

## Are you studying at the UD and want to meet international students and practise speaking a language at the same time?

The University of Deusto is home to a large number of local students and a growing number of foreign students who choose our University for international academic mobility programmes. Local students study two and three languages, while visiting students mostly learn Spanish. By combining these two needs, both groups can help each other and improve their knowledge of other languages and cultures, while establishing bonds of friendship.

### How to take part

Tandem language learning is a form of autonomous learning: you and your tandem partner choose when you would like to meet and then agree the time, place and how often to meet.

The Tandem Language Exchange Programme at the University of Deusto:

- We will assign you a partner with whom to practise another language.
- We will offer you simple guidelines on how the programme works and basic advice on correcting speaking errors.
- You can contact the coordinator by email [tandem@deusto.es](mailto:tandem@deusto.es) for any queries or problems on how the tandem programme works. If you are interested in the Tandem programme, please fill in the [Registration Form](#).
- At the end of the semester, we will send you an anonymous questionnaire by email so that you can evaluate the programme and improve it with your suggestions.

The Tandem Programme is only open to students at the University of Deusto. If you are interested in participating in it, you can sign up by following the instructions in the **registration** section. The programme coordinator will put you in contact with two students interested in practising the languages you have chosen. From then on you will work autonomously, arranging your meetings according to your needs and availability.

### [Registration](#)

### Learning method

Tandem learning is an effective language learning method in which people who speak different languages meet regularly to learn each other's language. These are some of the programme features:

- **Communication is less academic** in nature as tandem learning involves direct communication with a real person, a native speaker. In addition, our tandem partner is also a language learner, which mitigates inhibitions about making mistakes in the foreign language. With two people learning together in a natural environment, virtually free of any external control, the learning process is greatly relaxed, which results in higher achievement.

- **More than grammar:** Tandem learning is not only about learning a foreign language, but also about establishing personal contact with other native speakers and their cultural, social, professional environment... For example, each culture has its own way of expressing emotion, of praising and accepting praise, its own taboos... and you can get familiar with all these specific features through direct contact and observation of a native speaker.
- **The principle of reciprocity:** The advantage of tandem learning is based on the reciprocal support of both partners: each partner is responsible for the learning of the other, so both should benefit from each other. Successful tandem work is based on a relationship of mutual trust: both participants must feel comfortable to ask for help, to give and receive equal support, to decide together which mistakes are corrected and how often.

### Some tips for the smooth running of the programme

- **Exchanging languages equally:** As mentioned above, tandem learning is based on the principle of reciprocity. It is an equal partnership: half of the time is for one language and half for the other. Therefore, there should be no predominance of one language over the other. Students are advised to decide right from the start which language goes first and how long they are going to use it. This should be clearly defined, as not all people are equally open and uninhibited. If these rules are set from the outset, we will avoid one participant benefiting more than the other. For example, if we are at the stage where it is time to speak in Spanish, all the communicative problems that may arise should be solved in Spanish and never jump from one language to another. On the other hand, it is also not advisable to hinder oral communication by looking up words in the dictionary, or by switching to a third common language such as English (unless English is the language used by the tandem partners at that moment).
- **Correcting errors:** Participants will also need to negotiate how they want to be corrected. Some prefer to be corrected immediately, on the spot, commenting on mistakes as they go along: they believe that by putting it off, the context of the error is lost and the correction loses effectiveness. Others prefer correcting errors at the end of the session, taking note of the partner's mistakes and commenting on them later. Finally, others prefer not to be corrected at all in order to prioritise communication and fluency. In any case, full correction of errors is not highly recommended. Ideally, it would be advisable to focus on a few in particular, and even decide which are the most serious or the most frequently committed mistakes for the sake of learning.
- **How often to meet:** The meetings, as well as their frequency, should be arranged according to the objectives and time availability. However, it is recommended that the meetings be systematic, scheduled and long-lasting. For example, a weekly meeting of about one hour could be a good option.