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DEFINING THE ROLE OF TANDEM METHOD IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Abstract: The article is devoted to the discussion of the method Tandem in recent foreign language teaching policy. It primarily tries to give the presentation on the origin and principles of it along with the latest development carried out world-widely by other language experts. It also facilitates the chance to show what peculiar characteristics of the method in contrast with others of which it varies greatly with its main stress on developing both linguistic and cultural knowledge of EFL learners. In other words, its principles are evaluated by two criteria of gaining proficiency in target language and raised cultural awareness.

Key words: Tandem method, tandem network, cultural awareness, conversation exchanges, linguistic objectives.
Language: English

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Introduction

The bi-national association DFJW (German-French Youth Organization) was the first initiator of the idea developing a method named Tandem on the basis of audiovisual method by the late sixties in teaching foreign language in a bilingual environment. A very simple clear picture of the method was an exchange of communication between two people from a totally different origin and language. A wide range of exercises, different activities were shared between each other such as dialogues previously prepared to discuss with a partner. However, in Spain, by the late seventies there occurred an immense upheaval in the usage and form of the method which started to be similar to its present concept and application as a Tandem method, precisely, that joins two native speakers of a different language to learn each other's language through interacting in their own native language in an autonomous way. Spread among other universities in the late eighties led to conduct deep theoretical investigations, to which main focus was driven towards the role of it as autonomy. Eventually, a very crucial milestone in the systematization of its principles as a modern language teaching method was

developed in the nineties with the foundation of *International Tandem Network* and following other researches.

To start with, it is worth mentioning that Tandem lessons are often to happen in two parts. They can be carried out subsequently to each other or in two separate days, however, each session should be dedicated to the one target language only (*first Tandem principle: languages must not be mixed*). Unfortunately, this fundamental principle has often been neglected in theoretical findings. However, it is considered critically important factor which facilitates learners either to challenge them in communicating in a target language or encourage to use it more. This also improves communicative goals of learners along with developing overall language proficiency. Surely, this fundamental aspect ascertains participants to use either of their native language in respective turns resulting in the improvement of communicative goals for them, which is often believed to be rather challenging. After all, one can not deny the importance of this basic principle as a key factor in achieving consistent development of learners via Tandem method.

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It should be born in mind that in tandem sessions both partners take turns in their own native language and they perform the function of both teacher and linguist expert due to a proficiency in their mother tongue. It is more realistic and ideal as long as they are engaged to practice times that often last one hour for each. Tandem is not a job requiring to be paid by its members. It only assists to enrich knowledge gain of language partners simultaneously relieving them from any financial compensation. It demands only high commitment and involvement from partners so that they can take advantage in developing language proficiency with a native speaker. Its main purpose here is to increase self-confidence and cultural awareness of learners. Therefore, it develops language and cultural knowledge of them through mutual exchange of ideas.

It is beyond a doubt that teaching foreign language enjoys a variety of methods, techniques and strategies presenting teachers an ample of opportunities to choose the one the most suitable and ideal to the needs and analysis of target group. In addition, forms of instruction also offer different settings ranging from individual sessions between a teacher and a student to group context in which learners often work collaboratively with other group members. Each of them has their own potential merits and drawbacks. However, in tandem method there can be seen a totally different context compared with others. It bears a special type of consolidation which delivers both forms - natural setting and formal instruction along with enhancing the chance to practice with combining the best aspects of both. Regarding its basic characteristics, one can be sure with the fact that Tandem can be referred as a learning environment:

- a) A context which develops both sociability and individualization
- b) Main responsibility is regarded as autonomy which leads to one's own decision-making, not individually, but 'with' or 'in relation' the other (of course, a partner's)
- c) Depends on sharing and repeating the roles of who maintain the power of knowledge
- d) Teacher's role takes another position which swings between being a teacher and counselor

Due to above stated reasons Tandem can not be estimated totally by only linguistic competence it also entails to have deep understanding both in language and culture as well. As a matter of fact, it is hard to gain linguistic estimation or error corrections from partners in a simple conversation. Here, it is often controlled subconsciously by applying daily life conversation rules and norms. So, as soon as we are

in a chat with our friends it happens that rather than focusing on meaning we tend to concentrate on how we talk. In this situation, automatic use of language chunks prevent us from noticing any error in target language. On the contrary, these are corrected by our partners through compliments and further encouragement so that we can accommodate ourselves into target language easily, to which time limit and face to face contact can be another restriction. Besides, due to the implicit negative meaning of correction in daily life contexts and because of certain conversational rules, it is quite difficult for them to correct our errors, even when they consciously notice them. Regardless of our friends' willingness, therefore, target language feedback will not arise in very detailed ways during ordinary conversation with them. It needs persistence and commitment that is rather unachievable for a long-term period unless there is specific goal implemented in the beginning. All in all, one can be sure with one fact that tandem is a particular type of method that develops language proficiency with both linguistic and cultural knowledge for its learners in an unusual way.

The following is a list of latest innovations in Tandem teaching:

- Since 1983, the TANDEM model has been regarded as another form of language learning, in which fundamental elements of language teaching are abroad, youth exchange, cultural tours, class correlation and similar cross-border activities are implemented in chosen establishments over Europe.
- The network has a cooperation with different educational organizations along with the E-Tandem Network, - established in 1992, and changed its name to the International E-Mail Tandem Network in 1993.
- 'TANDEM Fundazioa' was established in 1994 for the improvement of scientific collaboration and educational and competitive training with their head quarters in Donostia/San Sebastian, Spain.
- In 2016, Tripod Technology GmbH presented a certificate from TANDEM Fundazioa to launch the [Tandem app](#).
- The number of the schools under the TANDEM Network founded the organization 'TANDEM International' with head office in Bremen, Germany. Since March 2014, TANDEM International has been ruling the brand 'TANDEM'.

In sum, although ordinary conversations with foreign friends or in daily life abroad do offer good opportunities to practice a foreign language, they are not to be confused with Tandem conversations, for the above stated reasons.

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