions, wishes, questions, create tables with different columns "what I know already?" and "what I need to improve?".
- Using [European Language Portfolios](#) (ELP) which were developed by the [European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe](#). For adults, direct links to these portfolios are available in [German](#), [English](#), [French](#) (€3.20), [Spanish](#), Croatian, Maltese, [Polish](#).

### What happens at the end?

**IMPORTANT** At the end of the partnership, we kindly ask that you and your partner individually complete a wrap-up survey. This survey is available for you to view at any time on the website and/or will be sent to you at the start of the tandem partnership.

These guidelines were adapted with permission from [www.tandem-unikoeln.de](http://www.tandem-unikoeln.de) (Uni. Cologne / TH Köln)