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**WORK WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TANDEM
LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Nadezhda Bogdanova (a)*, Sergey Pogodin (a)
*Corresponding author

(a) Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU), Polytechnicheskaya 29, Saint Petersburg, 195251
Russia, nvbogdanova.imop@mail.ru

Abstract

This article is dedicated to the tandem method of foreign language learning, which not only allows intensifying the process of modern professional and linguistic education, but also allows expanding possibilities of independent work in the development of a foreign language. The article considers the perception and reproduction of texts in a foreign language learning in national groups within the tandem method in the conditions of the modern information-educational environment, for the purposes of training experts ready to participate in cross-cultural and professional communication in all types of speech activity, considering educational opportunities of new information communication technologies. The research study of the effectiveness of TANDEM projects was conducted. The main methods of research are the analysis of the scientific literature in the field of foreign language teaching methodology, psychology and pedagogy at the research problem, the study and generalization of experience of teaching foreign languages in tandem groups, as well as analysis of the products of educational activity of students, teacher observation, questionnaires and interviews. The purpose of the tandem network is the organization of virtual communication, aimed at the mastery of their native language tandem partner and the formation of intercultural competence in the process of mutual learning with the help of new information and communication technologies. Article submissions are of practical importance for the foreign language teachers since they contain recommendations for conducting tandem projects and requirements for their participants.

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Keywords: Authenticity, communicative competence, foreign language training, perception and reproduction of the text, tandem method, types of speech activity.



1. Introduction

In the modern society, there is a pressing need for establishing and strengthening international relations. Efficient international partnership at all levels requires highly qualified specialists with good knowledge of foreign languages and intercultural competencies. Tandem language learning is an efficient method of learning foreign languages and developing intercultural competencies.

2. Problem Statement

This study is relevant due to the fact that tandem language learning, being an interactive way of learning foreign languages within the modern information-educational environment, makes it possible to work with authentic texts even at early stages of learning.

3. Research Questions

The aim of this study is to develop guidelines for efficient work with authentic materials within the framework of tandem language learning in the context of the modern information-educational environment.

In order to achieve this aim, the authors have set forth the following tasks:

- to examine the problems of perception and reproduction of authentic texts within the framework of tandem language learning in the context of the modern information-educational environment;
- to analyze the experience of tandem language learning through the example of German and Russian languages at Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University and its foreign partners;
- to provide guidelines for efficient work with authentic materials within the framework of tandem language learning.

4. Purpose of the Study

The focus of language learning in a binational language course based on the tandem method is on direct communication with a native speaker in various situations. This method is particularly effective in the context of the modern information-educational environment. Scientific studies emphasize such benefits of new information technology (NIT) as automated control and self-control of learning results, computer visualization of educational information in a foreign language through graphic representation of lexical, grammatical, and phonetic materials, instant feedback between the learner and the learning medium during an interactive dialog in a foreign language as part of the process of learning new skills in information activities such as collection, processing, transfer, and distribution of educational information in a foreign language; training in language activities (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) (Baeva & Bogdanova, 2014). The purpose of the tandem network is building virtual communication, aimed at the mastery of their native language tandem partner and building intercultural competence in the process of mutual learning with the help of new information and communication technologies (Almazova, Khalyapina, & Popova, 2017; Popova, Almazova, Khalyapina, & Tret'jakova, 2017). Article submissions are of practical

importance for the foreign language teachers since they contain recommendations for conducting tandem projects and requirements for their participant.

5. Research Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study summarizes the experience of tandem projects implemented as part of the International Further Education Program "Russian-German Business Communication", introductory and practical training of students in "Foreign Studies: European Research" in Russia and Germany, review of Russian and foreign methodological literature, and comparative analysis within the framework of an experimental study of foreign language competence formation in tandem language learning. The main methods of research are the analysis of the scientific literature in the field of foreign language teaching methodology, psychology and pedagogy, the study and generalization of the experience in teaching foreign languages in tandem groups, as well as the analysis of the students' educational activity products, teacher observation, questionnaires and interviews.

6. Findings

The participants should learn to understand, find, use, and communicate appropriate words and lexical structures in authentic situations and authentic texts. The fundamental principle of tandem language learning is mutual assistance and support. In this regard, the social factor is critical: each participant is involved in the advancement of his partner in a foreign language and therefore feels responsible for his or her success (Berdichevskiy, 2008). In a binational language course, students usually work in authentic communicative situations, i.e. in a cross-cultural context. In practice, this means that language is acquired and used simultaneously rather than sequentially. This significantly benefits the understanding of meaning, since semantic components and use characteristics of words and lexical expressions (and to a lesser extent their grammatical information) lie at the center. In order to increase vocabulary, it is recommendable to choose an authentic text on a topic that corresponds to the linguistic level of participants. In a text, words are used contextually, making it easier to deduce their meaning. In contrast, lists are never complete and cannot be used to learn words for the vocabulary, which mainly applies to the productive and potential vocabulary (Löschmann, 1992). *The authenticity of language* in a text is paramount. Students should be in contact with the language they use to speak and write in any situation in life or at work. Articulation of tasks for working with texts is the cornerstone of preparation of learning materials. That said, it is important to distinguish between two skill areas: text perception and text reproduction. Text in a native or foreign language can be processed or created during a binational language lesson in a native/foreign language according to the demands of participants and course objectives.

6.1. Text perception in tandem language learning

This article describes the difference between text perception and text reproduction with regard to learning materials from various sources: popular scientific and literary texts, video and audio materials, artistic images in binational groups. At any stage of foreign language learning, the tandem method is an efficient way of forming the socio-cultural competence (knowledge of the cultural peculiarities of a native speaker, his or her customs and traditions, norms of behavior and etiquette, and the ability to understand

and use them in the process of communication) and the socio-linguistic competence (ability to choose and use appropriate linguistic means depending on the situation and purpose of communication) (Kovaltchuk, 2015). It is also necessary to make allowance for the differences in the degree of complexity and language structure. In each language, the same meaning can be conveyed in different forms. Language lessons for beginners may involve simple language structures in dialogs and narrative texts. However, it is important to avoid oversimplification to the point where language becomes artificial, i.e. it can still be understood by a native speaker but is not used in reality.

We would like to talk specifically about text perception. When developing written and oral texts for binational language courses, particular attention should be paid to cultural specifics, since these allow purposeful expansion of perception capabilities. One of the fundamental strategies used in teaching a foreign language is triggering associations. Attempts to develop associative links highlight the characteristic contradictions and differences between two languages and cultures. This requires multiple factors to be considered:

First step: Developing associative links by participants through individual semantic organization. The participants approach the text from the perspective of their individual needs regardless of the requirements in order to assign a semantic reference, or "meaning", to the text. As can be expected from a language lesson, this puts all students' knowledge and skills to work, *including vocabulary, general knowledge, creative approaches to understanding text, use of strategies for explaining the meaning of the text.*

Second step: Developing associative links related to the systemic aspects of language. Following these tactics, the language awareness of the participants is oriented toward a specific attribute of the study materials, such as the vocabulary, morphology, sentence structure, semantics, or the pragmatic component. Facilitating the development of selective perception strategies through hearing and reading is critical to achieving success in learning a foreign language (Bausch, 1995). During a binational course, where the participants always have the ability to hear the studied language, it is vital to emphasize the importance of audio memory reactivation as early as possible. For this purpose, it is advisable to plan as many lessons focused on listening and speaking as possible in the first days. It should be noted that most participants will have a hard time adjusting to such methods, because, despite having learnt their mother tongue through aural perception in childhood, their further education, at school in particular, focused on the development of visual memory using written sources. In the case of binational courses with participants whose language level is far from advanced, the teacher and the participants often have to resort to another language when solving organizational issues or making reports. This may cause the participants to stop listening when information is communicated in a foreign language. Therefore, it is necessary to think about how to encourage the participants to listen: for example, asking the participants before translating what information they understood or giving them a riddle to solve, where signal words that are known to the participants would be associated with the information. The participants who make reports/presentations should adapt their reports/presentations to the average language level of the entire group. They can also be asked to pause after each semantic segment to let the other participants exchange opinions or clarify linguistically or semantically confusing matters. In order to improve aural perception of information during binational language courses, the following methods are proposed:

– visualization of text content (pictures, pantomime, "visual dictation" – the participants are dictated words in the studied language relating to a certain topic, e.g. "leisure time" / "free time activities". Their task is to draw what they hear. (The dictation is conducted by the tandem project coordinator or the tandem partner).

Continuing the analysis of reading as one of the dominant types of language activities, which still plays an important role despite being allotted less time during classes, the Table below shows the recommended proportion according to the integration model, which we advise to adhere to. As can be seen from the Table, this type of language activity is divided into intensive and extensive reading. It also introduces new types of reading that are implemented into the learning process: communicative reading, oral reading, critical reading. Particular attention is devoted to skimming. The participants need to get accustomed to reading large volumes of text and finding the necessary information (Bogdanova, Korotkov, 2014).

Table 1. Types of reading for language groups in tandem language learning

No.	Types of reading	Percentage
1	Intensive reading Skimming	35%
2	Scanning	25%
3	Communicative reading / Fluent reading	10%
4	Extensive reading / Guided reading	10%
5	Oral reading	5%
6	Reading for detailed comprehension	10%
7	Critical reading	5%

The following activities are intended to facilitate information perception while reading:

- reconstructing text structure: the participants need to compose a logically correct text using the given text fragments;
- text processing in accordance with specific questions to the content;
- finding information in the text/texts as part of preparation for the subsequent task (discussion, essay, presentation, etc.);
- recreating the logical formal structure of a text that has been changed (e.g. a letter);
- asking the participants to formulate hypotheses on the given topic before reading the text in order to facilitate text understanding;
- preparing a brief summary of the text in the corresponding foreign language.
- Activities for improving aural and perception of information and reading recognition:
- developing an idea from the text or choosing an ending.
- asking the participants to formulate hypotheses on the given topic before reading the text in order to facilitate text understanding;
- preparing a brief summary or an abridged version of the text in the corresponding foreign language;
- formulating questions to the text (in the language of the text or other language).

6.2. Text reproduction in tandem language learning

During text reproduction in tandem groups, the partners should decide who composes texts, when, and in what language. It is often useful to settle into the role specified in the task to facilitate text composition. Particularly relevant are the roles of a journalist, artist, and other roles associated with professional activity. Productivity can also be boosted by simulating an interview, live commentary, cross-cultural exchange of opinions and views on various problems, “question – answer” situations, etc. In a general sense, all these tactics are used in classes according to the concept of “global simulations” (role play over a long time), which are becoming increasingly popular with regard to binational language courses. Over the past few years, there have emerged concepts and binational language courses, in which global simulation acts as an important part of the structure. By composing various types of text on the same topic it is possible to draw a distinction between the participants of the binational course with different language levels. Processing of the topic in the form of presentation in one language and in the form of dialogue in another language provides a good opportunity for such distinction. The more difficult text is reproduced in tandem in the language that is foreign for the more advanced participant. Combining text perception and composition is possible through such topic as “News of the week” / “Wochenschau”. The participants are given texts from newspapers of the same date in German and Russian languages and asked to analyze these texts based on questions to their content. Their next objective is to define the topics and produce short articles that the German and/or the Russian group could publish that week. Information obtained while working with a text through different perception channels can be communicated by various means. That which was heard can be visualized in the form of drawings or pantomime, while that which was written can be communicated using sounds, music, etc. Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples of oral and written composition for binational courses. A liberal oral statement usually precedes the written product:

- Writing motivation letters, applications for participation in summer schools, CVs in different formats.
- Compiling a glossary corresponding to the learning profile and objectives of the group: for example, related to the professional sphere of vocabulary of a future specialist in foreign studies.
- Creative writing workshop: variations on the given topic.
- Creating a comic strip using the given randomized drawings without the corresponding text.
- Creating crosswords or a quest game.
- Writing advertising texts.
- Translating specialized texts (excerpts from professional literature) with subsequent comparison and evaluation.
- Writing professional texts (business correspondence, invitation, phone conversation, etc.)
- Describing works of art, writing and acting out sketches, role play / global simulations.
- Preparing digital presentations on various topics.

Working with video. A source like a video or movie provides a whole range of opportunities for text perception and creation. Discussion and evaluation of movies, videos, and TV shows as well as presence of a camera to create your own movies on various topics spark a vivid interest within the framework of a binational language course. Processing of Russian and German TV shows is a particularly appropriate activity: for example, comparing news bulletins broadcasted in the same evening on Russian

and German TV channels. One possible way of doing this is to show a news bulletin in a foreign language to a mono-national group. Their task will be to make notes on the topics, order of their demonstration, the way they are presented (text only, pictures, video clips), and the approximate duration. Then the participants compare notes in tandems or binational groups, discuss cross-cultural differences, and try to determine their causes. The next step can be creating a news program (topic) or news bulletin (reports) that could be broadcasted the next day. Possible implementation of videos in a binational language course: assessment of linguistic and cultural information; production of texts: videos are played with no sound, and after watching them the participants make dialogues and voiceover and then compare it to the original; discussion/analysis of movies and videos (acting, dialogues, music, direction, advance advertising, etc.); concept of continuation (developing a concept of an ending for an unfinished video or reconstruction of the missing episodes (in writing or during oral role play); creating speech or basis for discussion; analysis, processing, or concept of commercials; creating a movie based on an original script during a language course – for example, a video about the course (using a camera).

Working with audio. Aural information is basically processed the same way as texts. Audio is used for tasks aimed at different areas of aural perception: global, selective, and detailed hearing. Different tasks for native speakers and foreigners make creating texts for an audio equally interesting for both groups. For example, a task for native speakers may involve pointing out details, while foreigners should understand the overall meaning. Possible implementation of audio in a binational language course: filling in the blanks in a text, retelling a text, selecting information, understanding specific information about the situation, characters, cause-and-effect relationships; reproduction of sounds typical of everyday life and expressing them by language means.

Working with artistic materials. The perception of pictures and images (photos, paintings, drawings, etc.) has nothing to do with the knowledge of foreign language. The symbolic nature, colors, and forms in a painting can be interpreted differently depending on cultural background and evoke different emotions in different people. All these factors make graphic images a topic for productive discussion in a binational language course. They also lay the groundwork for further creative process within a tandem, such as describing paintings, creating dialogues and narrative texts, etc.

Artwork can also serve as a product of binational work (collages, photo exhibitions, etc.). For example, hanging such works on classroom walls may express the forming self-identity of the group. A direct correlation between an image and language supports foreign language learning in the binational sphere. Images can be used to explain the meaning of words or facilitate the understanding of entire text passages. Usually, several participants of a binational course have the necessary means of creating drawings, graphic images, collages, and photos. If a course involves creating photo content, the organizers should invite the participants to bring drawing tools, scissors, glue, cameras, etc. Possible implementation of artistic materials in a binational language course: making collages; using and creating picture-based riddles; describing paintings; illustrating dictionaries and word lists; creating photo stories, detective stories, or comics; using pictures, photos, etc. as means of self-expression; picture-based creative writing (for example, "Journey into a painting" – an attempt to imagine yourself in the shoes of the painting's protagonist, filling in the dialogue boxes in comics).

Despite the fact that the participation of two people in tandem is preferable, there may be more participants. Participation in the tandem project provides for communicative skills at the intercultural level, so interaction with others with tandem-pairs or people learning the same foreign language is welcome (Wolff, 2018). Successful experience and perspectives of applying tandem training elements to undergraduates studying in various fields, researcher Stepanova (2015). The authors of Sysoev and Amerkhanova (2016) offers innovative methods of teaching written scientific discourse of graduate students on the basis of the tandem-method.

Numerous variants of the organization of training under the Tandem program as one of the popular forms in the countries of the European Union and Russia are also reported by Sablina and Bulavenko (2014). "Together, all the same it is better!" - confirms and the researcher of the Austrian Institute of International Economic Relations, Berdichevsky (2008).

7. Conclusion

In tandem language learning, particular attention should be paid to the correlation between text perception and text production. The article describes the criteria for the selection of teaching materials for binational groups: the use of authentic texts; information binding to the contents of the studied specialty, weighted proportion of texts in both languages, considering the level of proficiency tandem partners. Binational courses provide the opportunity to use the studied material in direct communication with native speakers. The tactics of working with texts should be thoroughly discussed within the group for the tandems to have specific tasks to work with. During collaborative work on texts within a tandem group, it is essential to successfully teach the participants to perceive and reproduce texts in order to meet the learning objectives.

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