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Institute of Foreign Languages

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN TANDEM LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING AS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Aim

- Study aims at analysing the efficiency of Tandem Learning as a method of extracurricular language learning in the context of higher education.



Method

The analysis is based on two methods:

- a case study;
- a semi-structured interview with participants of VMU Tandem project.



Research questions

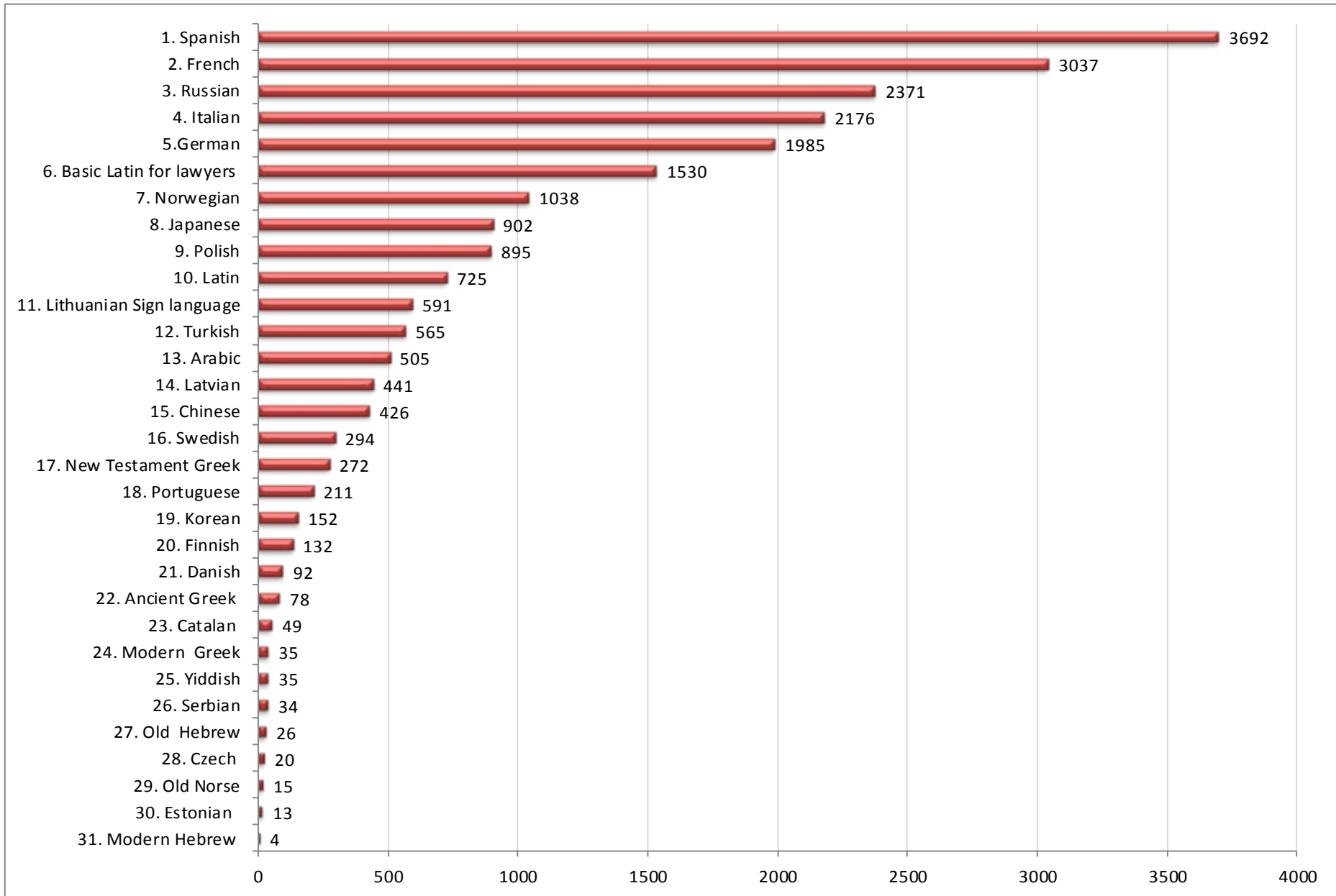
- What is specific about language learning at VMU?
- Why do students choose Tandem project as their extracurricular activity at university?
- What are their expectations?
- What are the achievements of the Tandem project participants?
- What can be done better by Tandem project organisers?



How many languages can you learn at Vytautas Magnus University?



Languages at VMU (2002-2016)





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- 30 languages offered, 17-20 taught per semester;
- SANAKO ICT enhanced learning, self-access centres
- Intensive 4+1 ac. hours face to face classes and Moodle, distance learning;
- Non-formal learning:
 - language clubs,
 - tandem learning**,
 - language and culture events.



Extracurricular Activities at VMU





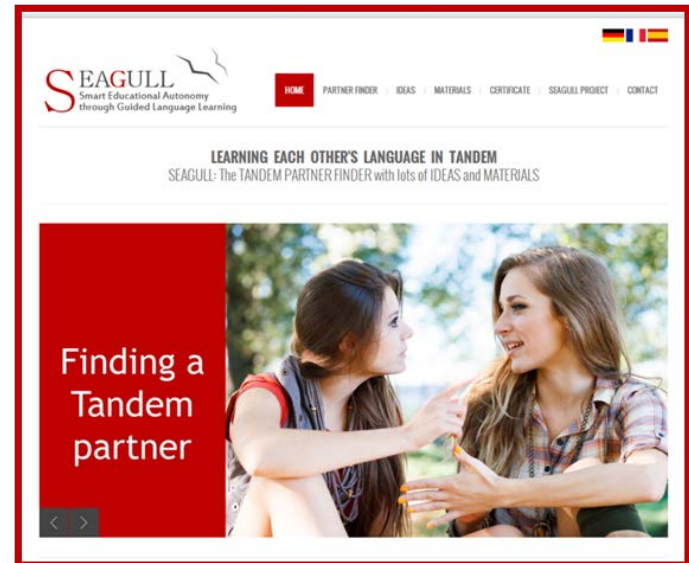
Tandem at Vytautas Magnus University

- Tandem Learning, as a method of foreign language learning integrated into the formal curricula, is advantageous and beneficial in supporting autonomous and self-guided learning.
- The implementation of Tandem Learning at Vytautas Magnus University was fostered by and started along with the participation in the international SEAGULL project which took place over the period of 2012-2015.



Tandem at Vytautas Magnus University

- A non-credited institutional initiative
- More than 50 university students have opted for this way of improving their communicative competences
- Half of the participants are foreign students of VMU





Objectives of Tandem learning at VMU

- enhancing speaking and listening skills;
- strengthening self-confidence with regard to speaking;
- acquisition of intercultural competence;
- acquisition of learning competence in an autonomous learning environment;
- enjoying a conversation in a foreign language.

Number of participants

Language	2014		2015		2016 (1st half)	
	Learned	Taught	Learned	Taught	Learned	Taught
Arabic	1	0	2	0	0	0
English	5	5	1	1	0	0
Italian	1	1	1	0	1	1
Korean	9	5	1	1	0	0
Lithuanian	2	4	2	5	1	1
German	0	0	2	1	0	0
French	0	0	1	1	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	1	0	0



Autumn semester of 2016

- 46 participants from 7 countries;
- 12 languages;
- 9 tandem couples and groups;
- Renewed Moodle platform.





MOODLE for Tandem activities

- In the autumn semester of 2014 there was a distance learning classroom created in Moodle platform for students' tandem activities and reports.
- Clustered in Tandems (or triplets e.g. two Lithuanians and one Korean) VMU students started to drill a broad spectrum of languages including Lithuanian, Spanish, Italian, Russian, French, Korean, Arabic, Dari, English, German and Kazakh.



MOODLE for Tandem activities

Tandem Learning

Home ▶ Institute of Foreign Languages ▶ TL

NAVIGATION

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ADMINISTRATION

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 - 📁 Import
 - ▶ Question bank
 - 📚 Repositories
 - 📁 Legacy course files
 - 📐 Competencies
- ▶ Switch role to...

STUDENT GUIDE

📄 News forum

📄 SEAGULL: LEARNING EACH OTHER'S LANGUAGE IN TANDEM



📄 What it is Tandem Language Learning?

📄 Tandem learning/teaching at VMU

📄 SEAGULL project

📄 Assess your level of the target language: CEF self-assessment grid.

📄 Find out about your individual learning style: Accelerated learning.

You may use the following suggested discussion topics as a guideline while tandeming

📄 Suggested discussion topics for level A1

📄 Suggested discussion topics for level A2

📄 Suggested discussion topics for level B1

📄 Suggested discussion topics for level B2



MOODLE for Tandem activities

Tandem Learning

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Documentation

	Date and place of the learning session	Topic and materials (Seagull project, internet, textbook, my pictures etc.)	Aim: what did I want to learn in this session?	Did I achieve my aim? Did I learn more than expected?	What would you like to change in the following sessions?
1.	06/10/2014 Vero Cafe	Meeting, introduction	Creating learning plan, agreeing on meeting days and times.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
2.	13/10/2014 Vero Cafe	Random topic, Conversation about politics	Using do and make.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
3.	20/10/2014 Kavine 48	Conversation regarding political situation in the middle east.	Learning new vocabularies and terms.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
4.	27/10/2014 Coffee in	Differences between studying Systems between LT, US , Europe and Middle east	learning new vocabularies and terms.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
5.	4/11/2014 Green Cafe	Discussing Migration issues and policies.	learning new vocabularies and terms.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
6.	11/11/2014 Vero Cafe	Traveling experience exchange	learning new vocabularies and terms.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
7.	18/11/2014 in Cafe on Lasives aleja	How to properly pronounce Arabic words and how the pronunciation differs from English	reiterating old vocabularies and terms.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
8.	25/11/2014 in Kavine 48	Discussing differences in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim holidays	learning new cultures and vocabulary	Yes, Aim was achieved	
9.	02/12/2014 in Cafe on Laisves aleja	Learning about the weather, days, months, years, and seasons in Arabic and how they differentiate from English	learning new vocabularies and terms.	Yes, Aim was achieved	
10.					

ADMINISTRATION

- ▼ Wiki administration
 - Edit settings
 - Locally assigned roles
 - Permissions
 - Check permissions
 - Logs
 - Backup
 - Restore
- ▶ Course administration



Students opinions about the usefulness of tandem learning

- “I joined tandem because it was something new and interesting. We don't have this at our university.”
- “I wanted to practise [...] my English is not that good.”
- “It's not enough to speak English and Russian. I want to learn more languages.”
- “[...] because it's for free. And it doesn't let you forget easily the language you have learnt.”
- “I'm overwhelmed by a possibility to meet native speakers. You can meet them at the bar or somewhere but it's not the same. Tandem project gives you frames. It's not just a simple chat.”



Motivational factors for participation in Tandem activities at VMU

- Wish to learn new languages and to practice them.
- Importance of meeting native speakers. Students think that it's better to learn with a native.
- Extracurricular Tandem language activities occupies less time than e.g. student language clubs.
- Flexible meeting time and informal learning.
- Participation diploma is also an important factor. Students want to add it to their CV.



Expectations of students

- Most of the research participants expressed a desire to strengthen their spoken language competence.
- Also they expect to meet other language enthusiasts and make friends to share their hobby.
- Participants want to receive help from the tutor and be guided during the project.





Personal and institutional achievements

- Tandem project at VMU gets more popular every semester.
- VMU students are multilingual and passionate about learning languages.
- Participants gain more self-confidence for speaking in a foreign language.
- Participation in Tandem activities helps foreign students to communicate with locals and facilitates their integration process.
- Students learn from each other not only language but also culture. Intercultural understanding is being broadened.



Improvements to Tandem project at VMU

- Students would like to collect ECTS out from Tandem project.
- There could be more Lithuanian participants because more and more foreign students choose VMU for their studies and they wish to learn the language.
- Tandem activities need more dissemination and promotion in order to be visible not only to language students.



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Thank you for your attention.