FAME–Fostering Autonomy and Motivation through E-Tandems

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FAME – a Sparkling Science project

Sparkling Science is a research programme funded by Austria's Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW) which started in 2007. The programme supports research projects, in which pupils of all levels of education are actively involved in the research process and work side-by-side with the scientific team.

In the course of the *FAME* project researchers from the University of Vienna investigate together with pupils from the Vienna Business School Hamerlingplatz the application of e-tandems in foreign language learning. The aim is for the pupils of one French and one Spanish class to establish partnerships (i.e. tandems) with German-learning students of the Lycée François Xavier (France), Universidad EAN, and Centro Cultural Austriaco (Colombia), respectively, using synchronous audio/video-based online communication. These e-tandems will be integrated into the foreign language teaching at the respective partner institutions and scientifically supervised throughout the entire duration of the project.

The aim of the project is to study how the complementary use of e-tandems in foreign language teaching in an institutional setting can support the autonomy and motivation of language learners. Beyond this, the development of the participating pupils' awareness of language(s) is at the heart of our interest, inasmuch as they will learn to engage with the linguistic performance of their respective tandem partners and to reflect processes of language learning.

E-Tandem language learning

Principles

- Autonomous learning
- Computer-mediated learning
- Co-operative learning
- Intercultural learning

Advantages

- Learner autonomy
- Spatial and temporal flexibility
- „Real-life" language use
- Motivating

Project aims

(1) Aim of the empirical study: Giving insights on how non-formal learning methods, such as E-Tandems, can be integrated into formal language learning settings in order to foster learner autonomy and motivation.

(2) Methodological aim: Development of motivating and encouraging tasks specifically designed for the needs of E-Tandems.

(3) Pedagogical aim: Development of language awareness.

Procedure

(1) Group discussions will be conducted with the pupils in order to document their subjective perceptions of the learning setting under investigation.

(2) Development of tasks in cooperation with the pupils in order to develop communication topics that are of personal interest for the students and therefore believed to be more motivating and encouraging than conventional tasks.
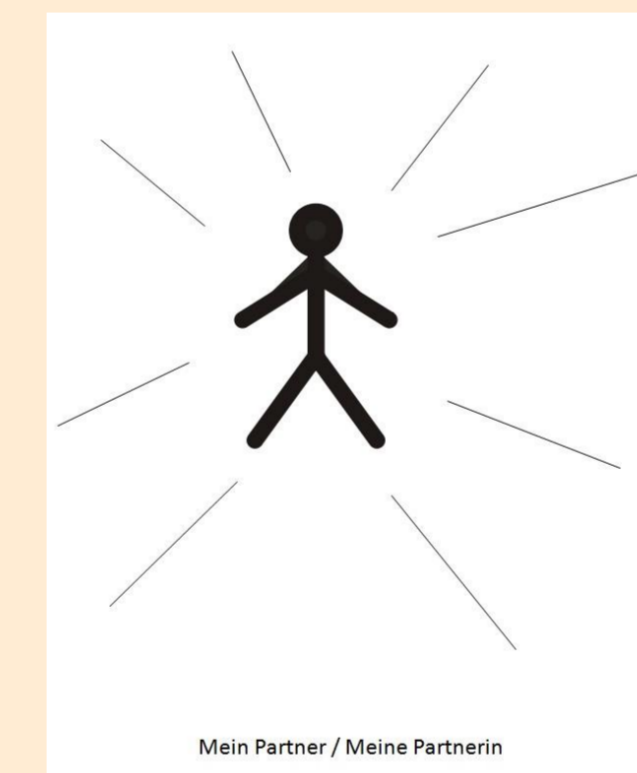
(3) Language learning diary as a place to reflect about their tandem learning experiences.

What we are doing

E-Tandem sessions with language partners from France and Colombia

Workshops with the scientific team

Development and evaluation of E-Tandem tasks in cooperation with the pupils

Mein Partner / Meine Partnerin

Transcription and analysis of video recordings

Benefits for the scientific community

Bottom-up research process: Due to the cooperation with our partner institutions we are able to keep in touch with the participating pupils at all times. This arrangement allows us to focus on learners as individuals and their perceptions / beliefs on E-Tandem learning.

Students as research partners for developing E-Tandem tasks: The scientific team develops in cooperation with the participating students a variety of E-Tandem tasks which are going to be uploaded to an online platform that is accessible for the public. The cooperation with the pupils is important to develop communication tasks that are of personal interest for the learners and therefore perceived as motivating and encouraging.

Data corpus: In the course of the project the participating students are going to record (parts of) their tandem learning sessions. These recordings are going to be available for research purposes.

Benefits for the participating students

Gaining insights into the techniques of scientific work by actively involving the pupils into the research process.

Contribution to 'lifelong-learning' by getting to know non-formal learning methods, such as tandem-learning.

Development of language awareness through dealing with one's own language performance, but also with one's tandem partners performance.

European language portfolio: Documentations of language learning experiences gained within the project may be added to the European language portfolio.

Networking: Establishment of international cooperations with partner institutions.

Literature

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Cooperations:

Vienna Business School Hamerlingplatz Handelsakademie und Handelsschule

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