



<http://go.upb.de/tt1en>

- 1 Welcome to our tandem video. In this video, you'll get information about the basics of language learning in an eTandem.
- 2 We will talk about
  - the **advantages** of tandem language learning
  - the two principles: **reciprocity and autonomy** (including an example) and
  - the **basic rules**.
- 3 What is tandem learning in general? What **advantages** are there in comparison to visiting a language class?
  - it is a purposeful cooperation between two learners, who want to practise the partner's native language
  - you alternately have a native speaker as a model
  - it combines language learning with authentic intercultural communication and direct feedback or correction
  - it's very individual
  - you can focus on single skills (for example, oral skills)
  - choose topics that are relevant to you (for example looking for a place to stay for the semester abroad)
  - and choose the time that you'd like to study according to your schedule.
- 4 There are two principles tandem learning is based on: **reciprocity and autonomy**. Sounds abstract? Here is an example:  
Imagine you ride a tandem bike with two people on it and want to reach a certain place. This will only work if you consider the two principles:
  - **Reciprocity** means a mutual interdependency, which demands equal commitment. In this example, your partner should be cooperative and also be pedalling and adjusting to you (for example, to your speed). He or she has to trust that you know your way of "riding" best, and supports and helps you whenever you need help. This is important because your partner expects the same from you if you switch seats. That the way you both benefit.
- 5 What about the second principle – **autonomy**?
  - Imagine you have chosen a place you want to reach while riding the tandem bike with your partner. Who of you is sitting in the front? Who is choosing the direction? It's you!

- 6 You as a *learner* decide what to do, where to go, and when. You are steering, and you are responsible for the whole trip:
  - before: you are planning (where do you want to go?)
  - the session itself is like riding the bike together (*how* are you riding? Do you already prefer mountain biking, or would you rather like to stick to slow, gentle paths for the beginning? What kind of *support* do you need from your partner?)
  - afterwards: looking back at the route (for example, if and why you would choose the same way if you would have to repeat the tour or what you would change).
- 7 Now imagine you're communicating with your tandem partner, and the principles stay the same. First: **Reciprocity**:
  - You learn from your partner what she or he's already able to do and you accept what he or she doesn't know.
  - He knows for example how to behave naturally in the target language & culture and is a good model for you.
  - He can give you grammatically correct examples but is probably not able to explain why this rule is applied – your partner is not a teacher. Or did you learn how to teach your native language?
  - Even if that was the case – in a tandem, it is not your job to teach, but to help the partner pursue his goals
- 8 By the way: If you don't know an expression or a word in the target language, one strategy would be to express yourself in your mother tongue and ask your partner for a translation. As your mother tongue is the language he or she wants to improve, he also benefits from that. What a perfect principle this reciprocity is!
- 9 Second principle: **Autonomy**:
  - Instead of goals already having been set by the teacher, you have the obligation and opportunity to set your own goals according to your needs and interest.
  - Good news: It's absolutely fine if you and your partner have different goals, for example one wants to improve his pronunciation and the other focuses on writing skills.
  - However, if you have similar interests, that is perfect, and it is necessary that you get along with each other quite well.
  - But as you are responsible for your goals and your learning process, even your *level* in the target language can differ. While your partner, for example, is at a beginner level and wants to practise his pronunciation to be more successful in everyday conversation, you might be advanced and interested in improving your writing skills, for example in brushing up your CV to apply for a job.
- 10 It's the same principle for your *learning habits*: If you learn best by *listening* at first, your partner is asked to respect it and give you the required input. He should adjust himself to your current level and interests, for example by talking slowly in a formal language, or by talking rapidly and using a lot of slang.

11 In a nutshell: If you consider these **basic rules** for tandem learning, your eTandem will be successful and effective:

- First: Tandem partners meet online or write regularly (for example 1-2 times a week). If you fix a date, learning with your partner becomes part of your weekly “timetable”.
- Second: Each language is practiced separately.
- Third: An equal amount of time is spent on both languages.
- Fourth: The person who is learning the language decides what will be done.
- Fifth: The person who is the native speaker is patient, listens and is helpful.

Now you know the basics for having a good start in language learning in an eTandem – good luck!



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Lewis, T. & Walker, L. (Eds.) (2003): Autonomous language learning in tandem. Sheffield: Academy Electronic Publications