

# Tandem Language Learning: A new Trend of Language Exchange

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## ABSTRACT

You must know about money exchange. Do you know about language exchange? Today's generation is more mobile than ever before. Fast and affordable transportation facility made it possible for common people to roam anywhere in the world. With this mobility people frequently visit different countries with various purposes. For a comfortable and stress free visit of any country one need to know some basics of the local language. It helps us to develop our good relation with local clients and it also creates a friendly environment. With a positive view some language lovers started exchanging each other's language. After some satisfactory outcomes today this gesture is known as tandem language learning. The word 'Tandem' was popularly used for common bicycle sharing by two people. Here it is used for sharing each other's language. In initial stage it was casual and only for a fun but after several years today it is officially valid. Certification is also available for any language learning. This is very favourable opportunity for language lovers and business people.

**Key words:** Tandem, Language, Peer teaching, Exchange, Media.

## What is Tandem Learning:

Tandem means a trail bike driven in sharing. Here it means language sharing mutually. Two or more tandem partners share their knowledge of language with each learner. In a way tandem is a kind of partnership. A native speaker of any language can help any person who wants to learn the same language. In the same way the learner also can share his language. For example any Hindi speaker can help Spanish to learn Hindi and Spanish speaker help to learn Spanish to Hindi speaker. Mostly the learning is aimed for spoken skill. In fact it was an informal type of knowledge sharing but after a time people started accepting it as a systemic approach of language learning. Miranda Clark writes in one of the article named Tandem - a great way to learn language that "The idea of this language

exchange is great as it means that you learn the intricate details of a language and funny expressions that you would not always learn in a classroom or text book!" (British Council) Today the Common European Framework of References for Languages gives the certificates after tandem learning and exam. Today there are many example of class arrangement for tandem language learning in some language schools around the world. Many universities have taken a note of this innovative idea of learning. Here tandem partner must share writing and reading skills as well. In universities it is not compulsory to meet physically but can take lessons online or through Skype call or any other means. This type of learning is known as E-Tandem or Distance Tandem. If two learners are learning

on with the help of counsellors it is known as Tandem Partnership. And if organised groups supported by moderators it is known as Binational Tandem Courses. Mostly partners divide their time in equal parts for language exchange. Hindi and Spanish talk in Hindi for thirty minutes and next thirty minute in Spanish. They get the social background and cultural information of each other's country.

### **Background of Tandem Learning:**

Most of us are familiar with the slogan 'Each One Teach One'. This is something like that. Two innovative educationalists are behind this innovative idea. Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell thought this for the first time. In the first quarter of 19th century they started 'mutual system' in England. In initial stage they also took the help of school students as well. A German educationalist named Peter Petersen was of the same thoughts and developed a similar model in 1960 in the USA. In the year 1971 first time the concept of Tandem came in the existence when two people started learning the same language. It was the influence of 'audio-visual method' method of English learning. It was promoted to German-French youth meetings. Then it was used in Munich for German-Turkish immigrants. It was used by Klaus Lieb-Harkort and Nükhet Cimilli with some modifications.

After some experimental teaching few educators came up with some improvement. Jürgen Wolff developed the Tandem learning partner mediation in 1979. This time it was for Spanish and German. In 1982 Wolff with his colleagues came up with a similar type of course in Madrid. After twenty two years of

experimental usage in 1983 tandem was becoming popular. It was adopted as an optional way of language learning. Some schools of Europe welcomed this concept with open arms.

With the boost in technology people started using internet. In education field also email and online learning was popular in late 90's. It was the right time to shift for E-Tandem. The idea started in 1992 but in 1992 it was given name as International E-Mail Tandem Network. To develop the concept systematically a governing point was required. A team needed to be formed for proper educational activity. So in 1994 a head office for Tandem was opened in Spain. Today the Tandem network has an association for global collaboration in Germany. Today it is known with different names like 'Learning by Exchange' 'peer teaching' or, 'one-on-one discipleship.'

### **Ideology of Tandem Learning:**

As Tandem is an innovative way of learning language its principles are also innovative. It focuses on exchange of language knowledge. Michael rightly points out that "The principle of learner autonomy is the actual driven force of Tandem exchange." (Michael, T 105)

(1) Here learning is self-governed. Learner autonomously decides the medium and the outline of content. Two learners learn each other's language with intercultural background.

(2) It must be a joint venture. Both the exchanging partner must be reciprocal. The sharing part of both partners should be equal for sharing knowledge. Both must be active to perform their role when they share.

(3) Turn by turn both the learners should teach in given period of time. The time span must be divided in equal proportion for both the partners.

(4) When any of the partners teaches language one is responsible for one's method. In short both partners are equally and mutually responsible for teaching learning process.

(5) Some teaching ability is required to be a Tandem partner. As Tandem partner is considered as an expert of one's language. One must be able use all four skills of one's language. The ability correct partner's mistakes and give tips about how to improve language is also desirable.

(6) A very praiseworthy principal of Tandem is that cultural exchange is given importance. The partners have to share the cultural aspects of their country. With this learners can easily understand the usage of language.

#### **Opportunities with Tandem Learning:**

Today with the help of internet people have started learning new things and concepts online. The aspects of teaching and learning process have been changed drastically. With the change of medium people also have to update their knowledge time to time. So requirement of learning new languages is on demand. Today in many cities of India we can find tutors of almost all popular foreign languages. Most of the business class and students want to learn the language where their business is growing. Tandem is the best answer for them. People of any age can take benefit of Tandem language learning. It can be best used with language students with pre intermediate proficiency. There is a vast opportunity for any language learner to learn

informally without any defined setup or class. We can also use the internet option for this. This saves time and money both. Learners can send various exercises and listening activities to their partners for better learning. In a book named Language learning beyond class room it is properly explained as "E-mail tandem is a web based language-learning method, in which two learners of a different native language use their L2 to talk about topics on their needs and interests, and offer assistance to the partner's L2 use by correcting errors and suggesting alternative expressions." (Nuan & Richard Ch -12)

Tandem language learning is not merely a language learning class. It kills many birds with one stone. Simply it focuses on language learning and with this lot more to offer. In any other language class we learn only language but not the culture. Here learner indirectly learns about culture to understand the usage of language. Both learners try to inculcate good things of other learner's culture. Two Tandem partners of same field or business can help each other a lot for their professional development. They fill comfortable as they have something common to talk about and share. With a hope of goodness they learn language. Learners have the full freedom to select their topic or content. They can even select any targeted skill directly. They also can select the mutually available medium for teaching learning process. In this way we can call it a learner centric learning.

To check the effectiveness of Tandem language learning compare to traditional language teaching class there was an experiment conducted in 1983 at the Madrid

Goethe-Institute. The result was satisfactorily good. Tandem learners could perform in listening and speaking skills compare to traditional classes. Here the partners are very much focused on each other as they have a only student to take care. Students can ask question without any hesitation. That is the reason mistakes can be pointed out easily and can be corrected properly. It also takes less time compare to traditional language learning. As the speed of the learner is the speed of the class. Many learners reported that they became more aware about their own mother tongue. So they make their language knowledge more profound by teaching their language to others.

Group Tandem is also one way for learning meta-communication. Here group of speakers show interest of learning any language. They learn with the help of various images and picture of objects. Visualization helps to understand about the object without translation and simultaneously learners learn the language of choice. A questionnaire can also help in simple knowledge sharing. It is known as 'cocktail mediation'. Group learning fastens the speed of learning and it also helps to find the appropriate language partners. When one is learning a foreign language it is equally important to know the cultural beliefs and gestures and greetings of the target language. With Tandem learning it becomes easy to learn all these things from your partner as you directly get the chance to communicate with native speaker. As there aims are common one can easily expect punctuality and reliability from your Tandem partner.

## Conclusion

Today world is digitally connected and became like a small family. These days' people are very much focusing on intercultural competence. It is being considered as a global skill. Tandem Language Learning has the ability to serve this need. It is also called OIE that is Online Intercultural Exchange or ICFLE means Intercultural Foreign Language Education. Tandem language learning is all about sharing one's knowledge of language. In response to this you get the knowledge of other language. It also increases your number of friends. We can call it modern barter system for language. It is just like a peer teaching which also gives a chance of recalling about your mother tongue. It is the best way to learn any language as it gives the chance to talk with native speaker. With tandem one can learn the target language faster and effectively. It is like real-time learning and implementing so any error can be corrected instantly. Tandem learning is a ray hope universal brotherhood and cultural exchange as it makes a strong bond between two learners as well as with their cultures.

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