

## Teletandem and project pedagogy in language and culture learning: Challenges and perspectives in new practices of virtual exchange

### Teletandem y pedagogía de proyectos en el aprendizaje de lenguas y culturas: Desafíos y perspectivas en las nuevas prácticas de intercambio virtual

*Rejane M. Gonçalves Maia<sup>a</sup>, Francisco J. Quaresma de Figueiredo<sup>b</sup>*

#### **Abstract:**

This article outlines an online language learning initiative that introduced teletandem sessions (Telles, 2009) into the Modern Languages Degree Program curriculum at the Universidade Federal de Goiás, Brazil. In the first semester of 2023, the teletandem sessions brought together participants from Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador. Vassallo and Telles (2006), who refer to teletandem as a learning context and as a collaborative language learning method, advocate that teletandem involves two students from different countries and cultural backgrounds who actively assist each other in learning their languages using virtual tools. As Salomão (2020) asserts, teletandem is an internationalization at-home action that has emerged in the last two decades as a potent method to enhance additional language learning processes through online interactions. During the teletandem sessions, the participants were tasked with developing a project on a chosen theme, incorporating perspectives from the Brazilian, Ecuadorian, and Argentine contexts. Like teletandem, project pedagogy is also anchored in the theories of collaboration and socio-interactionism. It presupposes a new culture of learning that advocates for students to get involved in collaborative knowledge-building by carrying out transdisciplinary projects that problematize real life (Hernández, 1998). This research investigated possible challenges in combining project pedagogy and teletandem and verified how this combination can enhance the collaborative learning of languages and cultures. In order to develop the projects, the participants were equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge on applying project-based pedagogy in learning. The data for this case study (Nunan, 1992) were collected through video recordings of classroom interactions and interviews conducted with the professors, João and Sarita, as well as with two of the six pairs of students: Chael and Marcela (Brazilian and Argentine), and Maria and Chica (Brazilian and Ecuadorian). The two pairs of participants developed projects focused on exploring cultural expressions such as traditional festivities, typical cuisine, and regional dances from their respective countries. These themes allowed participants to delve into the cultural specificities of their countries, encouraging them to reflect on both shared elements and distinct characteristics of their cultures. Through these reflections, participants gained a deeper awareness of the cultural similarities and differences present in the global South. The projects acted as anchors for their conversations, giving direction and depth to the interactions, making them more engaging and purposeful. The results indicate that integrating teletandem with project-based pedagogy enhanced pair-work interactions and gave participants meaningful opportunities to improve their language learning while actively engaging in collaborative project development. However, the findings highlight that effective time management remains a challenge that must be addressed to ensure the success of teletandem sessions and project development.

#### **Keywords:**

*Teletandem, project pedagogy, language learning.*

#### **Resumen:**

Este artículo presenta una iniciativa de aprendizaje de lenguas en línea que incorporó sesiones de teletándem (Telles, 2009) al currículo del Programa de Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas de la Universidade Federal de Goiás, Brasil. En el primer semestre de 2023, las sesiones de teletándem reunieron a participantes de Brasil, Argentina y Ecuador. Vassallo y Telles (2006) definen el teletándem como un contexto de aprendizaje y un método colaborativo de enseñanza de lenguas, basado en la interacción entre dos estudiantes de distintos países y contextos culturales que se apoyan mutuamente en el aprendizaje de sus respectivos idiomas mediante

<sup>a</sup> Rejane M. Gonçalves Maia, Universidade Federal de Goiás | Instituto Federal de Goiás | Goiânia - Goiás | Brazil, <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5484-1273>, Email: [rejane.goncalves@ifg.edu.br](mailto:rejane.goncalves@ifg.edu.br)

<sup>b</sup> Francisco J. Quaresma de Figueiredo, Universidade Federal de Goiás | Goiânia - Goiás | Brazil, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5936-1578>, Email: [franciscofigueiredo@ufg.br](mailto:franciscofigueiredo@ufg.br)

Fecha de recepción: 26/11/2025, Fecha de aceptación: 21/04/2025, Fecha de publicación: 05/05/2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29057/lc.v6i12.14508>



herramientas virtuales. Según Salomão (2020), el teletándem es una acción de internacionalización en casa que ha emergido en las últimas dos décadas como una metodología poderosa para fortalecer el aprendizaje de lenguas adicionales a través de interacciones en línea. Durante las sesiones de teletándem, los participantes tuvieron la tarea de desarrollar un proyecto sobre un tema de su elección, incorporando perspectivas de los contextos brasileño, ecuatoriano y argentino. Al igual que el teletándem, la pedagogía por proyectos se basa en teorías de colaboración y sociointeraccionismo. Esta pedagogía presupone una nueva cultura de aprendizaje que promueve la participación de los estudiantes en la construcción colaborativa del conocimiento a través de proyectos transdisciplinarios que problematizan la realidad (Hernández, 1998). Esta investigación exploró los posibles desafíos de combinar la pedagogía por proyectos con el teletándem, y examinó cómo esta combinación puede mejorar el aprendizaje colaborativo de lenguas y culturas. Para el desarrollo de los proyectos, los participantes recibieron formación teórica y práctica sobre la aplicación de la pedagogía por proyectos al aprendizaje. Los datos de este estudio de caso (Nunan, 1992) se recolectaron mediante grabaciones en vídeo de las interacciones en clase y entrevistas realizadas a los profesores João y Sarita, así como a dos de las seis parejas de estudiantes: Chael y Marcela (brasileño y argentina), y María y Chica (brasileña y ecuatoriana). Las dos parejas desarrollaron proyectos centrados en la exploración de expresiones culturales, como festividades tradicionales, gastronomía típica y danzas regionales de sus respectivos países. Estos temas permitieron a los participantes profundizar en las especificidades culturales de sus contextos, fomentando reflexiones sobre los elementos comunes y las diferencias entre sus culturas. A través de estas reflexiones, los estudiantes ampliaron su conciencia sobre las similitudes y diferencias culturales presentes en el Sur global. Los proyectos funcionaron como ejes estructuradores de sus conversaciones, aportando dirección y profundidad a las interacciones, haciéndolas más dinámicas y significativas. Los resultados indican que la integración del teletándem con la pedagogía por proyectos mejoró las interacciones en pareja y ofreció a los participantes oportunidades significativas para avanzar en su aprendizaje lingüístico, al tiempo que se involucraban activamente en el desarrollo de proyectos colaborativos. No obstante, los resultados también evidencian que la gestión eficaz del tiempo sigue siendo un desafío que debe abordarse para garantizar el éxito de las sesiones de teletándem y el desarrollo de los proyectos.

### **Palabras clave:**

*Teletándem, pedagogía por proyectos, aprendizaje de lenguas.*

## **Introduction**

In the past few decades, many Higher Education Institutes in Brazil have implemented initiatives to improve their internationalization processes. Lunardi, Gomez, and Corte (2019, p. 133) highlight that "languages constitute one of the foundational elements for the internationalization of Higher Education Institutes, enabling, among other possibilities, the dissemination and strengthening of research from Brazil to the world." While English is often regarded as a lingua franca and the dominant language of internationalization (Finardi; Porcino, 2015; Fonseca, 2016; Mendes, 2020), advocating for linguistic diversity in the global knowledge exchange is crucial. As Muñoz (2021) observes, humanity thrives in multilingual environments. Similarly, universities, scientific production, and knowledge creation have evolved through diverse linguistic and communicative practices.

Supporting linguistic diversity within Brazilian universities can promote the learning and use of languages beyond English. This approach fosters interaction among diverse cultures, enhances engagement between students and educators, and facilitates meaningful exchanges with speakers of various languages.

One of the initiatives to improve the internationalization process at the Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Brazil, was offering courses in a teletandem context.

Teletandem is a language learning context that adapts the principles of tandem<sup>1</sup> learning to an entirely virtual environment. As Vassallo and Telles (2006, 2009) described, teletandem is a "collaborative, autonomous and reciprocal method of foreign language learning" (Vassallo; Telles, 2006, p. 84). It involves synchronous learning of foreign languages facilitated by computer-based platforms and communication tools such as Skype, Openmeetings, Google Meet, and Zoom. It integrates the development of all four language skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening comprehension. This method adheres to the core principles of tandem learning, including mutual support in addressing linguistic challenges, with students providing their partners with appropriate input in the target language (Cavalari; Freschi; 2018; Cavalari; Freschi; Pereira Filho, 2022; Pereira Filho, 2022). Certain aspects, such as time management and session organization, must also be considered to ensure the success of interactions (Walker, 2002).

The collaborative nature of tandem fosters trust and a sense of closeness between participants (Campos; Salomão, 2019). According to Vassallo and Telles (2006, p. 87), tandem sessions "may be either chronologically subsequent to each other or done in two different days." Thus, the sessions may occur on the same day, dedicating equal time to each language, or on separate days, focusing on one language at a time. Through these

<sup>1</sup> In tandem learning, "two people with different mother tongues communicate with each other, to learn from each other" (Brammerts, 2002, p. 17).

interactions, teletandem serves as a dynamic context for language learning, enriched by the mutual commitment of learners to each other's progress.

Thus, teletandem, an internationalization at-home action, emerges as a dynamic learning context. It connects students through online communication, empowering them to be part of an international network. This network facilitates innovative activities that foster interaction and knowledge construction through collaborative learning (Salomão, 2020).

Teletandem has the potential to foster democratic inclusion by supporting the development of foreign language proficiency, thereby facilitating learners' active participation in international contexts.

Teletandem interactions can become even more focused and meaningful if students work together on a project about a topic they must discuss and present their viewpoints (Figueiredo, 2024). Recently, project pedagogy – also referred to as work projects or project-based work – has emerged. This proposal is based on the principles of Dewey (1979), Hernández (1998), and other pioneers of active learning. It is a new learning culture, defined by an active posture of students and teachers who engage in collaborative and meaningful construction of knowledge based on real-life problematizations. An educational context that adopts project pedagogy proposes that mechanical, fragmented, and decontextualized learning is replaced by a new scenario where the learning process is now viewed as active, innovative, meaningful, and collaborative knowledge-building.

This study presents a promising combination of teletandem and project pedagogy, offering a new perspective on language and culture learning. By exploring this combination's challenges and potential benefits, we aim to inspire optimism and intrigue in our audience.

### **Theoretical underpinnings**

Teletandem is a specific context of tandem learning (Telles, 2009), a concept originally derived from the term 'tandem', which refers to a type of bicycle with more than one seat, powered by the collaborative effort of two or more individuals (Brammerts, 2002). This metaphor aptly captures the essence of tandem in language learning, where two people from different countries and with different native languages work together to learn the language spoken by the partner. According to Brammerts (2002), tandem learning is based on reciprocal learning, where participants benefit from each other's linguistic strengths and help overcome challenges in a collaborative, real-world context.

In language learning, 'tandem' implies more than just the exchange of words; it emphasizes authentic

communication. Brammerts (2002) highlights that language learning in a tandem setting contrasts sharply with the simulated, often artificial communication in traditional classroom environments. In tandem learning, the interaction is genuine, spontaneous, and driven by the shared goal of mutual language development rather than structured drills or predetermined exercises. This form of learning is dynamic, engaging, and rooted in real-life exchanges, allowing participants to acquire language skills through meaningful conversation and cultural exchange.

In 2006, tandem learning evolved into a new format that integrated online interactions. This development was proposed by Brazilian Professor João Telles and Italian Professor Maria Luisa Vassallo, who introduced the concept of teletandem (Vassallo; Telles, 2006). Telles and Vassallo envisioned teletandem as a means for language learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to connect virtually, allowing them to learn each other's languages and cultures mutually. This innovative model sought to overcome geographical barriers, offering learners a dynamic and interactive opportunity for online cross-cultural communication through a "computer-assisted mode of learning foreign languages" (Vassallo; Telles, 2006, p. 193).

Teletandem brings together students from various languages, cultures, and identities within a global framework, where they collaborate autonomously and engage in a balanced, reciprocal exchange (Telles, 2009). This approach is grounded in a socio-interactionist perspective on language learning, which emphasizes the importance of interaction and social context in acquiring language skills. In this framework, learners improve their linguistic abilities and gain deeper intercultural understanding, enhancing their perceptions of themselves and others.

Beyond linguistic growth, teletandem fosters an environment of collaborative knowledge construction, where participants actively contribute to each other's learning processes (Carvalho, 2011; Figueiredo, 2024; Telles, 2009). This peer-driven collaboration can also help mitigate the teacher's workload by creating a shared responsibility for learning while ensuring that instructors can offer guidance and support when needed (Helm, 2015). By promoting autonomous learning, role balance, and mutual respect, teletandem provides a rich, transformative experience that extends the boundaries of traditional language education.

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted on teletandem, exploring various aspects of this innovative learning context. Research has delved into topics such as collaboration (Figueiredo, 2018, 2024), learning strategies (Cavalari; Freschi; Pereira Filho, 2022), and interculturality (Carvalho, 2011), among others. These studies have offered valuable insights into

how teletandem can enhance language learning and intercultural exchange.

For example, research on collaboration has highlighted how teletandem fosters a sense of mutual responsibility and partnership between learners, emphasizing the importance of peer support in the learning process and guaranteeing that both languages are used during the interactions (Figueiredo, 2018, 2024; Lima-Lopes; Aranha, 2023). Studies on learning strategies have examined how participants employ various techniques to improve language learning, such as negotiation of meaning, clarification requests, and feedback exchanges (Cavalari; Freschi; Pereira Filho, 2022). Interculturality research has explored how teletandem encourages students to engage with different cultures, promoting linguistic skills, and greater cultural awareness and sensitivity. Through real-time communication, students are exposed to different cultural perspectives, which enriches their understanding of the language and its context (Carvalho, 2011).

Overall, these studies have illuminated the broad potential of teletandem as a multifaceted learning context, demonstrating its capacity to engage learners in meaningful, interactive, and cross-cultural experiences that enhance both language proficiency and global citizenship.

The second theoretical framework that supports our study is project pedagogy, an educational concept that has gained prominence in recent decades. Project pedagogy is a problem-oriented and student-centered learning process organized around a project where students can develop knowledge and skills by exploring real-world problems (Carreira, 2013; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Hernández, 1998; Lorensen, 2022; Prado, 2005; Thomas, 2000).

Rooted in the educational philosophies of Dewey (1938) and Hernández (1998), project pedagogy promotes an academic environment defined by a new learning culture. Unlike traditional methods, project pedagogy is not simply a teaching technique or methodology but represents a shift in how learning is conceptualized and practiced (Hernández, 1998). This new culture encourages active engagement from both learners and educators, where both parties collaborate in constructing knowledge by executing transdisciplinary projects.

These projects address real-world issues, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students are encouraged to connect academic content to practical, everyday contexts by engaging in such projects, bridging the gap between theory and real-life application. This approach emphasizes the importance of meaningful, hands-on learning experiences where students engage with disciplinary knowledge and explore interdisciplinary and non-disciplinary perspectives.

Project pedagogy fosters a deeper connection between

the academic community's daily experiences and the broader spectrum of knowledge, enabling students to see the relevance of their learning beyond the classroom. It challenges traditional boundaries of academic subjects and encourages students to draw connections between various fields of study, promoting a more holistic understanding of complex issues. As such, project pedagogy facilitates a dynamic learning environment where collaboration, critical inquiry, and real-life problem-solving are central to the educational experience (Figueiredo, 2024; Hernández, 1998; Prado, 2005).

The classroom is metaphorically opened by embracing project-based pedagogy, allowing students to gain a broader perspective of the world and the realities beyond its walls. This educational model enables the identification of real-world issues and contexts that require attention and intervention (Thomas, 2000). It provides an opportunity for the knowledge gained in the classroom to be applied meaningfully and relevantly to situations outside of it, fostering a connection between local and global realities. In this way, project-based learning helps bridge gaps and overcome limitations within traditional curricula.

This educational model encourages students to shape their identities by selecting a project topic based on their needs and interests, which they then present to their teacher and classmates. On the other hand, project pedagogy redefines the teacher's role, shifting from being the sole authority and transmitter of knowledge to guiding students in developing their understanding rooted in their personal interests and real-world contexts (Carreira, 2013). This transformation allows for a more student-centered learning experience that promotes autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking (Hernández, 1998; Figueiredo, 2024; Prado, 2005).

Project pedagogy and teletandem can both foster communication, independence, and pair work (Figueiredo, 2024). As a result, we consider the integration of teletandem and project-based pedagogy to be a practical and promising proposal to language education. This combination not only enhances peer interaction and encourages sustained pair work but also diversifies the range of conversational topics, fosters learner autonomy, and promotes deeper cultural and linguistic exchange through meaningful, task-oriented collaboration.

The combination of project pedagogy and teletandem may promote exciting and meaningful learning of languages and cultures in a virtual and authentic context since both proposals are anchored in theories of collaboration and socio-interactionism (Bruffee, 1999; Figueiredo, 2019; Vygotsky, 1998). They also encourage the development of intercultural, interpersonal, and linguistic competencies and skills such as creativity, empathy, negotiation, and problematization. Both value

the process more than the product.

However, a web search on teletandem associated with project pedagogy reveals the need for more research. Therefore, it points to the need to investigate this combination (Figueiredo, 2024). By exploring this combination, we hope to uncover new insights into the potential benefits of this innovative learning culture.

In the following section, we present the methodology adopted to carry out our study.

## Methodology

Our research, conducted in 2023, involved participants from three distinct educational institutions:

- six students from the Universidade Federal de Goiás (Brazil),
- one student from the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (Argentina),
- five professors from the Instituto Tecnológico Universitario Rumiñahui (Ecuador).

The Brazilian, Argentine, and Ecuadorian participants signed a Free and Informed Consent Form, agreeing to participate in this research. This study is part of more extensive research, which has been rigorously reviewed and approved by the Universidade Federal de Goiás Research Ethics Committee, protocol number CAAE 70953817.7.0000.5083.

The study aimed to explore the dynamics of teletandem interactions and the role of project pedagogy in enhancing collaborative language learning across diverse cultural contexts.

After participants signed the informed consent form, several instruments were employed for data generation, including questionnaires, which offered insights into their experiences and perceptions, and recordings of interactions between students and professors. These interactions were crucial for analyzing the nature of communication, collaboration, and knowledge exchange in a teletandem environment. Additionally, we gathered materials used during their interactions, such as project-related documents and learning resources, to assess the integration of project pedagogy within the teletandem framework.

Semi-structured interviews with students and professors were also conducted to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, as this instrument allows for both consistency and flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives about their experiences, challenges, and reflections on the learning process (Dörnyei, 2007; Nunan, 1992). These interviews offered valuable context for interpreting the recorded interactions and provided a more nuanced view of the participants' engagement with the projects they had developed.

In the interest of space, this paper will focus only data from interactions and interviews for the purposes of

analysis. In this case study (Nunan, 1992), we concentrated on two distinct pairs for detailed examination, using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity: the first pair includes Maria, a Brazilian student, and Chica, an Ecuadorian professor who worked on a project exploring cultural festivities in Brazil and Ecuador (original titles: *Festividades na cultura equatoriana e festividades na cultura brasileira*/*Festividades en la cultura ecuatoriana y festividades en la cultura brasileña*); the second pair consists of Chael, a Brazilian student, and Marcela, an Argentine student, who collaborated on a project that covered a range of cultural topics, including festivals, dance, and traditional foods in Brazil and Argentina (original titles: *Pratos típicos, danças e festas culturais das regiões do Brasil e da Argentina*/*Platos típicos, danzas y fiestas culturales de las regiones de Brasil y Argentina*). Both pairs received support from two professors in Brazil (João and Sarita) and one coordinator in Ecuador (the Ecuadorian coordinator).

The primary objectives of this investigation were to identify potential challenges that may arise when integrating project pedagogy with teletandem and to explore how this combination can enhance the collaborative learning of languages and cultures. In pursuing the first objective, we sought to uncover any obstacles related to implementing these two approaches, such as issues with technology, communication barriers, or the alignment of pedagogical goals. The second objective focused on understanding how integrating project pedagogy with teletandem might foster a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, where students improve their language skills and gain deeper insights into different cultures through collaborative work. We aim to contribute to the growing body of research on innovative learning methodologies that blend technology and project pedagogy by addressing these objectives. Our findings will offer insights into the practical benefits and challenges of using teletandem as a context for collaborative, cross-cultural learning while highlighting the potential of project pedagogy to enrich the educational experience. Ultimately, we hope our work will inform future educational practices and support the development of more effective and engaging strategies for language learning in diverse, global contexts.

## Description and analysis

The data generated in this investigation shed light on several important aspects of the teletandem experience. We will focus on challenges and perspectives of integrating teletandem with project pedagogy.

One of the most significant challenges encountered during the teletandem sessions was time management. A particular issue arose with the Ecuadorian participants, who only accounted for the different time

zones when scheduling their interactions, as illustrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 1:

Ecuadorian Coordinator: We thought the class would start at 9:00 pm, and only now we did see that it is at 5:00 pm in Ecuador. The professors are teaching at this time.

João: Ok. So, it won't be possible for teachers to participate in classes?

Sarita: What if we have two meetings a week, instead of one, so the class doesn't end so late?

João: We have to see if the Argentine and the Brazilian students can participate in two weekly meetings.

Ecuadorian Coordinator: We can have a meeting tomorrow morning so we can resolve this issue.

João: Ok, then I suggest that we finish the class so that tomorrow they can solve the problem and communicate the decision to us.

This oversight often led to confusion and difficulties in coordinating sessions, ultimately impacting the exchange's quality and continuity. The lack of synchronization in scheduling meant that some sessions were cut short or had to be rescheduled, reducing the overall effectiveness of the virtual exchange.

This finding underscores the potential of teletandem as a method for collaborative, cross-cultural language learning. It highlights the importance of planning and coordination in virtual exchange programs (Walker, 2002). To fully realize the benefits of teletandem and project pedagogy, logistical challenges, such as time zone differences, must be addressed, and sufficient time must be allocated for meaningful interactions. By addressing these concerns, we can optimize the potential of teletandem and project pedagogy, fostering a richer and more meaningful learning experience for all participants.

The initial discomfort caused by the Ecuadorian participants' unfamiliarity with the time zone differences during the first class created an awkward situation that affected the flow of the session. However, Sarita and João, the Brazilian professors, quickly stepped in with practical suggestions that helped the Ecuadorian participants address the issue. They collaboratively rearranged the timing of future meetings to ensure that everyone could participate without further confusion or scheduling conflicts. It is important to highlight that, despite the initial confusion and discomfort caused by time zone differences, the Ecuadorian coordinator responded with notable proactivity and professionalism, swiftly resolving the issue and ensuring the continuity of the collaboration.

This moment was particularly significant because it

clearly demonstrated the professors' and students' collaboration to navigate a challenge. It was not just about solving the logistical problem; it was an opportunity for the students to witness their professors engage in conflict resolution in real time. Sarita, João, and the Ecuadorian Coordinator demonstrated how to address issues with flexibility, negotiation, and empathy – skills that are central to the teletandem model, which promotes a collaborative and interactive learning environment (Telles, 2009).

Through this experience, students were able to observe the importance of negotiating and finding solutions together, reinforcing the teletandem principles: reciprocity, autonomy, and equality of opportunities (Picoli; Salomão, 2020), as well as mutual respect and empathy (Vassallo, Telles, 2006, 2009). The ability to solve conflicts in a positive and empathetic way is essential for both effective language learning and intercultural exchanges. As noted by Cavalari, Freschi, and Pereira Filho (2022), teletandem thrives in environments where these skills are actively fostered, as they not only enhance communication but also encourage a deeper connection between participants. This situation ultimately turned into a valuable learning moment, showing that challenges, when addressed collaboratively, can lead to growth for both students and teachers alike.

Another challenge related to time management was the availability to explore other interaction possibilities, such as using WhatsApp to communicate with the partner or having additional sessions. Maria, a Brazilian student, pointed out that Chica, her Ecuadorian partner, always said she had a busy routine and did not have time to participate satisfactorily:

Excerpt 2:

João: How often did you and Chica interact?

Maria: We only had meetings on interaction days. We could have been more flexible in speaking, as in other experiences I had in teletandem. But it was not possible because she always told me that she was very busy and did not have time for that. It sounded like she was there under hard pressure, you know?

Excerpt 3:

Sarita: Would you like to continue interacting in teletandem?

Chica: Yes, I would like to, but the problem is that I have little time because of my workload. At this moment, I do not have time.

Some participants, such as Chica, expressed interest in participating in future editions of the teletandem initiative, recognizing its value for expanding intercultural dialogue



and deepening both cultural and linguistic understanding through collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1999; Figueiredo, 2018). However, due to her demanding workload, Chica ultimately chose not to continue in subsequent editions. Her case illustrates both the potential of teletandem to engage participants meaningfully and the practical constraints that may limit ongoing involvement, particularly for professionals balancing multiple responsibilities.

Despite the time management challenge, the combination of teletandem and project pedagogy emerged as a promising avenue for innovating virtual exchange experiences (Figueiredo, 2024). Project pedagogy, emphasizing student-driven learning, encourages learners to select a topic of interest to explore and develop. This element of choice fosters greater engagement and autonomy (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Hernández, 1998; Thomas, 2000) and serves as a guide for the interactions during teletandem sessions. By working on a shared project, students have a clear focus for their interactions, which significantly enhances the quality and relevance of their virtual exchanges, as can be seen in Maria's speech:

Excerpt 4:

João: What did you talk about during the interactions?

Maria: Our conversation started with a focus on the project, which I reassured her would not be too time-consuming. The project served as a guide, providing plenty of topics to discuss. This approach proved to be successful and led to a productive conversation.

As Maria's comments demonstrate, the project-centered approach helps students navigate the virtual exchange more effectively, providing structure and purpose to their interactions. She noted how having a defined project allowed for more meaningful discussions, prompting her to explore specific cultural and linguistic aspects of their study theme. In this way, the project facilitated a deeper understanding of the language and connected students to broader cultural and real-world contexts.

This combination of teletandem and project pedagogy addresses the practical challenge of time management and opens up new possibilities and perspectives for enriching and purposeful learning. By allowing students to engage in collaborative, project-based work, the exchange transforms the learning into a dynamic, cross-cultural experience that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and cultural exploration (Figueiredo, 2024). Ultimately, the combination of teletandem and project pedagogy offers a promising perspective for the future of virtual exchanges. Grounding interactions in meaningful, collaborative tasks enhances interactivity,

relevance, and impact in language learning.

By inviting Marcela to share her perspective, the professor created an open dialogue, allowing Marcela to express any concerns, suggestions, or insights she had regarding the project's direction and objectives.

Excerpt 5:

João: Did you think the project development was significant?

Marcela: I thought it was important because we had to elaborate on something to present. It was easy.

Although the interview took place after the teletandem sessions had been concluded, it nevertheless encouraged students, such as Marcela, to engage in critical reflection on their learning experiences, fostering a heightened sense of ownership and active engagement. This moment of reflection aligns with Talmy's (2010) view of interviews as co-constructed social practices, which not only serve as tools for data collection but also promote dialogic meaning-making that can lead to new insights. Echoing this, Ng (2024) highlights how revisiting learning experiences through interviews allows learners to reframe their understanding, while Block (2023) emphasizes their role in revealing evolving identities and beliefs. In this sense, interviews function similarly to mediation, helping participants move from a situated, maybe fragmented view of their language development to a more comprehensive and connected understanding of the learning process (Vassallo, Telles, 2006, 2009; Salomão, 2020). Thus, the post-session interview operated as a reflective bridge, enhancing the enduring impact of teletandem and suggesting that meaningful learning continues well beyond the formal structure of the project.

This exchange reinforced the principle of student-centered learning and demonstrated the importance of adaptability in teaching. Considering Marcela's perspective, the professor could make informed adjustments to the project or the teaching approach, ensuring that it remained relevant and effective for all participants. The professor's willingness to value Marcela's opinion created a more inclusive and participatory learning environment, essential in fostering a sense of shared responsibility and community within the teletandem framework.

Marcela's partner also exhibited a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward the project, which was essential for fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment, as we can see in excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6:

João: Did you think developing the project was important?

Chael: I loved it. I enjoyed doing it. We talked about dances in Argentina and Brazil.

João: And did you think the project helped the interactions?

Chael: Yes.

João: Why?

Chael: I was fully committed to the project. I dedicated a day to presenting it to her, and we also had extensive discussions on WhatsApp. It was a day filled with vibrant interaction and exchange of ideas.

By actively engaging with the project's objectives, Marcela and Chael brought fresh ideas and perspectives to the discussions, greatly enriching the overall experience. This proactive approach not only facilitated the smooth progression of the project but also promoted a sense of mutual respect and shared responsibility between the two participants.

Chael's genuine enthusiasm for the project cultivated a dynamic interaction that motivated both him and Marcela to fully engage and put forth their best efforts. Their collaborative attitude encouraged a deeper exploration of the project's themes, which included cultural exchange, linguistic development, and the exploration of traditions and practices from both Brazil and Argentina. The partner's willingness to collaborate, listen, and offer constructive feedback made the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful for Marcela as they worked together to explore their respective languages and cultures in a practical and personally relevant way.

Moreover, the partner's positive and constructive approach reinforced the core principles of reciprocity and mutual benefit that underpin the teletandem model. As emphasized by Vassallo and Telles (2006), teletandem relies on the active and equitable involvement of both participants, who are simultaneously learners and language experts. This dynamic process fosters a collaborative partnership rather than a hierarchical or one-sided interaction. Marcela's partner exemplified this balanced relationship, cultivating a space where both individuals felt encouraged to share knowledge, take risks, and support one another's development. Such cooperation aligns with the sociocultural perspective of learning, particularly Vygotsky's notion of mediated learning (1998), where interaction with more capable peers plays a central role in cognitive and linguistic development. This spirit of co-construction not only enriched Marcela's learning experience but also deepened her understanding of the intercultural dimensions of the exchange, ultimately contributing to the success of their collaborative learning journey.

As shown in excerpts 4, 5, and 6, the project assigned to the students served as a guide, providing direction and focus for their conversations during the teletandem

sessions (Figueiredo, 2024). This structured focus not only helped make their interactions more purposeful and efficient but also infused them with greater energy and engagement. By working on a shared project, the students had a clear, tangible goal that directed the flow of their discussions, fostering a more dynamic exchange. The project provided a context for the conversations, allowing participants to delve deeper into topics of mutual interest, explore cultural nuances, and practice language in a more meaningful and contextually rich way.

In the next session, we present some final considerations.

## **Final remarks**

The integration of teletandem and project pedagogy introduced a more dynamic educational approach (Figueiredo, 2024; Hernández, 1998), fostering active collaboration in a cross-cultural context beyond the simple exchange of linguistic knowledge. This approach not only enriched interactions by making them more vibrant and engaging but also cultivated a deeper sense of learner autonomy. Rather than being passive recipients, students became co-creators of knowledge (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Vygotsky, 1998).

Anchoring discussions around a project enabled students to connect academic content with real-world concerns, enhancing both the relevance and impact of their learning. This blend of structured collaboration, intercultural exploration, and active engagement fostered a more comprehensive educational experience — one that extended beyond traditional language learning to encompass broader cultural understanding.

However, the study identified time management as a key challenge, particularly due to differences in time zones. These discrepancies complicated scheduling and limited the depth of some interactions. Addressing this issue requires thoughtful planning and clear communication to ensure all participants have the opportunity to engage meaningfully. Advance awareness and coordination are crucial to unlocking the full potential of virtual exchanges. Ultimately, combining project-based pedagogy with teletandem has the power to transform virtual exchange experiences. By structuring interactions around both linguistic and cultural inquiry, this method encourages deeper engagement and critical thinking. It creates a meaningful context in which students not only develop language proficiency but also gain insights into cultural perspectives.

We hope this study will encourage language educators to adopt this innovative approach in their own classrooms. Incorporating project pedagogy into teletandem exchanges can lead to richer, more engaging virtual learning environments that promote collaboration,



cultural awareness, and communicative competence. This model offers a promising path forward for language education in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Acknowledgements

Francisco José Quaresma de Figueiredo would like to thank CNPq for the support it provided through a Research Productivity Scholarship (PQ).

## References

- [1] Brammerts, H. (2002). Aprendizagem autônoma de línguas em tandem: Desenvolvimento de um conceito. In K. H. Delille & A. Chichorro (Coords.), *Aprendizagem autônoma de línguas em tandem* (pp. xx–xx). Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- [2] Bruffee, K. A. (1999). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence, and the authority of knowledge*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [3] Campos, B. da S., & Salomão, A. C. B. (2019). Estratégias de aprendizagem no Teletandem: O que os aprendizes de língua inglesa afirmam fazer para aprender nesse contexto? *Revista Horizontes de Linguística Aplicada*, 18(1), 133–160. <https://doi.org/10.26512/rhla.v18i1.25100>
- [4] Carreira, R. A. R. (2013). *Ensino e linguagem: Entre o ideal e o real na construção de um projeto pedagógico integrado*. São Paulo: Annablume.
- [5] Carvalho, K. C. H. P. (2011). Desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa e intercultural en interacciones vía Teletandem portugués x español. *Signos Universitarios Virtual*, 11, 1–9.
- [6] Cavalari, S. M. S., & Freschi, A. C. (2018). A correção de erros e as relações entre avaliação por pares e autoavaliação no ambiente Teletandem. *Revista do GEL*, 15(3), 194–213. <https://doi.org/10.21165/gel.v15i3.2413>
- [7] Cavalari, S. M. S., Freschi, A. C., & Pereira Filho, S. A. (2022). Peer corrective feedback: Face-saving strategies in Teletandem oral sessions. *The ESPecialist*, 43(1), 1–20.
- [8] Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Macmillan Company. <https://archive.org/details/democracyandedu00dewegoog/page/n6/mode/2up>
- [9] Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- [10] Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- [11] Figueiredo, F. J. Q. de. (2018). Aprendizagem colaborativa de línguas estrangeiras: Foco em interações face a face e mediadas pelo computador. *Polifonia*, 25(39.1), 165–182.
- [12] Figueiredo, F. J. Q. de. (2019). *Vygotsky: A interação no ensino/aprendizagem de línguas*. São Paulo: Parábola.
- [13] Figueiredo, F. J. Q. de. (2024). The use of project pedagogy in teletandem sessions: The points of view of Brazilian and Argentine learners. *Revista Domínios de Linguagem*, 18, 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.14393/DL.v18a2024-26>
- [14] Finardi, K. R., & Porcino, M. C. (2015). O papel do inglês na formação e na internacionalização da educação no Brasil. *Horizontes de Linguística Aplicada*, 14(1), 109–134. <https://doi.org/10.26512/rhla.v14i1.1391>
- [15] Fonseca, A. L. S. B. (2016). Inglês: A língua da internacionalização. *Educação*, 4(2), 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.17564/2316-3828.2016v4n2p23-32>
- [16] Helm, F. (2015). The practices and challenges of telecollaboration in higher education in Europe. *Language Learning and Technology*, 19(2), 197–217. <https://www.lltjournal.org/item/2910>
- [17] Hernández, F. (1998). *A organização do currículo por projetos de trabalho: O conhecimento é um caleidoscópio*. Porto Alegre: Artmed.
- [18] Lima-Lopes, R. E. de, & Aranha, S. (2023). Language separation in Teletandem: What corpus analysis can tell us. *Ilha do Desterro*, 76(3), 329–351. <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/article/view/94574>
- [19] Lorenset, O. (2022). A concepção dos projetos de trabalho: Contribuições à formação docente. In L. C. Niedzieluk (Org.), *Diálogos multidisciplinares* (pp. 43–58). Palhoça, SC: FMP. <http://fmpsc.edu.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/DIALOGOS-MULTIDISCIPLINARES-ISBN-.pdf>
- [20] Lunardi, E. M., Gomez, S. da R. M., & Corte, M. G. D. (2019). Institucionalização de política linguística para a internacionalização. In M. Morosini (Ed.), *Guia para a internacionalização universitária* (pp. 131–147). Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS.
- [21] Mendes, C. R. B. (2020). *A internacionalização e a língua inglesa: Uma relação simbiótica e seus conceitos básicos*. São Luís: IFM.
- [22] Muñoz, A. E. (2021). Plurilinguismo acadêmico: A intercompreensão como prática comunicativa em contexto universitário. In S. Gorovitz & E. H. Unternbäumen (Eds.), *Políticas e tendências de internacionalização do ensino superior no Brasil* (pp. 101–115). Brasília: Ed. UnB.
- [23] Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [24] Pereira Filho, S. A. (2022). *A correção por pares nas sessões orais de Teletandem em língua inglesa: Um estudo longitudinal* (Dissertação de Mestrado). Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho”, São José do Rio Preto.
- [25] Prado, M. E. B. B. (2005). Pedagogia de projetos: Fundamentos e implicações. In M. E. B. de Almeida & J. M. Moran (Orgs.), *Integração das tecnologias na educação* (pp. 12–17). Brasília: Ministério da Educação/SEED/TV Escola/Salto para o Futuro.
- [26] Salomão, A. C. B. (2020). Intercâmbios virtuais e a internacionalização em casa: Reflexões e implicações para a Linguística Aplicada. *Estudos Linguísticos*, 49(1), 152–174.
- [27] Telles, J. A. (Ed.). (2009). *Teletandem: Um contexto virtual, autônomo e colaborativo para aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras no século XXI*. Campinas: Pontes Editores.
- [28] Telles, J. A. (2015). Learning foreign languages in Teletandem: Resources and strategies. *DELTA - Revista de Estudos em Linguística Teórica e Aplicada*, 31(3), 651–680. <https://www.scielo.br/j/delta/a/vyDgwtkLRKj5ftZ86ddKVggm/>
- [29] Thomas, J. W. (2000). *A review of research on project-based learning*. California: Autodesk Foundation. [https://tecfa.unige.ch/proj/eteach-net/Thomas\\_researchreview\\_PBL.pdf](https://tecfa.unige.ch/proj/eteach-net/Thomas_researchreview_PBL.pdf)
- [30] Vassallo, M. L., & Telles, J. A. (2006). Foreign language learning in tandem: Theoretical principles and research perspectives. *The ESPecialist*, 27(1), 83–118. <https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/esp/article/view/6117>
- [31] Vassallo, M. L., & Telles, J. A. (2009). Ensino e aprendizagem de línguas em tandem: Princípios teóricos e perspectivas de pesquisa. In J. A. Telles (Org.), *Teletandem: Um contexto virtual, autônomo e colaborativo para aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras no século XXI* (pp. 21–42). Campinas: Pontes Editores.
- [32] Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). *A formação social da mente: O desenvolvimento dos processos psicológicos superiores*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- [33] Walker, L. (2002). O papel do diário no apoio e desenvolvimento da autonomia do aprendente tandem. In Delille, K. H.; Chichorro, A. F. (Org.). *Aprendizagem autônoma de línguas em tandem* (pp.89-97). Lisboa: Colibri.