

# IMPLEMENTING TELECOLLABORATION IN THE WORLD LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

by

VIVIANE DE SOUZA KLEN-ALVES MOORE

(Under the Direction of Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor)

## ABSTRACT

Despite national efforts for internationalization, college student enrollment in language programs is in decline (MLA, 2019), and the United States continues to be a very monolingual country. Similarly, although Brazil is seen as an ethnically diverse and multicultural nation, and that the country's common core standards consider English to be a *Lingua Franca* (BNCC, 2017), only around 5% of Brazilians report having some knowledge of the language, most of whom are affluent and have access to world languages and study abroad for a longer period of time (British Council, 2014). Telecollaboration, well-established even before the pandemic, can connect geographically distant people to teach and learn languages, develop digital skills, and further cultural understanding.

This study explores the experiences of ten undergraduate students participating in the program

“Teletandem Brazil: Foreign Languages for all,” a telecollaborative language exchange program. It examines the North American language classroom, observing how telecollaboration was implemented and what results it had on students' engagement and learning. Guided by a sociocultural approach to human development (Vygotsky, 1978), this qualitative project combined Formative Interventions and Change Laboratory methodologies to understand and present the findings. Data collection occurred over a span of three years. The bulk of the data

was collected in an intermediate-level Portuguese language classroom that integrated Teletandem between September and October of 2018. Data analysis and further data collection continued until 2021 and supported the retelling of the history of telecollaboration implementation, as well as the discussion of its community, cultures, and objects. The investigation of the application of different Teletandem tasks, combined with the author's ten-year experience observing the integration of telecollaboration in the setting, allowed for a careful consideration of the Teletandem design and implementation. This study is the first to discuss how the integration of Teletandem tasks occurs in the partnering universities. It has identified several qualities of implementing synchronous and asynchronous Teletandem tasks, whether integrated or not, into the language classroom. Implications include a critical analysis of the contradictions that arose from the utilization of telecollaboration and a series of proposals and suggestions on how to implement telecollaborative exchanges.

**INDEX WORDS:** Telecollaboration, Teletandem, Virtual Exchange, Portuguese, Less Commonly Taught Language, Computer Mediated Language Learning, Learning Logs, Oral Sessions, Tasks

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## DEDICATION

To the Rats (see A Rat Ode) with the wishes that you can and will esperar. You will spread your beautiful wings, Rat. Over the seas and across the borders they still insist on building.

To the Aliens, in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, I hope we can find more than that.

Às revolucionárias que chacoalham os muros da história e perseveram no seu pertencimento.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2012, as a Fulbright visiting teaching assistant in the United States, I heard about the *Teletandem* project (Telles, 2006) for the first time. Initially based on tandem learning (Little & Brammerts, 1996), Teletandem is a Brazilian born virtual context for teaching and learning foreign languages (Aranha & Cavalari, 2015) in which learners of two different languages, usually geographically distant, participate in several a/synchronous tasks to help each other with learning one another's languages (Aranha & Rampazzo, 2021, p. 3; Telles, 2015).

Previous empirical research has already demonstrated that participation in Teletandem can yield linguistic gains (Hasko, Moser, Guida, Hayes & Klen-Alves, 2017) and support language and intercultural learning (Klen-Alves & Tiraboshi, 2019; Hasko et al., 2017; Cappellini, 2016; Brammerts, 1996), yet the implementation of telecollaborative practices such as Teletandem is not yet widespread nor streamlined in language programs.

To understand this issue, I examine the implementation of Teletandem into a Portuguese course in a 4-year institution<sup>1</sup>: The University of Georgia (UGA) in partnership with the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) campus São José do Rio Preto (hereafter, UNESP-SJRP). By looking at how the Portuguese program implements Teletandem tasks in comparison to the way those tasks are envisioned and implemented at UNESP-SJRP, I discuss the students' experience

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<sup>1</sup> The partnership between UNESP-SJRP and the UGA's Portuguese Program is public, and previous publications have identified both universities' names making it harder to deidentify this data. Moreover, Teletandem was established by UNESP, and it is important to credit the institution and, in this case, its partnering university. All other participants' names, including instructors and students, are pseudonyms to protect the individuals' identities.

and observe what can be beneficial to language programs interested in incorporating telecollaboration into their language curricula.

## **Landscape of the Field and Study Rationale**

The field of world language education in the United States has experienced peaks and valleys. According to the Modern Language Association's (MLA) most recent report, “[b]etween fall 2013 and fall 2016, enrollments in languages other than English fell 9.2% in colleges and universities in the United States”<sup>2</sup> (p. 2). In 2016, modern language course enrollments per 100 students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States had experienced a 7.5% decline. Additionally, there is no evidence that the decline in language enrollments can be wholly or partially attributed to the common practice of students first enrolling in 2-year college programs and later transferring to 4-year programs at universities, as these introductory enrollments (the first through fourth semesters in 2-year colleges) likewise<sup>3</sup> experienced a 15.9% decrease in language enrollments<sup>4</sup> (MLA, 2019, para).

Thus, in the report, the lower enrollment in foreign languages is attributed, at least partially, to financial constraints faced by universities (MLA, 2019, p. 15). Not surprisingly, limited budget and enrollment issues result in some departments or programs completely shutting down. For example, in 2010, the City University of New York (CUNY) suspended five humanities programs, including French, Italian, Russian, Classics, and Theater<sup>5</sup>. The cuts of

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<sup>2</sup> The 2015 report on foreign language enrollments in US higher education registered a decrease of 6.7% in “aggregated . . . enrollments in all languages” since 2009 (Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin 2015:2).

<sup>3</sup> For the full report: <https://www.mla.org/content/download/110154/2406932/2016-Enrollments-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.mla.org/content/download/110154/2406932/2016-Enrollments-Final-Report.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> CUNY has been the home of the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Center since 2004. Yet, many Modern Language courses are offered in English. Source: <https://www.npr.org/2010/11/15/131336270/cuts-to-university-s-humanities-program-draw-outcry>.



specific humanities programs affected new students' abilities to register for classes and, even today, 12 years later, only a few introductory courses are offered in those languages by the university. CUNY's example reveals an unfortunate trend, which is the demonstration of a complete disregard for language studies in college (MLA, 2019, p. 15).

Despite initiatives of internationalization, the lack of prioritization of world language teaching combined with the increased offering of world language cultures courses in English<sup>6</sup> results in a great number of US citizens not learning a world language. Some scholars, such as Neuman (2017), explain that even in universities with rigorous language requirements, students only took an average of three semesters of a foreign language, whereas, in institutions with no language requirement, undergraduates took only one credit or none (Neuman, 2017, para). As a consequence of reduced or non-existent language requirements, the author argues that students can graduate high school with enough credits to fulfill a language requirement in college or be placed in a higher-level course of a language already taken in high school (Neuman, 2017). Yet, according to the MLA report, only 1.4% of the students enrolled in modern language in colleges and universities in the United States in 2016 were for enrollments in advanced modern language classes (MLA, 2019, p.4).

To attract and retain students and to guarantee their continued operation, language programs work in a myriad of ways. Language clubs, cultural events, and study abroad opportunities tend to garner students, contributing to student engagement and retention. Additionally, recruitment in high schools and 2-year colleges and partnerships with other universities, as well as the availability of placement tests, may increase enrollments and ensure that students can receive several consecutive semesters of instruction in the language (MLA,

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<sup>6</sup> See: [https://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/a\\_fre.html](https://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/a_fre.html).

2019, p. 13). However, programs' ability to offer several semesters of instruction varies, resulting in limited opportunities for the achievement of advanced or superior proficiency (ILR3<sup>7</sup>), despite the increased demand for higher proficiency levels (Rifkin, 2005).

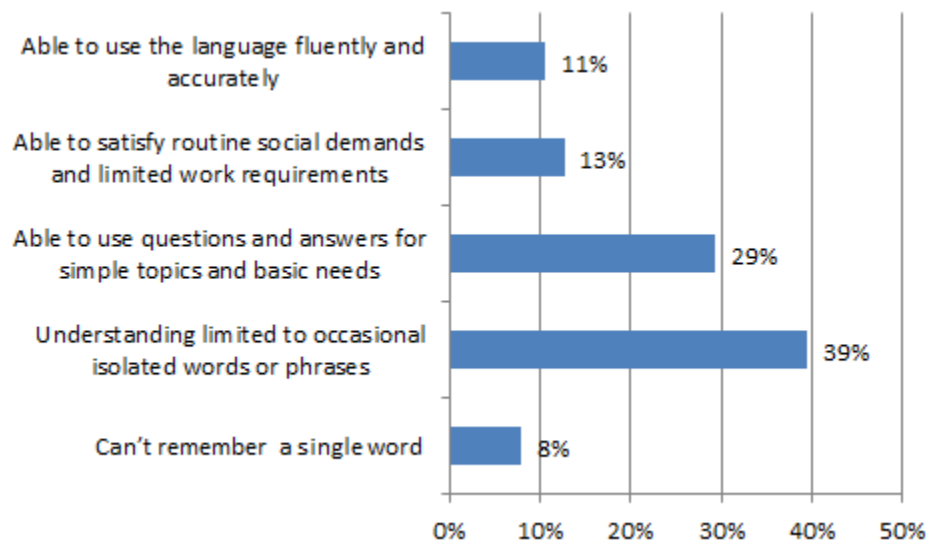
Lastly, despite the increasing diversity in the U.S. (U.S. 2020 census), only 15% of its citizens have studied a foreign language, and “less than 1 percent of American adults today are proficient in a foreign language that they studied in a United States classroom” (Neuman, 2017, para). When discussing college undergraduate students, Neuman predicts that only 24% of college graduates who studied a foreign language in college are proficient in a foreign language. Still, half of these students (12%) “were language majors or [persons] who reported that the language was spoken extensively in their home or community” (Neuman, 2017, para.). Figure 1 offers a breakdown of skills reported by college graduates.

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<sup>7</sup> The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale is the standard grading system for language proficiency in the United States's Federal-level service. On this scale, limited working proficiency (2) is equivalent to satisfying routine social demands and limited work requirements.

**Figure 1**

*Levels of proficiency of college graduates*



*Note.* Reprinted from Inside Higher Ed, Setting Aside Bureaucratic Requirements<sup>8</sup>

Concomitantly, the American Councils for International Education 2017 report reveals that “throughout all 50 states and the District of Columbia, only 20% of K-12 students are enrolled in foreign language classes and, in total, it is predicted that less than 1% of Americans are proficient in foreign languages” (as cited in Neuman, 2017). If, as figure 1 shows, only 11% of college graduates who studied a foreign language in college are fluent while the vast majority of language students (39%) do not acquire a working proficiency in foreign languages studied, world language education needs alternatives.

It has already been established that speaking a second language requires hours of contact with the language, guided instruction, and access to a myriad of resources to study the language.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: [https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/05/18/undergraduate-foreign-language-requirements-arent-particularly-effective-essay#:~:text=If%20we%20consider%20the%20top,\(24%20percent\)%20are%20proficient](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/05/18/undergraduate-foreign-language-requirements-arent-particularly-effective-essay#:~:text=If%20we%20consider%20the%20top,(24%20percent)%20are%20proficient)

Additionally, the programmatic nature of the classes has also been impacted by budgetary cuts (MLA, 2019), and the consequent reduction in face-to-face classes is pushing language programs to offer hybrid classes. This scenario, combined with the lack of authentic materials and chances to communicate with fluent and native speakers of the target languages, makes the ambitious goal of graduating students with higher levels of language proficiency harder. Considering this background, the planned implementation of telecollaboration can mitigate many of these challenges, serving as an essential tool to sustain the integration of authentic materials and the connection with a multilingual community of practice.

### **The Current Status of Foreign Languages, Policy, and Funding**

In this scenario of continuous decline in L2 enrollment in 4-year colleges<sup>9</sup> after 9/11, there is a new demand for what the US considers less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), such as Portuguese. All languages except English, French, German, and Spanish are considered LCTLs<sup>10</sup>, or, world languages that are less frequently studied by Americans. Historically, different movements have been made to support language learning. In the mid-2000s (before and after 9/11), the government realized it needed to get involved in policy to encourage the offering of foreign languages in every public school in the United States (Ballaro & Klassen, 2018) as well as to strengthen North American's levels of fluency in languages they deem as critical for national security.

Ballaro and Klassen (2018) cite the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* as one example of a piece of legislation that included foreign language as a core subject (para.) and pushed for at

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<sup>9</sup> In the period of three years, Portuguese enrollments declined by 12.3% at two-year institutions and by 20.9% at four-year institutions (MLA, 2019, p. 8).

<sup>10</sup> In the MLA (2019) report, LCTLs are all languages not included in their top 15 criteria. For the full report: <https://www.mla.org/content/download/110154/2406932/2016-Enrollments-Final-Report.pdf>.

least two foreign languages to be offered in every public school in the United States. In 2006, President George W. Bush launched the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), which is responsible for implementing and coordinating programs to develop American students' foreign language skills.

There are several reported goals for the creation of NSLI. The first of which, strengthening national security, was criticized by defendants of mutual understanding who focus on the goal of expanding intercultural dialogue (NSLI page, 2020). The overall goal of the program is to improve Americans' ability to engage with people from around the world. Because of the creation of NSLI, there are numerous grants from kindergarten to college education. For example, STARTALK grants<sup>11</sup> are designed to encourage the recruitment of foreign language teachers for languages considered strategic (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Russian, and Turkish). The NSLIY (National Security Language Initiative for Youth)<sup>12</sup> is an initiative that focuses on youth exposure to these languages through study abroad by the time they graduate high school.

At the college level, nation-wide initiatives such as the Language Flagship were created as a national effort to address the shortage of American speakers of critical foreign languages and to form “the next generation of global professionals that are proficient in a less-commonly taught language by the time they graduate college” (Language Flagship website, accessed 2015). According to the page, the Language Flagship initiative currently funds 31 language programs in ten different critical languages at 23 higher education institutions across the U.S.

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<sup>11</sup> STARTALK is a federal grant program funded by the National Security Agency. STARTALK grants fund several types of innovative programs that create strong language learning outcomes for K-12 students, provide in-depth, quality teacher development, and develop support materials and resources for educators in order to meet the goals for critical need languages in the United States. To read more: <https://www.startalk.info/>

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://www.nsliforyouth.org/>

In addition to the Language Flagship sponsored by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), the State Department offers a myriad of language programs like the Critical Language Scholarship. The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program is a highly competitive scholarship with an average of 10% acceptance rate. The program's goal is to offer an intensive language study of one of the critical-need foreign languages, including Portuguese. The program happens overseas during the summer and sponsors an average of 600 undergraduate or graduate students from the U.S. every year. Despite the positive results in the increase of study abroad numbers, more studies are needed to discuss if funding opportunities impact the diversity of U.S. students studying abroad.

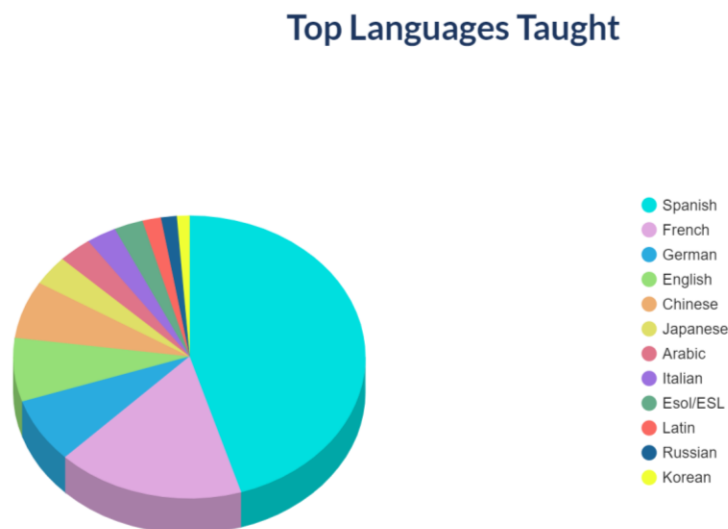
The conclusion taken from these initiatives is that funding is necessary both domestically and internationally to support the goal of increasing the number of citizens fluent in more languages. In this dissertation, I intend to show how implementing telecollaboration in a structured format in language classrooms can help the U.S. achieve this goal. The advances in technology and the increased number of students pursuing college education have changed the regular in-person structure of the classroom we were accustomed to seeing in higher education. For example, since the mid-2000s, there has been a push to reduce physical presence on campus and offer more hybrid learning and online course options (Bonk & Graham, 2012). Pedagogically speaking, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the field of World Language Education has gone through multiple rapid and critical structural changes that will continue to remain in place. Thus, anticipating ways in which we can best integrate technology such as telecollaboration into the language curriculum gives universities and language programs an alternative with which they can innovate and attract students while also improving language teaching and learning experiences.

## Foreign Languages and the Status of Portuguese

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has an enormous impact on pushing legislation that favors foreign language teaching. ACTFL declared 2005 the “Year of Languages,” and since then, the organization has been conducting nationwide public awareness campaigns that drive decisions on foreign language policy. Their work has been recognized by the U.S House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, governors, and other government officials (The Language Educator, 2017, p. 29). In 2019, ACTFL released a report in which they display the number of associates (11,622) teaching foreign languages in the U.S.

**Figure 2**

*ACTFL top languages taught by members of the association*



Note. Reprinted from ACTFL, Annual Report 2019.

As observed in Figure 2, the top languages reported to be taught by ACTFL members were Spanish (45.3%), French (17.1%), German (7.4%), English (7.3%), Chinese (6.6%), Japanese

(3.4%), Arabic (3.1%), Italian (2.8%), ESOL/ESL (2.7%), Latin (1.7%), Russian (1.5%), and Korean (1.2%).

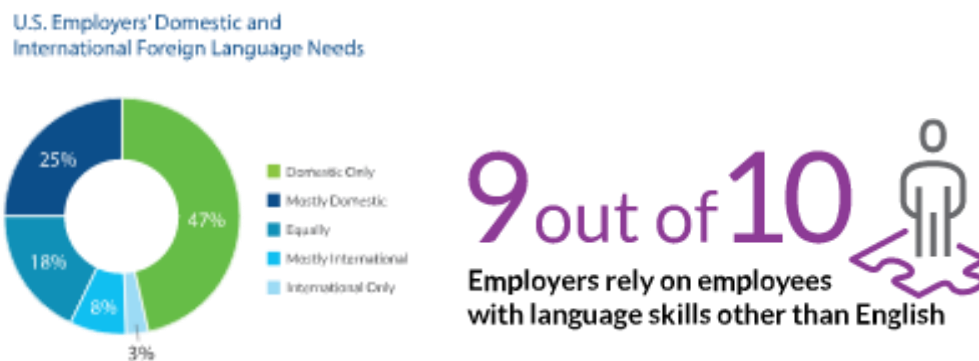
Notably, Portuguese is not represented in the report. However, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) reports that not only Portuguese is spoken in communities in California, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, it is used by 687,126 speakers in the United States. Portuguese is considered the sixth-most spoken language globally, with an average of 220 million native speakers and 50 million L2 speakers. The language did not make it into the top languages taught in the US., along with other minority languages that are frequently omitted from reports but are largely present in several states.

ACTFL Annual Report 2019 report also highlighted the need for foreign languages in the U.S. workforce. According to ACTFL, and as detailed in the figures below, nine out of ten employers reported relying on employees with language skills other than English, and 47% of them stated a need for language skills exclusively for the domestic market. This number was followed by mostly domestic (25%), equally domestic and international (18%), primarily international (8%), and international only (3%).



**Figure 3**

*U.S. Workforce Needs*



*Note.* Reprinted from ACTFL, Annual Report 2019

The global demand for a multilingual workforce is an indication that local efforts to internationalize foreign language education are urgently needed. Moreover, with the pandemic, the ability to go abroad and to meet people has diminished compared to what it was in the past. This is compounded with the extant push to limit locations for and shorten the duration of study abroad programs (Moreno Kilpatrick, 2020) which is already detrimental to foreign language experiences with other cultures.

At a time when language programs worldwide can use online language pedagogies to increase the number of students participating in virtual exchanges (O'Dowd, 2018), American colleges and universities are experiencing decreased enrollments in world languages (Looney & Lusin, 2018) when they could be investing in the democratization of both digital literacy skills and multilingualism (Ortega, 2017).

The implementation of a structured integration of telecollaboration into college-level language courses can revolutionize students' participation in virtual exchange, provide them with high-quality, student-centered experiences, and create space for authentic language

communication. Considering that most North American students do not major in foreign languages and that their proficiency levels tend to plateau (Gass & Selinker, 2008) at the intermediate level, innovative educational practices, such as meaningful collaborative language exchanges, seem to make sense as an alternative. They can encourage learners to continue engaged in language learning beyond the classroom, making learning more compelling and supporting gains in foreign language proficiency and intercultural competence. Having considered the U.S. side, I provide a brief contextualization of the Brazilian scenario in the next section.

### **The Current Status of English in Brazil**

English has always been considered a desirable language to learn in Brazil, possibly due to the importance of the English language in a globalized world and its use in economical, political, and social developments (Del Monte, 2016). As a consequence, after Portuguese, English is the most learned language in Brazil; however, English proficiency in the country is considered low in comparison to other countries that have adopted English as a language for common global communication (EF Education Report<sup>13</sup>, 2021).

In the past few years, several initiatives have been implemented in an attempt to expedite the internationalization of Brazil. Before 2017, foreign languages such as English and Spanish<sup>14</sup> were only required in high school, but with the publication of the common core curriculum (Base

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<sup>13</sup> According to the report, Brazil is ranked 60 out of 112 nations in English language proficiency. For the full report access: <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/>.

<sup>14</sup> In 2005, law 11,161 was approved making Spanish the second mandatory foreign language in high schools. Public high schools had five years to follow the curriculum guidelines (Orientações curriculares para o Ensino Médio - OCEM), but the law's implementation has been very slow. Thus, Spanish is not offered in most Brazilian high schools (Brasil: Espanhol, 2010, p. 23-24).

Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC), English has acquired the status of lingua franca and is expected to be offered in every school from 6-12. As detailed in the quote below.

In this proposal, the English language is no longer that of the “foreigner,” coming from hegemonic countries, whose speakers serve as a model to be followed, nor is it a variant of the uses of the English language created by speakers around the world, with different linguistic and cultural repertoires suited to individual contexts. This makes it possible, for example, to question the view that the only “correct” English to be used, and taught, is that which is spoken by American or British people (BNCC, p. 241, my translation<sup>15</sup>)

By removing the status of English as a foreign language<sup>16</sup> and posing it as a Lingua Franca, the core curriculum requires schools to revise their current program to integrate English earlier and demystify what it means to speak the language. The document also asks schools to move away from seeking native-like proficiency to recognize linguistic variations. Despite these changes and an increased interest in public dual language immersion (Megale, 2018; Megale & Liberali, 2016), it is distressing that 85% of Brazilian students from poor working-class families attend public schools and graduate high school without thoroughly learning English or any other world language (British Council, 2015).

According to the 2015 British Council report, world language teaching and learning challenges are numerous and include the lack of certified teachers fluent in L2s and the lack of accessible and equitable educational resources. Adding to this problem, the materials and textbooks issued by the National Program for Public Schools (Programa Nacional do Livro e do

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<sup>15</sup> For the original see: [http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC\\_EI\\_EF\\_110518\\_versaofinal\\_site.pdf](http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC_EI_EF_110518_versaofinal_site.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Spanish maintained the status of foreign language and can be offered additionally to English. Critics of this policy defend a plurilingual view of world language teaching while sympathizers recognize the importance of English as a global communication tool.

Material Didático - PNLD), which schools are required to use, are not always culturally responsive, as detailed below:

The PNLD<sup>17</sup> was one of the results of the adaptations of the Brazilian educational system made in reaction to the globalized world and its influences and dependencies, whether financial, cultural, or social. With the declared objective of democratization and universalization of basic education, those responsible for the systematization and regulation of these changes instituted the use of teaching materials that are acquired free of charge by the students attending public schools and that have been previously chosen by specialists who are often oblivious to the needs of those schools or regions. (Del Monte, 2016, p.74, my translation<sup>18</sup>).

Consequently, although this is not the only factor that can make learning difficult, these resources are often the only ones the teachers have access to, and they do not have enough time or additional resources to prepare the classes they teach. Concerning teacher education, 39% of Brazil's in-service teachers do not have a degree in foreign language teaching, and 58% received their degrees from online programs and smaller private universities. When considering practicing their skills, 55% of English teachers in public schools report not having other people that speak English around them, and 22% admit having problems speaking the second language.

Colleges and universities can establish practices regarding foreign language learning, but those practices will vary widely from program to program. Past federal government efforts have added to the internationalization of university campuses. For instance, from 2011 to 2014<sup>19</sup>,

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<sup>17</sup> For more information about PNLD see: <https://www.fn.de.gov.br/programas/programas-do-livro>

<sup>18</sup> For the original, see: <https://repositorio.unesp.br/handle/11449/137841>

<sup>19</sup> The Science Without Borders Program was announced in August 2011. Until it was effectively suspended in late-2015, CsF had funded nearly 100,000 Brazilian scholarships for studies abroad. Source: <https://monitor.icef.com/2017/04/brazil-shutting-science-without-borders/>

the *Ciências sem Fronteiras* (Sciences without Borders) was a large-scale nationwide scholarship program primarily funded by the Brazilian federal government and its child grant *Idiomas sem Fronteiras* (Languages without Borders), sending roughly 100,000 Brazilian students to study abroad. They funded myriad opportunities to learn languages within public and private universities. Although the program was shut down in 2017, its emergence supported the internationalization process of Brazilian higher education institutions and federal institutes. Still, the reduced rate of study abroad opportunities and the failure of the K16 system to graduate students with working proficiency in English, aggravated by the global pandemic, contributed to the countries' regression from the little progress it had achieved in three years of the Science without Borders program. These points are taken together to paint a picture of how Brazil and the US have similar issues regarding L2 teaching/learning.

### **The US and Brazil: bringing interests in L2 education together**

Considering that a) Portuguese programs in US higher education institutions are in need of reformulation and engaging practices for student recruitment and retention, and b) Brazilian universities also need to connect their English learners to speakers of English worldwide, innovative educational practices, such as meaningful collaborative language exchanges, make sense and are especially useful in a moment when the ability to go abroad and to meet people has diminished more than what it already was in the past.

Considering how internationalization efforts affect education, especially at the undergraduate level, where students are being prepared for careers in more technologically advanced, global, and diverse companies (Rampazzo, 2021; Sadler & Dooly, 2016), innovative practices must be low-cost to accommodate the reality of developing countries, such as Brazil,

and provide an opportunity for wealthy countries such as the US to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges. Therefore, Teletandem might be the ideal and simultaneous solution for these problems.

With this context in mind, the object of my study is to provide a better understanding of Teletandem integrated into the higher education university classroom by analyzing its implementation in the Fall 2018 PORT 2002 Intermediate Portuguese course.

The research questions that guided my dissertation were RQ 1: What does Teletandem implementation look like before, during, and after the Teletandem experience? and RQ 2: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions? By exploring the incorporation of Teletandem into the UGA class and looking into the ten students' experiences, this study contributes to the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) by providing a detailed account of how Teletandem was incorporated into the US institution. It benefits the broader Teletandem community by discussing Teletandem's design, its tasks, and contemporary ways of examining language learning, autonomy, and teaching.

This work is also relevant to language programs as, despite the urgency brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and past globalization efforts, there is much to be done to improve the integration of telecollaborative tasks into the language classroom and to ensure they are well integrated into the language curricula.

## **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter One introduced the research study background, rationale, and framing questions. Chapter Two presents a literature review of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), telecollaboration, and Teletandem; the chapter

is organized into three subsections explaining the landscape of CALL research, telecollaboration, and the principles of Teletandem. In Chapter Three, the methodological approach used to conduct the research is discussed. The discussion of the findings is initiated in Chapter Four, which addresses RQ 1: What does Teletandem implementation look like before, during, and after the Teletandem experience?, with the analysis of how Teletandem was implemented and visuals to help the reader understand each step of the Teletandem program implementation.

Chapters Five and Six respond to RQ 2: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions? Chapter Five evaluates the implementation of synchronous and required Teletandem tasks by discussing the students' participation in the Oral Sessions (OSs) and the completion of writing tasks. In contrast, Chapter Six focuses on evaluating the implementation of asynchronous, non-required Teletandem tasks. This chapter centers on the Learning Logs (LLs) and details the students' experience with this task. The narratives and case studies in Chapters 5 and 6 help answer how the Teletandem program's structure is reproduced in the partnering institution.

These findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 7, combining the implications of this study into a series of proposed changes that instructors and program supervisors can make in the administration and integration of Teletandem to better serve the students involved in the program and learning a world language. The final chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 8, summarizes the dissertation's objective and the plans for future research and practice.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is divided into three different parts. I will first introduce the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (hereafter, CALL) and the rapid changes it has been through in the past 25 years. Then, I dive into telecollaboration, discussing the diverse practices of connecting learners with other learners for language learning. Next, I examine Teletandem, discussing its origins, theoretical and pedagogical principles, and implementation into the language classroom. I finish the chapter unpacking the concepts that guided me in the continuous understanding of the research topic and shaped my doctoral investigation.

#### **From Language Pals to Immersive Experiences**

Historically, British-born CALL<sup>20</sup> has been the umbrella term most commonly used and widely spread throughout university settings and the one I will be using throughout this dissertation to refer to the use of technology to assist with language learning. Coined in the 1980s, CALL is loosely defined as any use of computers for language learning (for an overview, see Levy & Stockwell, 2013) and as the field to study the application of computers in language teaching and learning (Levy, 1997).

Since its emergence and with the rapid advances of technology, the CALL field has evolved vertically in the language curriculum, making it harder to identify and compare the

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<sup>20</sup> There are many other terminologies that account for different projects and pedagogies proposed and implemented across the globe. In this dissertation, I will use the term CALL to refer to the field of human-computer interaction research and to discuss the implementation of telecollaboration, a computer-mediated pedagogy, into the language classroom.



distinct types of CALL intervention (Chapelle, 2009). In an early attempt to categorize CALL research, Warschauer and Healey (1998) described CALL's development as having three chronological 'stages': Stage 1: 'Behavioristic,' Stage 2: 'Communicative,' and Stage 3: 'Integrative.'

The observation of CALL through 'general stages' was heavily criticized by Bax (2003). For the author, the stages proposed by Warschauer and Healey suggested chronological phases that did not necessarily account for the historical progression of CALL software, approach, and practice (Bax, 2003, p. 20). Bax's (2003) argument was that naming such 'stages' in relation to learning theories was considered ambiguous and confusing since one could not assume that only one type of theory of learning was being used by an entire generation (e.g., Behavioristic). Therefore, he proposed looking at the stages as distinct phases divided into three 'approaches' named Restricted CALL, Open CALL, and Integrated CALL (see Bax, 2003, p. 21 for a detailed outline).

In 2019, Dorothy Chun presented a third chronological view of CALL's evolution. In her table, Chun builds on the three stages previously elaborated by Warschauer and Healey (1998), reviews Bax's (2003) conceptualization of approaches, and proposes the return to the term *stages* with the inclusion of a fourth stage as observed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*The Stages of CALL*

Stage	1970s-1980s Structural CALL	1980s-1990s Communicative CALL	2000s Integrative CALL	2010s Ecological CALL
Technology	Mainframe	PCs	Multimedia and Internet	Mobile and wearable devices
English teaching paradigm	Grammar translation and audiolingual	Communicative language teaching	Content-based, English for Specific Purposes	Digital literacies, multiliteracies
View of language	Structural (a formal structural system)	Cognitive (a mentally constructed system)	Sociocognitive (developed in social interaction)	Symbolic and intercultural competence
Principal use of computers	Drill and practice	Communicative exercises	Authentic discourse	Global communication
Principal objective	Accuracy	Fluency	Agency	Identity as global citizens

*Note: Reprinted from Chun, 2019.*

In agreement with Bax (2003), Chun (2019) argues that it is impossible to account for all types of pedagogical interventions that have occurred throughout the years and observe them solely through stages. Still, the authors also ponder that the observation of CALL through stages helps account for the general evolution of the field. This information is relevant when discussing telecollaborative pedagogies because these programs may emerge from a theoretical perspective but evolve or regress during practice. This issue will be discussed further in the next session. Returning to Chun's (2019) framework in Table 1, we can visualize different stages of educational technology previously proposed abundantly in the field of language learning, from the structural use of grammar-translation and drill practices to communicative exercises using cassette tapes and CDs, to the use of online platforms and cellphone apps capable of much greater sophistication today.

To summarize this section, we can conclude that the different attempts to theorize CALL discussed here reveal that the development of computer-based resources has informed the

distinct approaches to teaching and learning using technology over the past several years. CALL technologies were also transformed by the arrival and constant upgrades to the *world wide web* and the accessibility of mobile technologies worldwide. We can thus agree that we now access the internet to present materials in many places of the world rather than using obsolete methods such as cassettes, DVDs, and CDs. Pedagogically speaking, we can also argue that each of these computer-based tasks can be implemented in myriad ways, following multiple perspectives.

### **CALL Theory into Practice: Tandem, e-tandem, or Telecollaboration?**

Although CALL has become more saliently used in language programs, it is still challenging to identify and compare types of intervention (O'Dowd 2021; Chapelle, 2009). In her seminal book *Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition*, Chapelle (2001) presents a detailed review of computer technology's contribution to the teaching and learning of second languages. Although her focus was on the use of technology to improve testing and learners' L2 communicative ability (p. 41), Chapelle reminds the field that no area of applied linguistics has remained unaffected by emerging technologies, recognizing the rapid expansion of computer applications in second language acquisition and the need to implement computer applications for language learning.

Recognizing the rapid expansion of computer applications and the diverse ways they have been used both within and outside the classroom context is an initial step to understanding some of the main differences between the early methods of face-to-face tandem, e-tandem, and telecollaboration, and predicting some of the expansions of telecollaboration in the applied linguistics field. Etymologically, the word tandem means *at length* in Latin, but it is more

commonly associated with the tandem bicycle definition of *sociable seating*. In the context of second language acquisition, tandem developed and adapted from the opportunities created for students to have authentic communication in the target language and collaborate with their peers learning (Cavalari, 2009; Little & Brammerts, 1996).

The practice of tandem learning<sup>21</sup> is predicted to have started in the 1960s and, in its earliest forms, was conducted face-to-face (White, 2012; Stickler & Lewis, 2008). Later, tandem learning projects such as letter writing began and were still around until the early 1990s (Brammerts, 2003). However, with the emergence of the internet, CALL projects expanded to e-tandem methods such as email exchanges (Little & Brammerts, 1996), synchronous chats (O'Rourke, 2005), and synchronous video conferencing (Chun, 2015; Telles, 2005). These innovations promote interaction between language learners and native speakers (O'Rourke, 2007, Klen-Alves & Tiraboschi, 2018).

The rapid growth of CALL is reflected in the considerable amount of research and diversity of tools we see in use today, two of the most prominent spheres being e-tandem and telecollaboration. In relation to e-tandem, O'Rourke (2007) identified it to have first been attempted in 1992 (p. 43). A seminal example of e-tandem, the LINGUA Project International Electronic Mail Tandem Network, was reported by Little and Brammerts (1996). Funded by the European Union in 1993-4, it resulted in a Guide to Language Learning in tandem via the internet. When reporting on the project, Little and Brammerts (1996) describe global partnerships that include overseas collaborators such as the Matsuyama University in Japan and

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<sup>21</sup> According to Vassallo and Telles (2006), “tandem was conceived in Germany towards the end of the sixties (Rosanelli, 1992; Baumann et al., 1999; Macaire, 2004); then it spread to other countries, first to Spain, where it was given its present form (Wolff, 1991a; Rosanelli, 1992; Herfurth, 1992: 204, 1994:46; Brammerts, 2002), it consists of regular sessions of collaborative bilingual work for didactic purposes” (pp. 84-85).

the University of Rhode Island in the USA. Nonetheless, the LINGUA project was mostly focused on European countries.

The literature suggests that email exchange experiences such as the one described above were the earliest successful usage of e-tandem (Kung, 2002; Müller-Hartmann, 2000) and had great pedagogical potential because they engaged learners in meaningful communicative interactions (see O'Dowd & Eberbach, 2004). Many of the earliest CALL e-tandem activities, such as the LINGUA project, were asynchronous. The tasks performed by learners were primarily written (e.g., email, chat), and those practices were not necessarily integrated into the language classroom or connected with institutions abroad. There is no doubt in the field that practices such as the one described above were an example of e-tandem. However, there is still doubt in the field about what is considered telecollaboration.

O'Dowd, a prolific writer in the CALL field, coined the term “online intercultural exchange” and later spread the use of “virtual exchange” as an umbrella term to divide two significant trends, e-tandem and telecollaboration, into two separate categories. The author argues that e-tandem has been chiefly informed by theories of second language acquisition, while telecollaboration is rooted in sociocultural approaches that foster interculturality in second language acquisition (O'Dowd, 2020, p. 5). Although valid, the attempt to fit pedagogies into a fixed form does not account for the evolution of some of these pedagogies (Chun, 2019; Bax, 2003). For example, Teletandem, which initially used chat communication, was positioned by O'Dowd (2020) as a form of e-tandem (O'Dowd, 2020; O'Dowd, 2021), but, as discussed by Cavalari (2014), Teletandem has evolved, and now uses several computer-based as well as digitally-mediated communication tools and contains sociocultural roots. Thus, it is considered a form of telecollaboration.

In this study, I argue that both terms, telecollaboration and virtual exchange, are valid and can be used, depending on the situation, interchangeably. Telecollaboration was popularized by Julie Belz in the 1990s. It is a sub-field of CALL, also known and discussed by O'Dowd as Virtual Exchange (VE) and Online Intercultural Exchange (OIE). The term telecollaboration has been widely used to describe the pedagogic practice of bringing together learners through the use of screens (tele) from a distance to collaborate (collaboration), working together at a distance to learn and improve their language skills (Belz, 2003). Telecollaborative programs vary in length, purpose, language, and tasks, but all employ some type of language learning technology to connect learners and introduce telecollaborative tasks (Hockly, 2016). Dooly and O'Dowd (2018) explain that the term describes:

...many different types of online exchange, ranging from loosely guided language practice of the target language (e.g., online conversations in text or oral chat) to elaborately designed project-based collaborative exchanges. (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018, p. 17)

In dialogue with Dooly and O'Dowd (2018), I agree that telecollaborative projects can have varied objectives, goals, and results. They can be classroom-independent, classroom-dependent, institution-integrated (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016), and rely on autonomous learning. Several of these methods continue to be primarily non-integrated to regular language courses, heavily focused on written exchanges, and primarily asynchronous (e.g., Belz and Thorne 2006; Tudini 2003). However, synchronous projects such as Teletandem, Cultura<sup>22</sup>, and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)<sup>23</sup>, among other well-established programs across the globe, are becoming more prominent.

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<sup>22</sup> Cultura is a US based program established in 1997. It is described as an intercultural project that connects groups of students online to help them understand each other's culture. To learn more: <https://cultura.mit.edu/>

<sup>23</sup> The COIL Center was established in 2004 and is part of the State University of New York Office of Global Affairs. It is described as a Collaborative Online International Learning method that connects students and professors in

Telecollaboration started out as an affordance of early computer technologies that may be considered obsolete in today's educational environment. Although it seems dated, telecollaboration is not inflexible and continues to be relevant in providing unique language learning opportunities. Taking as a fact that technology may change, the term can be easily transferred to current technology in use. For instance, when I collected the data for this dissertation, students used *Skype* for the oral sessions, and nowadays they use *Zoom* or *Google Hangouts*; however, the tele-collaborative practice continued to be based on the same goal of advancing their language learning.

Advances in technology available contribute to this goal and may reshape the activity, but the base of telecollaborative language learning continues to be the same, despite the emergence of recently established technologies such as VoIP communication (Skype, Zoom), social networks (Tik Tok, Whatsapp), and VR experiences. Therefore, although some scholars may refer to telecollaboration as Virtual Exchange (Aranha & Wigham, 2020) or Virtual Collaboration (Schulze & Krumm, 2017), and consider the term telecollaboration dated because the term “tele” was related to computer screens, in this study, I maintain the use of the term telecollaboration to discuss the type of online-based pedagogy that encourages the collaboration between two language learners to teach and learn with one another using computers. Along with CALL, which is being used to refer to the field of research in the use of computers for language learning, the term telecollaboration will be used to examine the focal program of this study: *Teletandem Brasil: Foreign languages for all* (Vassallo & Telles, 2006), the Brazilian-born model of synchronous telecollaboration evaluated in this dissertation.

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different countries for collaborative projects and discussions as part of their coursework. To learn more: <https://coil.suny.edu/>

## The Teletandem Program

In this subsection, I will introduce *Teletandem Brasil: Foreign languages for all* (Vassallo & Telles, 2006), the focal program of this dissertation. I will detail the three current Teletandem modalities followed by its foundational principles, and then highlight how it is tied together through the Teletandem implementation in my intervention setting: the inter-institutional collaboration between the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) campus São José do Rio Preto (hereafter, UNESP-SJRP) and the University of Georgia (UGA).

Teletandem emerged in the 2000s as a new context for the teaching and learning of foreign languages through computer-mediated tools (Telles, 2006). Telles and Vassallo's (2006) study represents the point from which Telles, the founder of Teletandem, transitioned from regular face-to-face student interactions to Teletandem, in which students first interacted via chat and then via a Voice-over IP (VoIP) computer application such as Skype or Zoom. Since it was originated, Teletandem ([www.Teletandembrasil.org](http://www.Teletandembrasil.org)) has been implemented at three different campuses of São Paulo State University and in three main English-Portuguese partner universities (UGA, Georgetown, and Arizona State University<sup>24</sup>) in the U.S. It has also been expanded to other universities in Germany, Italy, Colombia, Mexico, and Australia and included non-English languages that have adopted the Teletandem pedagogy. It is estimated that 8,500 students have participated in exchanges in at least six different languages (Portuguese, English, Spanish, Italian, German, and French) from 2006-to 2020 (Aranha & Cavalari, 2021; Aranha & Wigham, 2020).

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<sup>24</sup> Information retrieved from: <http://www.teletandembrasil.org/partner-institutions.html> last checked in December 2021.



At its inception, Teletandem (TTD) was not integrated into the language classroom (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014, Salomão, 2012). Currently it can be both integrated (iiTTD) (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014) and semi-integrated (siTTD) (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). According to Aranha and Cavalari (2014), in the non-integrated modality of Teletandem, learners registered as students in the institution can volunteer to participate in the interactions and are randomly paired with other participants. Different programs have distinct ways of recruiting participants. At its inception, the UNESP-SJRP program asked students to fill out a form so that they could match characteristics between themselves and their peers, but most frequently, they only promoted Teletandem to students attending regular language courses. Selected volunteers receive an email confirming their participation and scheduling the Orientation Session. After pairing, they participate in interactions where they teach and learn each other's language. At its inception, the practice could be interinstitutional, referring to a formal contract between two partnering institutions, but the students had total autonomy over when, where, and how they would meet and the duration of their experience. They were also responsible for defining and pursuing their learning goals (for more detail, see Telles & Vassallo, 2006).

In contrast, the integrated version of Teletandem (iiTTD) proposed by Aranha and Cavalari (2014) and reaffirmed by Cavalari and Aranha (2016) involves learners taking a required class in the language they are learning, and, as part of the class, participating in interactions with students from another university. When participating in iiTTD, learners collaborate on a series of structured tasks integrated into a course. However, the curriculum is not set in stone and there is not yet a web platform nor a management system that is used by the Teletandem program and its partners when implementing Teletandem. Therefore, learner autonomy varies since students might be graded on the assignments completed, have session

schedules planned out for them, and may have classroom goals set for them supplemental to the learning goals they set for themselves.

Cavalari and Aranha's (2016) rationale for initiating the iiTTD was that in the non-integrated format, interactions could happen more or less frequently depending on the pairs' arrangements, while in iiTTD, interactions consistently happen weekly during class time. Differently, when integrated, Teletandem provides consistency for instructors' and students' practices, and therefore helps with student retention (Aranha & Telles, 2011), which is essential in sustaining and increasing language program enrollments. The planned integration of Teletandem tasks can also support the learning of different language skills. For instance, during the synchronous oral sessions (OSs), students learning Portuguese in the US actively communicate in real-life situations with peers learning English in Brazil (Telles & Vassallo, 2006), increasing the time using the target language (Hasko et al., 2017), and engaging students in a community of practice.

Although iiTTD makes more sense in partnerships that involve students learning a language in regular classrooms, due to the high demand for iiTTD partnerships in the last few years and the limited number of regular language courses being offered in each language, the alternative is to organize partnerships using semi-integrated Teletandem (siTTD). Teletandem scholars argue that siTTD maintains the goals of developing participants' linguistic and cultural skills (Klen-Alves & Rampazzo, submitted; Aranha & Wigham, 2020), providing some structure to the partnership when full integration is impossible.

The nomenclature semi-integrated (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016) is used when “only one of the two partnering institutions integrates the Teletandem practice into the language curriculum.” (Klen-Alves & Rampazzo, submitted). The semi-integration is not an exclusive characteristic of

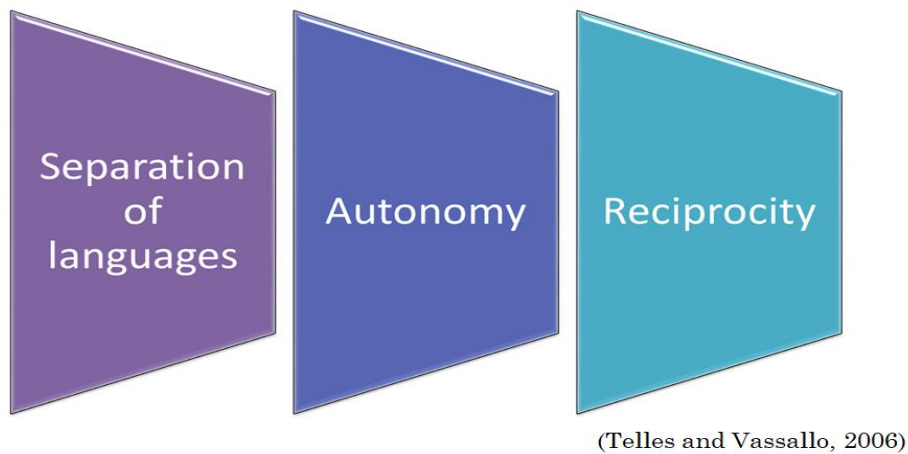
the partnership between UNESP and UGA; rather, semi-integration into a particular site can be necessitated by low enrollments or high language level disparities. When this happens, UNESP and the peer university call for student volunteers to join the project during the academic semester. The volunteers at UGA are students of other Portuguese classes, while those at UNESP-SJRP are undergraduate students or members of the university community.

When selected to participate in Teletandem, all students must follow a set of rules, including participating in the tutoring session, committing to attending all oral sessions, and performing iiTTD or siTTD tasks (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). Cavalari and Aranha (2016) argue that compared to TTD and siTTD, iiTTD improves participants' retention and commitment to participating in all the interactions. An earlier study from Aranha and Telles (2011) reported that, before the integration, two significant factors, asymmetrical relationship, and the lack of shared goals, were related to increased dropout of volunteer participants in both TTD and siTTD. The authors concluded that the volunteers had additional work and/or study responsibilities and consequently did not share a sense of commitment and responsibility with the project. On the other hand, the students required to participate did so as part of a class they were taking, having a grade/passing motivation to engage in the project (Aranha & Telles, 2011). In addition to joining one of the three modalities, when learners engage in the practice of Teletandem, they should observe three Teletandem principles: separation of languages, autonomy, and reciprocity (Vassallo & Telles, 2006).

**Figure 4**

*Teletandem Principles*

Teletandem Practice Relies on Three Principles:



Note. Reprinted from 2018 UGA3si Tutorial PowerPoint presentation

The Teletandem principles listed in Figure 4 still in use today were based on tandem learning (Little & Brammerts, 1996). The first, *separation of languages*, was not a standalone principle in its earliest conceptualization, but instead was embedded in the principle of reciprocity within the context of e-tandem (see Brammerts 1996, p. 11). Vassallo and Telles (2006) proposed this as the first principle of Teletandem, arguing for it to be considered a pillar on its own as it encouraged and challenged speakers to maintain the use of the target language for a period of time (Vassallo & Telles, 2006, p. 102).

Other authors publishing work in Teletandem also refer to this principle as *independence of languages* (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016), *bilingual use of the languages* (see Salomão, Silva & Daniel, 2009), and *equal use of languages* (Benedetti, 2010), contending that the separated use of

languages poses that the students speak two different languages from a position of equality (Benedetti, 2010; Salomão et al., 2009; Panichi, 2002). In alignment with Cavalari & Aranha (2016) above, Telles (2015) describes Teletandem as a program where there is no *Lingua Franca*. Therefore, the use of the languages in each interaction is divided equally, one half in one student's language, the other half in the other student's, with separated use of both languages<sup>25</sup>.

More recently, other considerations regarding the principle of separation of languages have come into play (Klen-Alves & Rampazzo, submitted; Picoli & Salomão, 2020). Picoli and Salomão (2020) problematize the term *separation of languages* and propose using the *principle of equality* as an alternative.

The debate on the nomenclature is open and relevant to the continued practice of Teletandem. Picoli and Salomão (2020) argue that the principle *of equality* better reflects the learners' effort to sustain the equal use of the languages. They also maintain that the current terminology (separation of languages) indicates a monolingual view of learners' communication. Indeed, scholars such as Lyster (2019) and Cenoz and Gorter (2020) criticize the tradition in second and foreign languages programs of teaching languages in isolation even when their purpose is the development of bilingual or multilingual competence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p. 1). The authors discuss how foreign language classrooms should be the exception to translanguaging, welcoming the way multilingual speakers already use the languages outside of the classroom.

Elsewhere, Klen-Alves and Rampazzo (submitted) revised the literature on the three Teletandem principles and defended that the term separation of languages refers to the equal amount of time dedicated to each language being learned. The authors argue that, when

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<sup>25</sup> From my observations of the implementation of the iiTTD and siTTD, if students start a session in one language, they start the next session in the other.

participating in Teletandem Oral Sessions, learners are expected to divide the time they have equally between the two languages. However, the use of languages will vary in practice because each student can use their unique linguistic repertoire to communicate with their peers. We have witnessed for instance L3 learners of Portuguese using their whole repertoire, including the knowledge of English and other languages such as Spanish, French, and Latin to communicate with their peers.

The second principle of Teletandem is *autonomy*. As explained before, Teletandem was based on the tandem's principles of autonomy and reciprocity (Brammerts, 1996). In tandem learning, observing autonomy means that participants "alone determine what they want to learn and when, and participants can only expect from their partner the support that they themselves have defined and asked for" (Brammerts, 1996, p. 11). Likewise, in Teletandem (TTD), students decide what, when, where, how to study, and for how long (Telles, 2006; Vassallo & Telles, 2006). Therefore, TDD reflected tandem learning, and the understanding of autonomy in Teletandem will depend on the practice being non-integrated, semi-integrated, or integrated into the language course.

In practice, autonomy is perceived as "a principle embedded into a guided independence" (Klen-Alves & Rampazzo, submitted). Students are expected to complete the given tasks, set goals for themselves, and monitor the achievement of those goals. The understanding that learners need training and support to participate in autonomous and reciprocal relationships (Klen-Alves & Rampazzo, submitted; Cavalari & Aranha, 2016; Brammerts, 1996) emerged from siTTD and iiTTD. These practices imply that planning and guidance are given to the students and include several tasks that may be required and graded (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). To that end, some of these tasks, such as tutorial sessions, explain what participating in

Teletandem entails before the sessions begin. Tasks implemented in siTTD and iiTTD, such as the initial questionnaire and learning logs, help learners identify goals, evaluate if they are working towards achieving them, and reflect on their language learning. Even with these tools, further research is needed to confirm that students understand they should take responsibility for their (and their peers') learning (Klen-Alves & Rampazzo, submitted).

The third, but not least important, principle in Teletandem's practice is *reciprocity*. In the Teletandem literature, the reciprocal learner's relationship should consist of mutual support, interdependence (Salomão et al., 2009), and equal commitment (Telles, 2015). Previously related to the equal division of time between the two languages (Salomão et al., 2009), reciprocity is more often seen as a commitment to take turns playing the role of tutor and learner as well as committing to their's and their peer's learning. (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016; Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). Klen-Alves and Rampazzo (submitted) argue that the principle of reciprocity is visible "when participants (i) alternate the roles of tutor and learners of languages, (ii) make decisions together, (iii) meet each other's needs, (iv) show affection and emotion to build a friendly, encouraging, and supportive climate, and (v) search for mutual interests and share intercultural information." (para). Therefore, reciprocity is the ideal symmetric relationship between learners occupying the same role as learners of a language and students in a classroom acting to support one another. In a scenario in which we are connecting learners from multiple worlds, reciprocity is a relevant concept in understanding the importance of bringing learners together as equal parties contributing to each other's language learning.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The history of CALL and its practices are well documented in the field of language learning (see Godwin-Jones, 2021; Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Levy, 1997; Warschauer, 1996). Thus, this chapter intended to provide an overview of CALL. Now that I have reviewed the conceptual framework that is the pillar of Teletandem, this section presents the concepts that guide this research.

First, this work recognizes that telecollaboration and virtual exchange are not a new phenomenon, but the refinement of how tasks are implemented is. Hence, one of the challenges that stands for applied linguistics that this work intends to contribute to is the understanding of how to best integrate telecollaboration into the language curriculum (O'Dowd, 2020).

Having established that Telecollaboration is defined as “the practice of engaging classes of geographically dispersed learners in online intercultural exchange using Internet communication tools for the development of language and/or intercultural competence” (Helm, 2015, p. 197) and also noting that telecollaborative tasks can be synchronous or asynchronous (or blended) with various models and instruments (Guth & Helm, 2010; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016), it is necessary to unpack some of the concepts that have guided me in the continuous understanding of the research topic and shaped my doctoral investigation.

Second, telecollaborative tasks have shifted towards learner-centered resources that recognize learner agency rather than focusing on following instructions (Davies, Dean, & Ball, 2013, p. 20). Recently, the multilingual nature of learner-to-learner interactions has also been recognized (Ortega, 2017; 2019), and, with that, rather than focusing on native-like fluency and correctness, multilingual awareness and meta-linguistic knowledge have become more critical goals of instructed Second Language Acquisition.



These current considerations also shed light on translanguaging (García & Li, 2014) and the focus on communication and mutual understanding. These concepts are central to the Teletandem practice because of its communicative approach to language learning and teaching. Teletandem's immersive context can address real linguistic demands and support the development of multiple language skills, including writing, listening, and speaking as well as meaningful “social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange” (Belz, 2003, p. 2).

Third, it is well established that implementing well-structured telecollaborative exchanges can provide learners with high-quality, student-centered experiences and revolutionize students' participation in language courses. However, “there is no single automatic “effect” of using online communication” (Ware & Warschauer, 2004, p. 243 ). There are numerous ways of implementing telecollaboration. The results may vary widely according to logistical, pedagogical, and social challenges that can undermine the proper integration of telecollaboration and its space into the language curriculum. Thus, any programs must be planned, evaluated, and revised. They must have clear objectives, desired outcomes, and tasks that can provide space for authentic language communication.

Fourth, a challenge to the implementation of telecollaborative exchanges is the access to technology, including the internet. If in the past the predictions were for a more interconnected and united world, today, we must consider the unequal spread of technology and search for equitable ways to support virtual education in low tech environments and access for people in locations with limited internet connections (Godwin-Jones, 2021; Joshi et al., 2019).

A significant number of resources may not be equitable for reciprocal partnerships between the countries that, for example, can be used with only one computer in the classroom, varying degrees of experience with CALL, and distinct linguistic levels between students. In the

past two decades, several scholars have reported on other challenges of telecollaboration (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018, O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). There is a plethora of studies being conducted in the Teletandem context (Cavalari, 2018; Aranha & Cavalari, 2015), assessment (Cavalari, 2019; O'Dowd, 2010), textual genres (Rampazzo & Aranha, 2019; Aranha, 2016; Bragagnollo, 2016), and more (for a detailed overview of current research in Teletandem see Rampazzo & Cunha, 2021). In addition to the research, scholars have discussed and published pedagogical considerations on the implementation of Telecollaboration. These reports include comments on differences in time zones and academic calendars, programmatic needs (i.e., students' and teachers' needs vs. partners/and institution's needs), and resources available (i.e., technologies available, internet speed, computer lab) and can be used to drive policy on equitable telecollaboration.

Having made these considerations, this work is informed by an interpretive approach to understanding learners' development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory allows me to examine the implementation of Teletandem as a complex and emergent developmental process in which individual and social cognition are interlinked and embedded in a particular sociocultural context and activity (Hasko et al., 2017, p. 9). Using this theoretical (and methodological approach discussed next), I analyze the implementation of the Teletandem tasks while considering the students' experience, the historicity of the context, and its potentialities.

In Chapter Three, I describe the multiple methods of data collection and analysis I used to evaluate the implementation of Teletandem. The chapter also includes my methodological framework and an overview of the research context and participants before we move on to answering the research questions.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) “transcends the dichotomy between theory and practice” (Cole & Engeström 2007, p. 484) and has been widely used as a methodological approach for studying complex activity systems. Generally speaking, scholars following Engeström’s legacy to conduct research interventions (Engeström & Sannino, 2010) have applied two methods of research design: *formative interventions* (Engeström, 2005) and *change laboratory* (Sannino, Engeström & Lahikainen, 2016).

Engeström (2014) proposes conducting formative interventions as research designs that centralize context analysis and observe the processes of reflexivity that occur in the study of social knowledge. That is, looking at the context, but going beyond the activity *itself*, to study it critically both as it occurs and when looking back (reflecting on) at what happened.

Sannino, Engeström, and Lemos (2016) explain formative interventions as collective activities based on a design done by the learners. These interventions are generative; they happen over an extended period of time and aim for expansive learning and transformative agency. In my study, the activity (participating in Teletandem) is collective; however, it was designed by UNESP and could be transformed by the participants' agency (or lack of agency) during the period in which they were participating in Teletandem (eight weeks), while enrolled in the intermediate Portuguese class at UGA or volunteering to participate in the program at

UNESP. Expansive learning and transformative agency can continue even after the intervention, when participants reflect about their experiences or reproduce them on their own.

Several scholars have applied both approaches to the study of a diverse range of activities. For example, Vetoshkina, Engeström, and Sannino (2017) discussed work activities and organizations' transformations by looking at the power of an activity's object. The authors explain that human beings have the power to skillfully shape and produce material objects that externalize (make real) our future-oriented imaginaries and visions. To illustrate this thought, they present a wooden boat-making situation. As they analyze the process of making the boat historically, they divide their analysis into four layers: history, community, culture, and objects. The authors conclude that by observing the different layers of an activity, one can reveal skilled performance and history-making in the agency of the activity's subjects.

Other scholars such as Cliff, Walji, Mogliacci, Morris, and Ivancheva (2020) used formative intervention to analyze interviews with senior higher education leaders. Their goal was to understand curriculum activities as "unbundling multi-dimensional systems of implicit and explicit cultural histories" (p.3). The authors used the activity system model to conceptualize the curriculum activity and avoid viewing sets of activities as deterministic or causally related to one another. By analyzing and presenting different excerpts from the participant interviews, Cliff et al. (2020) demonstrate the interconnectedness between macro, meso, and micro activities (e.g., administrators, instructors, and students' activities), highlighting a multiplicity of potentials and contradictions that make the curriculum a dynamic system that interacts with other contesting systems of activities (i.e., administrators, instructors, and students in favor of online, blended, or in-person learning).

On the other hand, the change laboratory method aims to engage participants and researchers in the codesigning of their systems (Sannino et al., 2016). To achieve that, the intervention expands from the collective to propose modifications in organizations and organizational work. Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja, and Poikela (1996) state that “[d]uring a change laboratory, researchers and practitioners, such as teachers, collaborate to improve practice.” (p. 55). In my research, I incorporate elements of change laboratory to understand the implementation of Teletandem *with* the participants instead of proposing an intervention or researching *on* them. Therefore, the codesign of this study is necessarily descriptive and deliberative (Spinuzzi, 2020, p. 12).

The combination of change laboratory and formative interventions guides me in understanding individual human praxis (students participating in Teletandem) as I analyze the implementation of the activity, its structure, and processes (Nussbaumer, 2012). To answer my first research question, which has to do with the Teletandem tasks implemented in both institutions, as well as my second one on how those tasks vary in terms of implementation and how they affect students’ engagement, I observed the Teletandem implementation and followed one of Spinuzzi’s (2020) approaches derived from Bødker and Engeström:

- Facilitate participants’ reflection on the current system (and its problems).

My involvement with the participants and constant engagement with them allowed for their experiences to inform the research (Ezzy, 2002, p. 64) and for their voices to emerge through the process of data collection and analysis. In addition to participating in class with the students for 18 weeks (about four months), I checked for their consensus on the study results twice: first during an evaluation session in November of 2018 and then in a reunion in February of 2021. During this time, I also collected artifacts that contained the participants’ reflections

and suggestions for change. At the end of the study, I provided a detailed account of the units of analysis (the implementation of iiTTD in the intermediate Portuguese course) and proposed an intervention in the activity by recommending changes instructors can make in the integration of Teletandem to serve the students involved in the program better.

## **Research Context**

From 2010 to 2020, it is estimated that more than 8,544 students took part in Teletandem (Aranha & Cavalari, 2021). Considering the vast amount of data generated during one semester of telecollaboration, not surprisingly, many current studies in the field involve the careful observation of individual TTD tasks. Yet, to my knowledge, research on how the integration of Teletandem tasks occurs in the partnering universities is still nonexistent.

To fill that gap, this study gives special attention to the way Teletandem was implemented at UGA in partnership with UNESP-SJRP. Taking into consideration that “[t]he research context must include sufficient information about the researcher’s perspective, the participants themselves, and the research process that the audience can assess the relevance, or transferability, of the findings to her or his own context” (Morrow, 2007, p. 219), in this section, I describe the contexts of the research, present the participants’ profiles, explain my positionality, the methods of data collection and analysis.

### *The University of Georgia context*

The University of Georgia is a public research university with its main campus in Athens, Georgia. The Portuguese program is part of the Romance Languages department under the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences. The program has an average of 12 courses per semester. It

comprises four faculty members<sup>26</sup>, several Masters and Doctoral students who work as instructors or teaching assistants (TAs) in the 1000-4000 level Portuguese courses, and two Fulbright Foreign Language Teacher Assistants who work as teaching assistants for the most populated courses.

PORT2002 is an intermediate Portuguese language course offered every semester. According to the program's webpage, the course entails a "content-based review of Portuguese grammar and systematic vocabulary and skill development. Integration of language, culture, and literature." (<http://www.bulletin.uga.edu/CoursesHome.aspx?cid=2700>). The PORT2002 course is worth three credit hours. At the time of this research the course met for 50 minutes three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11:00 to 11:50). Nowadays, the class happens on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 1h15 minutes each day. The duration of the semester continues to be 18 weeks.

The usual pathway for the PORT2002 course starts when students take two introductory Portuguese courses (PORT1001, PORT1002) and one intermediate-level Portuguese course (PORT2001). Thus, PORT2002 is the fourth Portuguese language course a student would take in the Portuguese curriculum. To register, students are required to have taken PORT2001, PORT2600 (accelerated Portuguese), or a placement test, which grants the department's permission to enroll in the course. One student participating in this study took the placement test, while four took PORT2001. Most majors at UGA require undergraduate students to take two to three language courses. Consequently, the number of students taking this class, at least in the Portuguese program context, is relatively small and varies from 5 to 12 students every semester.

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<sup>26</sup> In 2021, a Portuguese program full-time coordinator was hired; in 2018, when the research was conducted, one of the full-time professors was also the coordinator and listed until today as the contact point between UNESP-SJRP and UGA. Source: <http://www.teletandembrasil.org/partner-institutions.html>

Students enrolled in the fourth semester of Portuguese either have a genuine interest in learning the language, are completing a requirement, or majoring or minoring in Romance Languages.

The observation of the implementation of Teletandem happened in the Fall of 2018. The course in analysis started on August 13 and ended on December 4. Students were in the class with the instructor and myself for 50 minutes three times a week for one semester (15 weeks (about three and a half months). The implementation of iTTD lasted eight weeks from September 5 (Tutorial Session) to October 22 (last Oral session). As a TA, I attended all classes and met regularly with the instructor to discuss the course and content taught. Before the semester started, we revised the department's syllabus. Concurrently, UNESP created and shared a pedagogical calendar that included the meetings and the homework activities proposed for the seven oral sessions.

The PORT2002 course offers the perfect space for the longitudinal observation of how TTD tasks are integrated into the language classroom because it is the first contact students have with Teletandem. Moreover, I had previous experience supporting instructors teaching this course for six years, from 2012 to 2018<sup>27</sup>. Upon gaining permission from the instructor of record to become a teacher assistant for the course, I was able to access the course syllabi, schedules, and other documents to gain a bird's-eye view of Teletandem's implementation. In addition to being in class together, the instructor and I worked on other projects that same year and regularly met to discuss the course and the content being taught. The same close relationship was held with UNESP-SJRP. I frequently interacted with the sessions' mediators via email and WhatsApp.

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<sup>27</sup> My assistance happened in varied ways, mainly in the 2000-level courses because the 3010 courses had an instructor and a teacher assistant. In comparison, the 2002 courses only had one instructor and demanded more support since it was the course where students experienced Teletandem for the first time. As a volunteer, I helped troubleshoot and substituted students when they were absent.



During the siTTD oral sessions, which happened for seven consecutive Mondays, I communicated with them via WhatsApp to collaboratively troubleshoot by helping students get ready for the sessions (turn the computer on, log in, and other related needs) and substituting absentee learners.

### *São Paulo State University Context*

The São Paulo State University is a public research university in São Paulo state, Brazil. The UNESP-SJRP campus in São José do Rio Preto houses the Institute of Biosciences, Language Arts, and Exact Sciences (IBILCE). Professors Suzi Cavalari and Solange Aranha are professors in the Languages and Literatures and Translation Studies programs. They coordinate the campus' Teletandem Project that partners up with UGA. Only the English language courses, both in Languages and Literatures and Translation Studies, integrate the Teletandem practice. Teletandem is also offered in its siTTD as an extracurricular activity to volunteer students from other majors offered on the campus (Computer Science, Biology, Mathematics, among others). Every semester, 20 to 30 students participate in Teletandem at the UNESP-SJRP campus.

### **Research Participants**

Participants of this research were the ten students participating in iiTTD and siTTD in the Fall of 2018. Five were enrolled in the intermediate Portuguese class at the US university, and five were volunteers from different majors at the Brazilian university. See Table 2 for the students' profiles; all names are pseudonyms.

**Table 2***Participant' Profiles*<sup>28</sup>

PARTICIPANT PROFILES					
<b>Names<sup>29</sup> (University)</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Age (Gender)</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Hometown Size</b>	<b>Years of language instruction (reason to take the class)</b>
Hunter (UGA)	International Affairs	21 Male	European American	Island (est. 14,778)	Three semesters (elective)
Mateo (UGA)	Business	20 Male	Hispanic American	Mid-size suburb (est. 29,719)	Three semesters (elective)
Zoe (UGA)	Ph.D./Romance languages	35 F	European American	Large-size city (est. 515,439)	None (required by FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) fellowship)
Kathleen (UGA)	Spanish	21 Female	European American	Small-size town (est. 239)	Three semesters (ROML major)
Sebastian (UGA)	Arts	22 Male	European American	Large-size city (est. 515,439)	Three semesters <sup>30</sup> (elective)
Fabiana (UNESP)	Translation (English Language)	19 Female	White	Small rural city São Paulo State (est. 40,487)	Four years in public high school (student volunteer)
Mercedes (UNESP)	Math	30 Female	Not informed	Small rural city São Paulo State (est. 17,761)	Eight years in private language schools (student volunteer)
Vanessa (UNESP)	Translation (English Language)	22 Female	“Negra de Pele Clara” [Black with light-colored skin]	The largest city in South America (est. 44.04m)	Not informed (student volunteer)
Maria (UNESP)	Languages and Literatures (English)	21 Female	White	Small rural city in the Northeast (est. not informed)	Not informed (student volunteer)
Cida (UNESP)	Food engineering	22 Female	Not informed	Small rural city São Paulo State (est. 38,211)	Not informed (student volunteer)

<sup>28</sup> The information presented in this table was retrieved from the initial questionnaire and email communication with the students.

<sup>29</sup> Pseudonyms were used to ensure participant anonymity.

<sup>30</sup> Sebastian dropped the course before. It was his 4<sup>th</sup> semester of Portuguese.

As observed in Table 2, the UGA group was composed of two female and three male students. Zoe was a second-year Ph.D. student in Romance Languages. The other four students, Kathleen, Mateo, Hunter, and Sebastian, were undergraduates in diverse majors, including Romance Languages, Arts, International Affairs, and Business. These four students followed the 'regular' path to enroll in 2002 after taking three other Portuguese courses (PORT1001, PORT1002, PORT 2001). In contrast, Zoe took and passed the placement test. In the initial questionnaire, she listed English as her first language, French as the second, and Spanish as the third. Kathleen and Mateo reported speaking Spanish as their second language, and Sebastian reported Hebrew. Kathleen, Mateo, and Hunter were classmates in their previous Portuguese classes. Sebastian rejoined the program after dropping PORT2002 one year before (in the Fall of 2017), and Zoe joined the Portuguese program to fulfill the FLAS fellowship requirement<sup>31</sup>.

The UNESP group was composed of five female undergraduate students. Three of them majored in language-related fields (two in Translation Studies and one in Languages and Literatures equivalent to English and Language Arts). Two were from different fields, Mercedes from Mathematics and Cida from Food Engineering.

As for the demographic data, Zoe and Mercedes were in their thirties, and the other eight students were in their twenties. Most students were from small towns (Kathleen, Fabiana, Maria, Mercedes, and Cida), Sebastian and Vanessa were from larger cities, Mateo from a mid-sized county, and Hunter from an island. The participants selected in the US provided their own

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<sup>31</sup> Recipients of the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships are funded for an academic year or summer. They are expected to study a modern foreign language and are required to enroll in language classes. For more information: <https://lacs.uga.edu/funding-available-foreign-language-area-studies-fellowships-flas>

racial/ethnic group identity classifications: four of the US students identified as European American and one as Hispanic American. The Brazilian students did not report on their race. I sent them an email asking if they would answer that question, identifying themselves in terms of race. Two students (Fabiana and Maria) responded as “white,” and one, Vanessa, as “black with light-colored skin.” Two students (Mercedes and Cida) did not respond to my email. Although race is not the focus of the data analysis, I decided to share all information gathered about the students’ demographics.

When reporting on their educational background and language experience, all students reported receiving their education in public schools. Only Mercedes studied English outside of public school or college. She reported studying the language in a private language school for eight years before joining siTTD. In the US, Zoe reported no previous Portuguese experience, but did report a background in French and Spanish. Kathleen was majoring in Spanish, had experience studying abroad in Madrid, and reported having good fluency in Spanish. Mateo was raised bilingual (Spanish and English). Hunter participated in a seven-week study abroad in Brazil before taking the class, and Sebastian reported some familiarity with other languages (Hebrew and French) but did not report on his fluency.

### **Positionality Statement**

In this session, I aim to discuss my research positionality explaining the possible biases and benefits my personal and professional experience brought to this research. My participation in Teletandem and my perceptions of Teletandem practices might influence this research, but this experience also helps strengthen my overarching goal of understanding and continuously improving the Teletandem practice. As explained in the introduction, I had been engaged with

the UGA community long before the research started, participating as a volunteer TA in the implementation of iiTTD since 2012, observing the work of other TAs and students, and learning about the challenges they had as well as about the questions they had. Probst and Berenson (2014) posit: “[r]eflexivity is generally understood as [an] awareness of the influence the researcher has on what is being studied and, simultaneously, of how the research process affects the researcher. It is both a state of mind and a set of actions” (p. 814). By discussing the possibilities and limits of my investment in the Portuguese program and my interest in telecollaboration, I am reflecting on my identity as a Portuguese language teacher assistant, foreign language learner, and researcher, as well as carefully observing the ways through which these identities may impact my research.

As a TA of the course, I used the first month of class to get to know the students better and to develop an *insider relationship with research participants*. This approach helped me gain my research participants’ trust before the Teletandem project started. When discussing the consent form, I acknowledged my position as researcher and TA, reminding them that I was serving the role of an assistant to the instructor who officially assessed them, and participation in research would thus not affect their grades. I also reiterated that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could decide to end their participation at any time. By sharing my identity as a Ph.D. student, language teacher, and researcher with the potential research participants from day one, I wanted them to view me as a member of their community: a student, researcher, and teacher assistant that would spend the entire semester with them. By discussing my positionality, I possibly created empathy that helped me conduct the research and help students see themselves as co-constructors in the research process (Muhammad, Wallerstein, Sussman, Avila, Belone, & Duran, 2015).

As a critical qualitative researcher and English language learner, my biographical journey learning English as a foreign language in Brazil greatly influences my values, research questions, and the knowledge I want us to push forward. To put my identity as a language teacher and learner to work, I engage with my research data in multiple ways. For instance, in some moments, I asked colleagues to read and provide me feedback on my analysis. At other moments, I had peers coding the same data and comparing their coding to mine. I also engaged in reflexivity during the data analysis, trying to be attentive so that I could provide evidence of the participants' experiences for the arguments I made.

## **Research Procedures**

The data collected for this study is part of the Teletandem Project Partnership (Phase Two), approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Georgia. Students enrolled in PORT2002 or as volunteers at UNESP-SJRP were invited to participate in the research. Those that accepted signed consent forms to allow the data generated through their participation in Teletandem to be collected and used for research purposes. I scanned the consent forms and archived the scanned and original copies. Table 3 provides a detailed visualization of the case being studied and will be helpful as I explain the complex process of data collection of multiple data sources in the next section.

**Table 3***Overview of the Research Project*

Who were the participants?	Ten students participating in the Teletandem project
What data consisted of?	<p>Teletandem macrotasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 Synchronous Oral Sessions (OSs)</li><li>• 2 Mediation Sessions (MSs) (only at UNESP-SJRP)</li></ul> <p>Teletandem microtasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 Tutorial Session</li><li>• 1 pre and 1 post questionnaires</li><li>• Up to 7 Learning Logs (LLs) per student</li><li>• Up to 3 writing assignments per student</li></ul> <p>Additional data:</p> <p>Other classroom and Teletandem documents and research generated data such as the notes from the Evaluation Session and Teletandem Reunion</p>
When did the research happen?	<p>Data collection: Fall of 2018</p> <p>Teletandem tasks in class implementation: September 3 to October 22</p> <p>Evaluation Session: November 2018</p> <p>Teletandem Reunion: February 2021</p> <p>Data analysis: Fall 2018 to Fall 2021</p>
Where did the research happen?	<p>The US the classroom was used for regular classes and as the language lab</p> <p>In Brazil volunteers attended the session in the Teletandem Lab</p> <p>Skype was used for synchronous interactions</p> <p>Google Docs was used to submit writing assignments, receive, and provide feedback to peers</p> <p>The same folder was also used to complete the learning logs</p>

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection for this dissertation occurred from August to December of 2018 in the Fall PORT2002 classroom and in individual follow-ups with the students. As I collected and

analyzed data, I combined data collection methods already designed by the Teletandem program with additional two additional methods employed to facilitate participants' reflections (Spinuzzi, 2020) on their experience with the Teletandem project: an evaluation session in November of 2018 and a reunion in February of 2021. During the Teletandem Reunion and data analysis I conducted members' checks to confirm and expand on the findings. The data collection methods are detailed in Table 4. Research tools designed by the Teletandem program will include an \*.

**Table 4**

*Research Corpus*

<i>Type of document</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Classroom Generated Data</i>			
<i>1 Course Syllabus</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>Document analysis</i>	<i>The syllabus includes a course calendar with the dates for the oral sessions interactions and a description of Teletandem</i>
<i>1 Consent form for Teletandem Research</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>Archived</i>	<i>Ten signed copies of the two-page document that explained Teletandem and the research project</i>
<i>Email communication</i>	<i>August-December 2018</i>	<i>Archived</i>	<i>General communication with the Portuguese students and reminders to complete Teletandem tasks</i>
<i>Teletandem Generated Data</i>			



<i>*1 Teletandem Pedagogic Scenario</i>	<i>August-December 2018 (updated by Unesp)</i>	<i>Document analysis</i>	<i>Two-page Google document that was modified primarily by the UNESP-SJRP instructors Includes the planned tasks and a follow-up of the students' participation in Teletandem</i>
<i>*7 audio and video recordings of the Oral Sessions (OSs)</i>	<i>September 10, 17, 24 October 1, 8, 15, 22</i>	<i>Annotated analysis + unfinished verbatim transcripts</i>	<i>Thirty-five audio-and-video-recordings of the seven 50+ minutes of naturally occurring Teletandem sessions between the ten students (5 per institution)</i>
<i>*2 Mediation Sessions (MSs)</i>	<i>September 24 October 15</i>	<i>Used to discuss students' feedback about their experience</i>	<i>Notes on the MSs that happened at UNESP-SJRP. They did not happen in the US.</i>
<i>1 Recording of the Teletandem Orientation Session</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>Triangulated with the course documents to answer the research questions</i>	<i>An audio recording of a 20-minute session I listened to the recording twice and made notes</i>
<i>*1 PowerPoint presentation (the Teletandem Orientation Session)</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>Sent to the students after the session</i>	<i>15 slides</i>

<i>*1 Pre-questionnaire</i>	<i>August 2018</i>	<i>Triangulated with the Learning Logs (LLs) and Oral Sessions (OSs) to answer the research questions</i>	<i>Ten responses</i>
<i>*7 Learning Logs (LLs)</i>	<i>September and October 2018</i>	<i>Thematic analysis + Triangulated with the pre- and post-questionnaires and OSs responses</i>	<i>Post-session LLs produced by the ten students</i>
<i>3 Writing Assignments per student</i>	<i>September and October 2018</i>	<i>Archive</i>	<i>Themes in the US 1: Autobiography (1-2 pages about themselves prior to the first interaction) 2: Movie review (The forgotten boys of Brazil [Menino 23], the movie discusses Nazism in Brazil), and 3: Brazilian elections (read about the two candidates standing and discuss the elections)</i>
<i>*1 Post-questionnaire</i>	<i>October 2018</i>	<i>Triangulated with the Learning Logs (LLs) and Oral Sessions (OSs) to answer the research questions</i>	<i>Nine responses</i>
<i>Research Generated Data</i>			
<i>Field Notes</i>	<i>September 2018</i>	<i>Archive</i>	<i>I observed and took notes every time the instructor and the students talked about TTD. For example, after OSs 3, the instructor asked students how they</i>

			<i>were enjoying their experience.</i>
<i>Evaluation Session</i>	<i>November 2018</i>	<i>Triangulated with the other data to confirm the analysis</i>	<i>Post-Teletandem semi-structured group interview + Written evaluations of Teletandem</i>
<i>Photos</i>	<i>September and October 2018</i>	<i>Archive</i>	<i>Photos of the space of the interactions and of the students participating in Teletandem</i>
<i>Final exam Writing Assignment</i>	<i>Fall, 2018</i>	<i>Triangulated with the pre- and post-questionnaires, sessions, diaries, and evaluation to confirm the analysis</i>	<i>This classroom generated data was included in the research because 3 out of 5 US students choose to write about their experience with Teletandem in the final exam.</i>
<i>Members check</i>	<i>Springs, 2019, 2020</i>	<i>Archive</i>	<i>Students and colleagues familiar with Teletandem were invited to read and comment on the findings</i>
<i>Teletandem Reunion notes. Three Brazilian students (Fabiana, Vanessa, and Maria) and one North American student (Zoe) participated</i>	<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Triangulated with the other data to confirm the analysis</i>	<i>Students were invited to get together and talk about the experience</i>

As detailed in Table 4, the research data generated and used for this study includes two sets of questionnaire answers (pre-and post-experience), Learning Logs (LLs) entries, video-recordings of students Oral Sessions (OSs), and several documents. As I respond to the research questions, I will return to several pieces of classroom, Teletandem, and research-generated data.

### **Trustworthiness**

Producing a trustworthy account and interpreting the implementation of siTTD involved a great deal of reflection upon my own and my participants' existing experiences. That meant seeing my research as an ongoing conversation (Lather, 1993) with research participants, asking them about their experiences while collecting data and conducting data analysis. Considering that “understanding does not come only from individual researchers locking themselves away and reflecting on their data, the responses of others to our interpretations are a central part of the process of developing a trustworthy account.” (Ezzy, 2002, pp. 67-68).

To ensure validity and a trustworthy interpretation of the data, I followed several protocols, including selecting multiple data sources and conducting an evaluation session and a reunion with the participants, as well as several member check opportunities in the past three years. These interactions allowed me to understand the data further, reorganize themes, reflect on my positionality, and write more confidently about the research findings. Moreover, the analysis of multiple data sources allowed for triangulation and strengthening of the results reported (Maxwell & Miller, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

## Research Methods Limitations

My rationale for using Change Laboratory and Formative Intervention as methodologies derived from CHAT lies in their impact of bringing the participants' voices into the experience. At the same time that these methodologies see people "historically- and socially-situated" (Smagorinsky, 2021, p. 16), they also see them as agentic individuals who are transforming the activity while it happens (Vygotsky 1978, p. 61).

A limitation of this study is that in the Change Laboratory model, the participants would be involved in redesigning and reenacting the activity with the researcher. Then, they would "design and implement solutions that would become the next interaction of the design cycle" of the activity (Spinuzzi, 2020, p. 13). However, replicating the activity cycle is nearly impossible in this particular research context as:

1. Teletandem is not integrated into all courses, and every semester, students enrolled in a language program transit to other courses, graduate, or complete their language requirements.
2. I was no longer part of the Portuguese program and would not be able to implement Teletandem myself as an instructor. Therefore, as a researcher and Teacher Assistant, I could participate in the course, but I could not make decisions with the students or by myself.
3. The Teletandem activity and its tasks are designed and maintained by UNESP-SJRP; thus, changes to the design and implementation would have to involve more than the students as research participants and the overseas context. They would have to be discussed and agreed upon before implementing a redesign collaboratively.

Despite the limitations, using CHAT as the conceptual lens to investigate the implementation of Teletandem allows this researcher to observe how the participants are situated in the activity and transform as they are stimulated to think about new ways to externalize the Teletandem program (Vetoshkina et al., 2017). Moreover, by investigating a language course that has integrated Teletandem for the past eight years, this study reveals the history, community, cultures, and objects of the teletandem implementation overseas.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4 FINDINGS I: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TELETANDEM IN A US-BRAZIL PARTNERSHIP

To answer the first research question: What does Teletandem implementation look like before, during, and after the Teletandem experience?, this session details each step of the Teletandem implementation at UNESP-SJRP and UGA to offer an overview and comparison of what was planned in the official documents for each institution, as well as what was implemented in the Fall of 2018. I start by introducing each Teletandem task according to the literature, followed by the analysis of the inclusion of these tasks into the Portuguese language classroom and the steps followed during implementation.

The iiTTD and siTTD (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016; Aranha & Cavalari, 2014) versions of Teletandem at UNESP-SJRP include two macrotasks: *Teletandem oral sessions* (Hereafter, OSs) and *mediation sessions*, as well as several microtasks: *tutorial session*, *pre-and-post questionnaires*, *Teletandem learning logs (LLs)*, and *writing assignments* (Aranha & Wigham, 2020). Each of these Teletandem tasks was designed to support language learning in a structured way that supports collaboration and the observation of the Teletandem principles of separation of languages, autonomy, and reciprocity.

In relation to the macrotasks, the *OSs* are synchronous oral sessions that take place weekly for a period of seven to eight weeks. These sessions happen between peers from each institution during class time using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology such as

Skype, Google Hangouts, or Zoom. They are usually recorded by UNESP-SJRP for research purposes<sup>32</sup>. The other macrotask, *mediation sessions*, which were not implemented at UGA, are conversations between students and the UNESP mediators (instructors). These sessions aim to retrieve the information students shared in another Teletandem task (the LLs). The sessions happen two times during the semester and aim to unpack students' experiences.

Regarding the microtasks, the first implemented is the *tutorial session*, an orientation given to the students before they participate in Teletandem. A UNESP instructor holds the tutorial session on separate dates for the Brazilian students who participate in the session in person and the US students who participate in a virtual version during class time. The tutorial aims to familiarize students with the Teletandem principles, share the project's expectations, and answer students' questions.

At the end of the session, students are asked to complete another microtask, the *initial questionnaire*. The document contains seventeen questions divided into four parts. The first inquired about students' demographic information such as age, gender, and familiarity with Teletandem. It also asks students to self-report language proficiency in their first, second, and third languages. The second asks students where they are from (e.g., hometown) and where they completed their high school education (public or private schools). The third section asks if learners have had any previous experience with Teletandem; if the answer is positive, they state the duration of the experience and their opinion about it. The final section includes a picture of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an international standard for describing language ability, and asks them to list their English/Portuguese proficiency level in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. After self-rating themselves,

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<sup>32</sup> The data collected by UNESP-SJRP integrates the Multimodal Teletandem Corpus (MulTeC) (Aranha & Lopes, 2019). The data for this dissertation was gathered by me in collaboration with UNESP-SJRP.



students are asked to detail their foreign language learning record and state their learning goals by answering two questions: (i) *what do you need to know to go to the next level in the self-assessment grid?* (ii) *How can you learn what you need (or want) with the help of your Teletandem partner?* (Retrieved from UNESP's Initial Questionnaire, Fall 2018).

Upon starting the OSs, students are asked to reflect on their experiences by completing the third microtask entitled *Learning Logs* (LLs), also known as reflective diaries. Students can respond to the questions posed by UNESP-SJRP or deviate from them by writing freely. Their responses are recorded on Google Documents inside a shared Google Folder.

The fourth micro-task in Teletandem is the *Writing Assignments*. Students had three writing assignments during the semester. When integrated, students can write about the same topic: for example, in the Portuguese classes, the topics included an autobiography (1 page about themselves before the first interaction), a movie review (1 page about the movie *the forgotten boys of Brazil* [Menino 23] movie, which discusses Nazism in Brazil), and an evaluation of the Brazilian elections. When semi-integrated, students can choose from a list of topics proposed by UNESP-SJRP or write about something of interest to them. For example, some Brazilian students choose to mirror the US students' topics (introducing themselves, talking about the elections in Brazil). In contrast, others translated texts related to their majors or personal interests (fiction, pieces of news), discussed global themes (education, gun law), or wrote about their university campus. All students should read each other's Writing Assignments and provide their peers with feedback before the oral sessions. During the sessions, they can choose to discuss feedback or talk about other topics of their choice.

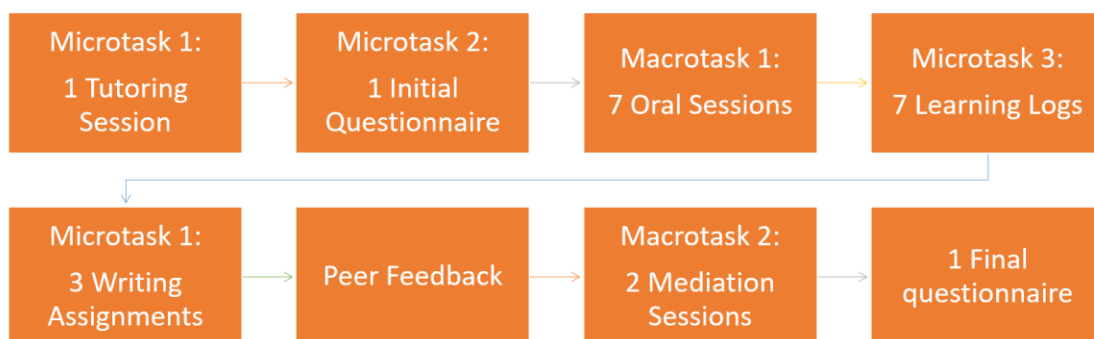
The final microtask is the *post questionnaire* which is shorter than the initial one and includes four questions instead of seventeen. The document asks students to look back at the

goals set when responding to the initial questionnaire to reflect whether they had met their goals. They are also asked to return to the CEFR self-assessment grid to make comments on (possible) changes to their proficiency levels. To provide a visual of the Teletandem tasks proposed and implemented by UNESP-SJRP in the Fall of 2018, I designed Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5**

*Teletandem Tasks at UNESP-SJRP*

### Reproduction of iTTD Tasks implemented at UNESP in the Fall of 2018



Note. Design based on Aranha & Wigham, 2020.

Figure 5 above displays the process of implementation of iTTD tasks at UNESP. As described before, UNESP implemented two macrotasks (OSs and Mediation Sessions) and five microtasks (the tutoring session, initial and final questionnaires, LLs, and Writing Assignments). The following section will detail the steps taken to implement Teletandem at UGA. I

reconstructed these steps in conversations with the Portuguese program coordinator and former course instructors that integrated Teletandem.

### **Teletandem Integrated into the Classroom at the University of Georgia**

1. The Portuguese Program at the University of Georgia started integrating Teletandem for two Portuguese courses, 2002 and 3010, in 2011. Teletandem is expected to happen every semester unless a mitigating circumstance arises, such as when the Spring semester of 2021 was canceled at UNESP-SJRP due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Portuguese Program coordinator collaborates via email with the UNESP-SJRP program coordinators during the pre-planning of the integration. For example, UGA predicts the number of students enrolled in the courses, while UNESP-SJRP analyzes how to better match these groups to UNESP-SJRP groups. Currently, UNESP-SJRP can decide to have the partnership integrated into two of their courses or semi-integrated (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016) when students at UNESP-SJRP or UGA are volunteers.
3. On the first day of class, all students receive the syllabus and are informed of the integration of Teletandem into the course. Participation in the oral sessions is compulsory. Students are also informed that they may volunteer to participate in Teletandem research (with authorization, as the data from Teletandem tasks is collected by UNESP-SJRP for research purposes).
4. The UGA class instructor receives the *pedagogical scenario* designed by UNESP-SJRP. The instructor includes information on UGA's side (e.g., students' names and emails, login information, proposed themes for the three writing assignments required). Professors from both sides can make suggestions about the proposed dates, times, tasks and

collaborate to make changes to the *pedagogical scenario*. They collaborate via email or WhatsApp throughout the semester. It is important to note that beyond the use of technology, which can be flexible and advance with the program and its needs, Teletandem integrated into the language classroom includes in its design a curriculum with specific synchronous and asynchronous activities that are common to all involved parties. These elements will be detailed in Figure 6 below.

5. Students participate in a *tutorial session* with a UNESP-SJRP mediator before they start the interactions (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). UNESP-SJRP provides two sessions, one for their students and one for UGA students. The session for UGA students may happen in English or Portuguese, depending on the decision made by the UGA group. The *tutorial session* lasts about 20 minutes and is followed by a Q&A session and the (optional) signing of the consent form to participate in Teletandem research. After the tutorial session, students are invited to complete the *pre-questionnaire* (not compulsory for UGA students).
6. When the OSs start, all students participate in Teletandem on the same dates/times. (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). The sessions happen during class time one time per week throughout the partnership's duration, usually lasting seven weeks. In both PORT 2002 and PORT 3010, the OSs last 50 minutes. As soon as the session ends, students leave the classroom in the PORT 2002 course. The PORT 3010 class is longer (1h15 minutes), so an oral session may be followed by 25 minutes of content teaching, a seldom conversation about the oral session, or early dismissal, with the professor being available to talk to students individually.

7. At UGA, the *OSs* are mediated by the instructor and sometimes assisted by one other graduate student (for example, a Foreign Language Teacher Assistant or volunteer) who comes to class on those dates to help troubleshoot or substitute absent students.
8. For all sessions, pairing is done randomly (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). At UGA, the *OSs* have traditionally taken place in different classrooms or laboratories, whereas the Portuguese program has more recently secured the same large computer lab and consistently used *Skype*. However, during the pandemic, students have met entirely virtually and used *Google Meet*.
9. In addition to the *OSs*, students complete three *Writing Assignments*, but the format and length of this task have varied widely. Previous experiences included exchanging two to three *Writing Assignments* or a combination between one text and one video project, but the format, size, and themes of this task are decided by the instructor (or supervisor) and related to the course level. The same happens at UNESP-SJRP; in the integrated version, the professor chooses topics related to their courses (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014) and may collaborate with the partnering institution professor to decide on themes. However, in the semi-integrated version, volunteer students choose to write about a topic of their interest or pick a topic from the "propostas de Texto" document. For Aranha and Cavalari (2014), the *Writing Assignment* topics serve as a "trigger" for the interactions and can be a good "warm-up" for students to discuss those topics. As part of participating in Teletandem, students are also expected to give and receive feedback on their peers' *Writing Assignments*.
10. Finally, the structure of the partnership follows a *pedagogic scenario* elaborated by UNESP-SJRP and illustrated in the next section. For the program coordinator at UGA,

the first and last interactions are always considered "free" (students can discuss topics of their interests), while the other oral sessions (2-6) are guided according to the theme of the task.

We can divide these ten steps of implementation into three phases:

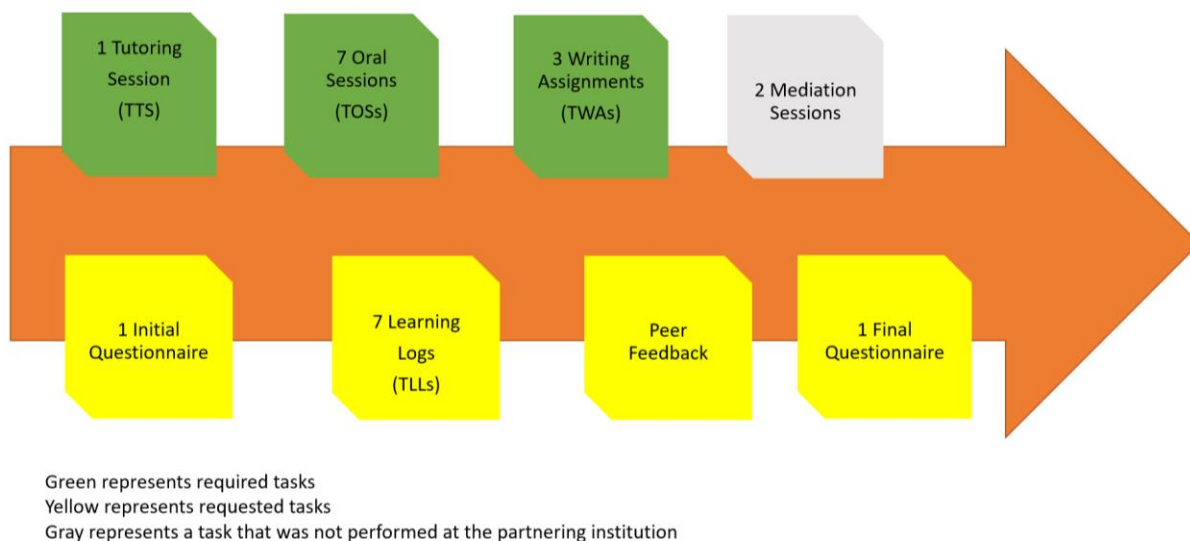
- preparation (planning and training);
- implementation (macro and microtasks execution throughout the semester);
- feedback (students and instructors' feedback and general comments about the sessions), which could be used if revised when preparing for the following semester.

Historically, UGA has only integrated three Teletandem tasks into the classroom: the tutorial session, the OSs, and Writing Assignments. Even though UGA students participate in the UNESP-SJRP tutorial and are guided by UNESP mediators to complete *all Teletandem tasks* (which are required on the UNESP side), they are told by their course instructors that the other Teletandem tasks (pre-and post-questionnaires, mediation sessions, and learning logs) are optional and used for research purposes only.

The conflicting instructions are observed in Figure 6 below. The tasks integrated into the Portuguese intermediate-level course in the Fall of 2018 are in green, while the requested tasks are presented in yellow. The mediation session, in gray, is not mentioned to the UGA students, but is required at UNESP, where students meet twice to discuss their experiences. The unbalanced requirements make it easier for UGA students to opt not to complete the non-integrated task while their Brazilian counterparts, volunteer or not, must take part in all of them.

**Figure 6**

*Teletandem Tasks at UGA*



Note. Design based on Aranha & Wigham, 2020

As observed above, the only tasks applied (with a grade attached to them) are the tutoring session, OSs, and the Writing Assignments. To analyze the integration of Teletandem into the intermediate-level Portuguese course, I worked with the Portuguese course instructor to reproduce UNESP's Teletandem project in the way the Brazilian university envisioned it. From day one, I emphasized the need for students to complete all Teletandem tasks and followed up with them to ensure successful completion of the non-integrated tasks (learning logs and questionnaires). However, students could opt not to complete those tasks since the course did not require them. Table 5 below displays each task and respective evaluative and formative feedback at UGA.

**Table 5**

*The Grades Assigned to each siTTD/iiTTD Tasks at UGA vs at UNESP*

Task	Evaluative feedback and grade	Formative feedback
7 OSs one tutorial session	Participation grade (up to 10% of the final grade)	Encouragement to attend all sessions and inform in advance in case of absence
Three Writing Assignments	10% of the final grade	Reminders of expectations and deadlines  Students were required to submit the final version to the instructor for the course grade
Pre-and-post questionnaires, learning logs, mediation sessions	N/A	Follow-up and encouragement by the researcher

As observed in above, the tasks integrated into the course at UGA affected students' evaluative and formative feedback and grades, while the non-integrated tasks did not affect their course completion. To evaluate the effects of the way Teletandem is implemented at UGA, in Chapter 4, I will focus on students' participation in the OSs, a required Teletandem task. Then, in Chapter 5, I will evaluate students' completion of the learning logs, a non-required task, and compare the results of both analyses.

### **Summary of Teletandem Implementation with the Partnering Institution**

Tying together the literature review on CALL, telecollaboration, and Teletandem discussed in this chapter, in this subsection I will summarize how Teletandem has been implemented in the partnership between UNESP-SJRP and UGA. I will present my conceptual



framework following this sub-section before discussing the qualitative methodological approach that guided this research process.

Cavalari and Aranha (2016) explain that iiTTD has been implemented every semester since 2011, the partnership with the University of Georgia started that year. Thus, since the beginning of the interinstitutional partnership between the two universities, iiTTD was the preferred modality, and when not possible, siTTD was implemented. The authors also argue that there are many positives in implementing these two modalities. First, it helps student retention; that is, learners tend to commit to starting Teletandem and continuing to participate until the semester ends. Second, these modalities encourage students to engage in the different tasks related to the Teletandem practice (e.g., tutorial, oral sessions, writing assignments, and learning logs). On this note, the integration or semi-integration becomes part of a hidden learning contract, i.e., by participating in the program, students commit to completing the tasks and helping each other learn the language. Third, Cavalari & Aranha (2016) perceive that these practices allow for better articulation of the three Teletandem principles on the students' part. In a continuous iiTTD or siTTD practice, students tend to develop autonomy, reciprocity, and language independence, which according to the authors, is not an easy task for language learners.

According to the literature, the implementation of iiTTD or siTTD lasts eight weeks as part of the regular language courses being taught. Teletandem's design includes two macrotasks, synchronous oral and mediation sessions, as well as several microtasks: pre-and post-course questionnaires, attendance to a tutorial session, writing a learning log after each interaction, writing texts in the language being learned, and having their work revised by their peer (Aranha & Wigham, 2020, p. 30). Consequently, if there is no standardized way of implementing iiTTD or siTTD, its practices will never be consistent with what is proposed by UNESP-SJRP.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5 FINDINGS II: STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN INTEGRATED TASKS

To address the second research question: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions?, in Chapter 5 I discuss students' participation in the oral sessions and completion of writing assignments, two tasks that were integrated into their language course. To achieve this goal I examine what happens when there is tension related to attendance of the oral sessions or completion of the writing assignments.

From the perspective of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), even when students participated in similar activities (i.e., participating in the Teletandem program with their peers), they engaged in multi-valued activities and, in each of these activities, they are surrounded by the different communities and rules, guided towards an object, and acting in the activity through the use of tools (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Like human activities, contradictions and tensions are not static; they are “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activities” (Engeström, 2001, p. 34), and they are continuously evolving, regressing, or expanding. In a recent publication, Nishio and Nakatsugawa (2020) analyzed contradictions in students' participation in a six-week-long telecollaborative exchange. They examined tensions that emerged and were negotiated by the participants to illustrate how these learners' understandings of 'successful' participation informed their actions and affected their overall experience. Based on Nishio and Nakatsugawa's (2020) study, in this chapter, I discuss the five pairs' attendance at the seven OSs that occurred in the fall of 2018 and analyze what happened

when students were absent. I then present a case study of one pair of students to illustrate how the pair navigated the consequences of missing an oral session.

### **Students' Participation in the OSs**

To discuss students' engagement in this task, I first summarize and discuss their attendance and participation. The integration of Teletandem into the language classroom makes attendance to the OSs required as part of regular attendance to class. This is stated in the course syllabus: "Attendance and punctuality are obligatory. The project will run for 7 weeks (about 1 and a half months), starting in September." and is explained during the tutoring session before the OSs start. During the tutoring session, which was recorded by me, the Teletandem program offered two alternatives to students if they must be absent: 1) they could reschedule the session outside of the classroom or 2) arrange a substitute to meet with their peers during class time. At the university level," [t]he decision to excuse an absence, allow makeup work, or reschedule or make up an exam is entirely at the discretion of each faculty member or instructor." (the University of Georgia, absence policy retrieved from: <http://bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/ind/attendance.html>). This directive and the integration of Teletandem into the language classroom encourage students' attendance and responsibility for autonomous make up for absences. There were four total absences during the seven weeks of meetings between the five dyads, which was equivalent to only 11.4% of the total attendances (31 out of 35) as observed in Table 6 below.

**Table 6***Attendance to the Oral Sessions*

Week		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Students								
1	Zoe <sup>33</sup>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Maria	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
2	Kathleen	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Fabiana	.	.	.	.	substituted	.	.
3	Mateo	.	.	.	.	rescheduled	.	.
	Cida	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	Hunter	.	.	.	.	.	substituted	.
	Vanessa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	Sebastian	.	.	.	absent	.	.	.
	Mercedes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Note. Adapted from the Learning Scenario created by UNESP-SJRP

As observed in the table, three out of the four absences occurred in the U.S. This finding shows that although the Brazilian students were volunteers participating in siTTD, their attendance was higher than their U.S. peers,' even though the U.S. students were participating in iiTTD and had a 10% grade attached to their general attendance to class, plus another 10% grade attached to their participation in Teletandem (information retrieved from the course syllabus). We can speculate here that Brazilian students took their attendance to the oral sessions more seriously. Still, in the U.S. context, one absence per student is a low number

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<sup>33</sup> US students are represented with the shading colors followed by their Brazilian peers.

compared to the number of attendances between the five students: Zoe and Kathleen were never absent, while Mateo, Hunter, and Sebastian, were absent once. Another finding is that there were two types of absences: absence with in-class substitution (Fabiana and Hunter) and absences with possible rescheduling (Mateo and Sebastian). Fabiana and Hunter had immediate in-class substitution, while Mateo and Sebastian were expected to have rescheduled their session with their peers. I will discuss the two scenarios below.

### **In-class Substitution**

From the four absences, Fabiana's and Hunter's had in-class substitution. The Brazilian student Fabiana followed Teletandem's protocol by 1) informing her peer Kathleen and instructors in advance of her absence and 2) finding a substitute who came to class and met with her peer. The US student, Hunter, did not show up to class. Once contacted by the instructors, he reported being sick. On that day, I, the course assistant, substituted for him so Vanessa would not be penalized by the unannounced absence of her Teletandem partner. From my observation and informal conversation with instructors in Brazil and the US, the in-class substitution can be a challenge if more than one student is absent in the same session and if there is no other student or teacher assistant that can substitute them. This was not the case in the data showcased, as the students were absent on different dates, and I would serve as the backup speaker for absentee learners. However, if students do not plan in-class substitutions or do not inform instructors about their absences, they are asked to reschedule the session.

## **Rescheduled Sessions**

The alternative for when in-class substitution is not possible is to schedule a make-up session. Two students, Mateo and Sebastian, were expected to reschedule their sessions with their peers, Cida and Mercedes. The analysis of the classroom documentation and OSs revealed that Mateo followed Teletandem's protocol by 1) informing his peer, Cida, and instructors in advance and 2) planning and scheduling a makeup session with her.

On the other hand, Sebastian (US peer) did not inform his instructors of his absence and later reported being sick. His Brazilian peer, Mercedes, planned to attend the session but left the language lab when informed that he was not present. I contacted Mateo and Sebastian in 2018 and their Brazilian peers Cida and Mercedes in 2019 and 2021 to check if they met outside of the classroom. Mateo and Cida confirmed meeting each other and Cida, while Sebastian and Mercedes did not respond to my inquiry. Even though it was part of the protocol to schedule a makeup session, there was no indication that Sebastian scheduled and attended a makeup session with Mercedes. Moreover, when I checked the LLs, students were supposed to complete after each session, I noticed that Cida and Mateo completed the log for the make-up session, confirming one more time that they attended the session and were following Teletandem protocols. In contrast, Mercedes and Sebastian did not complete the log for that session, reinforcing the conclusion that it never happened.

## **Discussion**

The data on absence discussed above offers three different scenarios with two instances of immediate in-class substitution, one instance of session rescheduling, and one absence without make-up. Two students followed the Teletandem protocol: Fabiana informed Kathleen

beforehand and scheduled an in-class substitution. Similarly, Mateo informed Cida in advance, scheduling a warning or make-up session. Two students, Hunter and Sebastian, failed to inform about their absences or take responsibility for them by finding a replacement or scheduling a makeup session.

Finding a substitute or scheduling makeup sessions are important alternatives that support the planning of telecollaboration, helping alleviate the pressure on the instructor(s) in the case of more than one absence on the same day and when the course does not have TAs. Anticipating absences would have helped instructors adjust the session accordingly. For instance, if informed in advance, they could have helped the students find a backup person to substitute them in class or advised the student to schedule the make-up session for the same week. Moreover, making students responsible for communicating their absences, arranging substitutions, or rescheduling is a way to shift some responsibility to the students and make them accountable for their actions, needs, and preferences (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Although makeups are a seldom necessary measure for when students have to be absent, they seem to be the best alternative to strengthening students' responsibility and responsiveness to the program and to their peers. In the next section, I share Mateo's and Cida's case study to illustrate the effectiveness of structuring the Teletandem tasks in ways that shift some of the responsibility to the students, encouraging them to be accountable for their actions.

### **Case Study 1: I am going to be Absent**

Mateo and Cida started in the Fall of 2018 with previous experience in Teletandem. Mateo, a bilingual speaker of Spanish and English, served as a volunteer in the previous

semester (Spring of 2018), and Cida reported having participated in Teletandem before.

However, she did not remember when and for how long.

Mateo started the semester with a positive impression of his previous experience: “I thought the Teletandem project was amazing. It immersed me in the language and made me feel comfortable with speaking Portuguese with a native speaker who is also learning another language.” As observed in excerpt 1 below, Mateo’s goals for the semester included developing his fluency and grammatical knowledge:

I would like to expand my vocabulary so that the dialogue in my conversations isn't so repetitive and I am able to express myself more clearly. I would also like to have a full comprehension of verb conjugations in the different tenses, especially future and past tenses so that I do not confuse others when I speak and I can express my ideas in the appropriate context. (**Excerpt 1**, Mateo’s response to the initial questionnaire)

Cida’s goal was to become more confident speaking, develop fluency, listening-and-speaking skills, and to increase her vocabulary:

Com a ajuda de meu parceiro, eu pretendo perder o medo de falar em inglês com outra pessoa e treinar a capacidade de ouvir, pensar e responder em inglês, no menor tempo possível. Pretendo aumentar meu vocabulário, principalmente com expressões utilizadas por nativos e que não são vistas em livros de ensino. [With the help of my partner, I intend to lose my fear of speaking in English with another person and train my ability to listen, think and respond in English in the shortest possible time. I intend to increase my vocabulary, especially with expressions used by natives and that are not seen in textbooks.] (**Excerpt 2**, Cida's response to the initial questionnaire, translated).



Cida's previous experience with Teletandem was also positive. She explains that:

O Teletandem me ajudou a ver o meu nível de inglês e a me fazer querer melhorar, pois na época eu possuía apenas o conhecimento oferecido nas escolas (ensino fundamental e médio), que é insuficiente. O Teletandem me motivou a querer estudar, pois vi o quão ruim é você querer se comunicar com alguém e ter todos os meios para isso, mas a língua ser um empecilho. A oportunidade de conhecer alguém com uma cultura diferente e poder desenvolver o inglês é excelente. [Teletandem helped me to see my level of English and made me want to improve, because at the time, I only had the knowledge offered in schools (primary and secondary education), which is insufficient. Teletandem motivated me to want to study, as I saw how bad it is for you to want to communicate with someone and have all the means to do so, but the language is an obstacle. The opportunity to meet someone with a different culture and be able to develop their English is excellent]. (**Excerpt 3**, Cida's response to the initial questionnaire, translated).

From OSs 1 to 3, Cida and Mateo got along quite well. They followed the pedagogic calendar, reading each other's first Writing Assignments, providing written and oral feedback, and discussing the texts during OSs 1 and 2. In every session, they talked about themselves, taking turns asking questions and learning new words in foreign languages. For example, when speaking Portuguese, Cida helped Mateo differentiate between words in Spanish and Portuguese (e.g., OS 2, he used "a cá" to refer to "aquí," "here" in Portuguese). Even though Mateo was more talkative, they took turns and split the time of the interaction between the two languages.

The tension analyzed happened during OS 4. The students start the session in English, talking about the weather and their weather preferences. Mateo asks Cida which language they should start with, and she mentions that her second Writing Assignment feedback was due that

day. Mateo apologizes by saying he did have the time to correct everything and promises he will do it after class. He clarifies that he read her entire text and liked it, but made a few corrections.

The first 24 minutes of the interaction were taken by Mateo reading Cida's text and providing her with feedback. As Mateo read the text aloud, he explained the grammatical issues and tried to share real-life examples and alternative ways to present her ideas. For instance, he proposed the substitution of the word "through" to "at" when saying, "I can spend a lot of time looking at their photos and videos" (Cida's second Writing Assignment). Figure 7 below is a screenshot of Cida's Writing Assignment 2. It provides an illustration of Mateo's feedback and corrections of Cida's work.

**Figure 7**

*Cida's Second Writing Assignment*



When they switched languages (min. 24:14), Cida asked if Mateo wanted to leave the remaining feedback on the text for the following week so they could talk about other things he

wanted to talk about in Portuguese. At this moment, the conflict emerges when Mateo remembers he cannot meet Cida on the following Monday.

#### **Conflict emergence: Excerpt 4, session 4, Cida and Mateo**

123. Mateo: Sim, pode ser, eu vou  
terminar todas as correções hoje, depois, na  
segunda-feira que vem. *AH!* Acho que não  
sei se vou.. (*hesitation*) poder.. (*hesitation*)  
falar com você na segunda porque, porque  
eu vou (*nervous laugh after noticing her*  
*face*), eu vou pra Orlando.

124. Cida: Aahhh.

125. Mateo: Para onde está (sic) Disney e  
tudo isso

126. Cida: Uhum.

127. Mateo: Na (sic)// \*no fim de semana  
que vem. Acho que Vamos tá viajando que  
de vol// \*de volta?! (*Making signs with the*  
*hands to explain the returning movement*).  
Não sei como dizer, é assim?

123. Mateo: Yes, it works, I will finish all  
corrections today, then, next Monday. *A.H.!*  
I guess I don't know if .. (*hesitation*) I'm  
going to be able to .. (*hesitation*) talk to you  
on Monday because, because am I going  
(*nervous laugh after noticing her face*), I'm  
going to Orlando.

124. Cida: Aahhh.

125. Mateo: Where Disney and all that is

126. Cida: Mhmm

127. Mateo: In// the next weekend. I think  
we're going to be traveling back?! (*Making*  
*signs with the hands to explain the returning*  
*movement*). I don't know how to say it, is it  
like this?

128. Cida: É, viajando, voltando, vocês estariam voltando

129. Mateo: Sim, vamos voltar na (sic) casa a (sic) segunda.

130. Cida: Ah. (*sounding disappointed*)

131. Mateo: Então não sei se vou poder falar, acho que talvez que sim. (*reading her face*), mas se não pode ser, podemos, uh, falar na terceira (sic)? Ou se não eh no domingo?

132. Cida: Então., eu não sei, por que não teria que ver com o pessoal da faculdade?

133. Mateo: Uhum

134. Cida: É, porque esse Skype é deles, né? Da Unesp Rio Preto. Aí não sei como lidar, como//

128. Cida: Yeah, traveling, coming back, you would be returning.

129. Mateo: Yes, we are returning to the (sic) house on (sic) Monday.

130. Cida: Ah. (*sounding disappointed*)

131. Mateo: So, I don't know if I'll be able to speak, I think maybe I will. (*reading her face*), but if it can't be, can we, uh, talk on Tuesday (sic)? Or, if not, on Sunday?

132. Cida: So, I don't know, wouldn't we have to check this with the people in the college [referring to the Teletandem program]?

133. Mateo: Mhmm

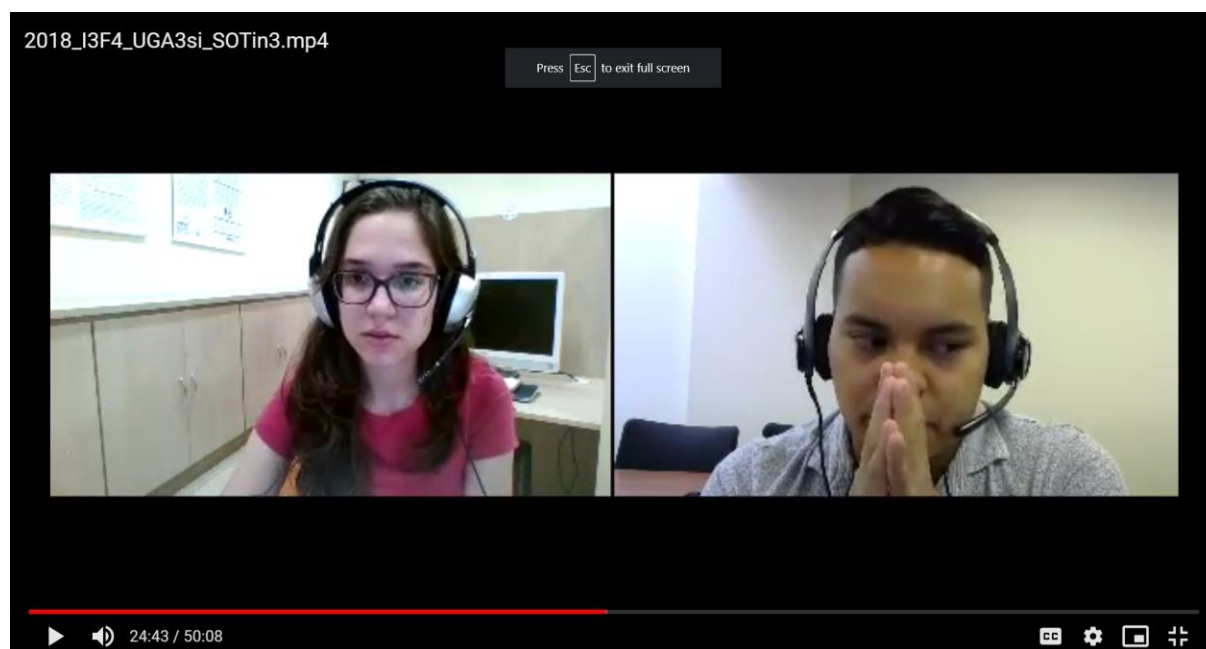
134. Cida: Yeah, because this Skype is theirs, right? From Unesp Rio Preto. Then, I don't know how to deal, how//

In excerpt 4, above, we note that during OS 4 Mateo remembered he would be absent on the following Monday. Although he knew for a fact he would be driving back from Orlando with

his family, by observing his peer's reaction to the news (see picture below), he made it sound like a hypothesis at first (lines 123 to 131).

## Figure 8

*The moment in which Mateo shares the news that he will have to be absent*



The analysis of Mateo's verbal and nonverbal actions is relevant here because even when speech is foregrounded, image, gesture, and body posture represent meaning (Bourne & Jewitt, 2003, p. 71). The picture above illustrates the moment when Mateo shares the news, hesitation is observed in his eyes, and the movement he makes putting his hands together in front of his mouth, covering his face when explaining his absence, makes what he is saying appear more serious.

The disappointment in Cida's response is evident in the tone of her voice and her straight posture as she faces her peer. Asking Mateo if they did not have to check with the university (lines

132 and 134) was an effective reaction, which led to holding her peer accountable for being in class. Although not prompted by the Teletandem staff, Cida's reaction can reflect the student's internalization of the program's rule of committing to attending all oral sessions. The conversation continued:

**Excerpt 5, oral session 4, Cida and Mateo**

135. Mateo: \*Sim. Deixa-me, eu vou, eu vou falar com minha professora sobre isso depois podemos estar comunicando porque eu não vou estar aqui

136. Cida: Uhmm. Okay.

137. Mateo: mas acho que, porque eu, eu já, já fiz o Teletandem o semestre passado.

138. Cida: Uhmm.

139. Mateo: Havia na uh..., uma vez, eu, eu não estive para o, para o Teletandem então eu e minha companhei// \*eu e minha parceira tivemos que reschedule?

140. Cida: Remarcar

141. Mateo: Remarcar

135. Mateo: \*Yes. Let me, I will, I will talk to my teacher about this, later we can be communicating because I will not be here

136. Cida: Mhmm. Okay.

137. Mateo: but I think that, because I, I already did Teletandem last semester.

138. Cida: Mhmm.

139. Mateo: There was at uh ..., once, I, I didn't go to, for Teletandem so, my partner and I // did it, my partner and I had to.. reschedule?

140. Cida: remarcar (reschedule in Portuguese)

142. Cida: Remarcar outro encontro

143. Mateo: sim, outro tempo para falar.

Então eu vou falar com ela (the TA) e  
vamos estar comunicando.

144. Cida: Okay. (OS 4 – Mateo and  
Cida)

141. Mateo: remarcar (reschedule in  
Portuguese)

142. Cida: Reschedule another meeting

143. Mateo: yes, another time to speak. So,  
I will talk to her (the TA), and we will be  
communicating.

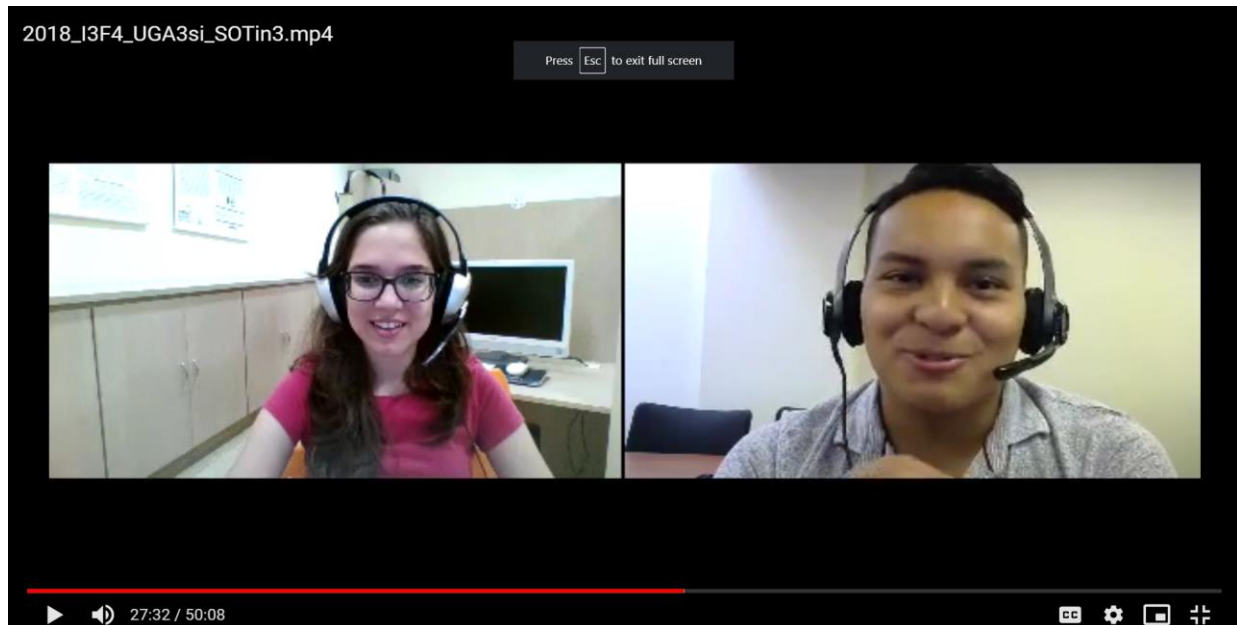
144. Cida: Okay.]

Noticing Cida's reaction to his news and the suggestion of meeting on Tuesday or Sunday prompted Mateo to explain the situation in more detail to his peer (lines 135-143). In doing this, Mateo conveyed in more precise language that he would not be able to attend the class. Being more precise in his communication by saying, “porque eu não vou estar aqui” [because I will not be here] (line 135) helped clarify that he needed to be absent, but had the intention to make up for it “sim, outro tempo para falar. Então eu vou falar com ela (the instructor) e vamos estar comunicando” [yes, another time to speak. So, I will talk to her (the instructor), and we will be communicating] (line 143).

When he told Cida he had done Teletandem before and that he was absent, but had scheduled a makeup session with his former peer (lines 137 to 142) it helped with the conflict resolution as it assured Cida that there was a viable plan B. Cida's conformation was noticeable in the change in her facial expressions and posture observed in the image below.

**Figure 9**

Cida's Acceptance of Mateo's absence



In Figure 9, Cida was smiling and sitting in a more relaxed way. Conflict resolution is explained in CHAT as a primary source of change and expansive development (Batiibwe, 2019). In this interaction, I argue that although the contradiction presented by Mateo's need to be absent generated disturbance and a conflict, Cida's responses motivated a change in the activity. After she understood that her peer needed to be absent (lines 136, 138, and 144), Cida continued the conversation in Portuguese, asking Mateo if he was going to Disney World and wanting to learn more details about his trip.

As we can notice in Figure 9, Mateo's facial expression also changes; he looks relieved after he is able to communicate his absence more clearly to his peer, assuring her that he will talk to the course TA and communicate more with her later. Hence, by bringing the conflict up and



negotiating with his peer Mateo was able to resolve the conflict by proposing a possible change in the activity.

### **Conceptualization of the Program's Rules and Teletandem's Principles**

As observed above, during OS 4 Mateo remembered to inform Cida that he would be absent in the following session (OS 5). Upon his return to their next session together (OS 6), they use the first four minutes to schedule their makeup session. During planning, they followed the Teletandem principles of separation of language, reciprocity, and autonomy. They started the session by deciding which language to use, and during the duration of the program balanced the use of the two languages by starting each session with one of the languages and switching to the other halfway through.

Mateo and Cida observed reciprocity by demonstrating a commitment to each other and to the Teletandem program by meeting for seven weeks. Considering that a bike cannot work without the two tires, a student cannot speak if the other is absent, so making up for a missed session is being responsive to the program and considerate to the peer's learning. Moreover, if they did not meet one time outside of the classroom, one of them would not have been able to receive peer feedback on one of the writing assignments, resulting in the penalization of one of the peers for the other's absence.

Finally, autonomy was observed when the students reorganized their plans for OS 5 make-up during their interaction in OS 6, making the decision to change what was planned in the pedagogic calendar to what, based on the absence constraint, made sense for them: instead of discussing the third Writing Assignment produced by Cida and using OS 6 to provide her with feedback, they decided to discuss Mateo's second writing assignment, which was due on OS 5,

when Mateo was absent. Autonomy was also visible as they considered the different time zones and calendar availability and ensured they had each other's contact information, ensuring they had everything they needed to meet that week. By the end of the exchange, Mateo could repair the tension that emerged during OS 4 and continued to have a positive relationship with his peer who reported in the final questionnaire:

Não tenho reclamações do meu parceiro. Ele foi pontual nas sessões e na correção dos meus textos e quando não pode comparecer à sessão, fizemos uma reposição em casa. Muito atencioso para me explicar minhas dúvidas e erros em inglês, além de falar português muito bem. É uma pessoa que serve como inspiração, pois além de muito jovem, fala 3 línguas: inglês, português e espanhol. [I have no complaints about my partner. He was punctual in the sessions and in correcting my texts and when he couldn't attend the session, we had a makeup session from home. He was very attentive, explained my doubts and mistakes in English, besides speaking Portuguese very well. He is a person who serves as an inspiration, as, in addition to being very young, he speaks 3 languages: English, Portuguese and Spanish.] (**Excerpt 6**, final questionnaire, translated)

In addition to witnessing Cida having a positive Teletandem experience, when we return to Mateo's initial goals of expanding his "vocabulary," so his dialogue was not "too repetitive," "express himself clearly," in addition to "improving his grammar skills." (Mateo's response to the initial questionnaire), we can argue that he has achieved several of his goals in his negotiation with Cida. Considering that speaking the language goes beyond learning the code, the interaction between Mateo and Cida during OS 4 helped him achieve his goal by gaining pragmatic knowledge of Portuguese. If we return to their dialogue, at first, the way Mateo breaks the news to Cida saying "Acho que não sei se vou..*(hesitation)* poder... *(hesitation)* falar com você na

segunda porque, porque eu vou (*nervous laugh after noticing her face*), eu vou pra Orlando.” (line 123) is hesitant, yet is very straightforward. The emergence of the negotiation situation was also an opportunity for Mateo to use the target language to negotiate the make up-session and learn the word “remarcar” (reschedule).

If we focus on what is being learned in terms of language learning and pragmatics, the use of words without consideration of the pragmatics can be uncomfortable (unnatural sounding). For example, when Mateo says “porque eu não vou estar aqui” [because I will not be here]. Initially, Mateo’s tone disappoints and surprises Cida, but when she realizes he is going to be absent and that the only alternative is to meet outside of class, she moves on. Although direct, the language used by Mateo was not considered impolite or improper, but rather pragmatically different from the way Brazilians may approach being absent. English speakers tend to be more direct than Brazilian speakers, who may apologize more. By noticing his peer's body language and thinking about his language, Mateo changes his tone to sound more apologetic and proposes a solution reassuring his peer he would be responsible for remediating the situation.

Finally, although the change that emerged (Mateo’s need to be absent) disrupted their interaction for a few minutes and generated tension (the need to schedule a makeup session, check with the instructors, plan the makeup session time and agenda according to their availability and needs), when the situation emerged, Mateo was able to use the L2 to navigate aspects of the target language and culture he would be unlikely to touch on in a regular language classroom.

## Implications

The goal of this chapter was to address the second research question: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions? I answered this by discussing how the Oral Sessions were reproduced as an integrated task. To achieve this objective, I first discussed the students' attendance at the OSs, analyzing the moments when there was a change in the student participation in the activity. I then presented a case study to illustrate how students negotiated the emergence of the need to be absent and how this tension negotiation reflected their conceptualizations of the program's rules related to attendance, and participation as well as their observation of Teletandem principles.

By analyzing students' engagement through attendance and the tensions that emerged when they were absent, I learned that releasing the responsibility to the students (Fisher & Frey, 2014) can be enough to foster autonomous problem-solving skills and motivate them to communicate absences and negotiate them with their peers. This was observed in Fabiana's and Mateo's actions, as she ensured her friend would be meeting with Kathleen, while Mateo explained to Cida the reason for his absence and was responsive to his peer's need by scheduling a make-up session.

Based on these findings, I argue that because students communicate with their peers weekly and synchronically, the integrated model of Teletandem encourages commitment and accountability. This is also evident in subsequent oral sessions, as students made sure to check with their peers. For instance, Fabiana and Hunter asked Kathleen and Vanessa how the session with the substitute went, Mateo negotiated with Cida what they were doing during the next session and during the make-up, and Sebastian had to take responsibility for his absence, apologized, and offered to make it up to Mercedes even though he tried to dodge her question

about his uninformed absence during the oral session. Although the make-up session never happened, at the time of the OS, the student seemed aware of his responsibilities in the partnership.

The analysis of all peers' participation in the OSs reveals that integration encourages agency and fosters autonomy because it allows students to be responsible for justifying their absences, working together, finding solutions, and offering alternatives. To solve problems, they encounter during the semester. This was evident in their engagement with both the OSs and the Writing Assignments. When they attended the oral sessions, they arrived on time and if they did not submit their Writing Assignments a day before the sessions, they would not be able to count on their peer-written feedback, consequently spending more time during the oral session for the peer to read the text and provide them with feedback so that they could turn the final version of the text into their Portuguese instructor.

Another conclusion drawn from this analysis is that the Teletandem protocols currently in place effectively mitigate the issues of having students absent. If we return to Table 6 there were more attendances (89.6%) than absences (11.4%). Based on my observations and on the students' feedback, I argue that they understood the rules of participating in Teletandem integrated into the course curriculum and viewed as positive the integration of the OSs in their course. This was confirmed by the high accountability, which indicates a willingness to participate in the OSs and, most importantly, a general sense of respect for their peers who would end up alone if they were absent and did not communicate it in advance.

This sentiment is exemplified in Mateo's response to my question about attendance during the mediation session; he explained: “the manner in which we could learn from each other was useful, and the comfort in speaking to my partner because there was dedicated class

time was appreciated.” (Mateo, evaluation session). Thus, the integration of the OSs and writing assignments and the use of Teletandem's protocols with the release of the responsibility to the students to find a substitute or schedule a make session were sufficient to ensure students' engagement and participation in these two tasks. The next chapter delves into students' completion of a non-integrated task, the LLs, to evaluate how this task was implemented, and discuss the lessons learned from the experience.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6 STUDENTS' COMPLETION OF NON-INTEGRATED TASKS

To understand how the implementation of the Teletandem tasks occurred, the last chapter addressed participation in the oral sessions and completion of writing assignments. One of the observed features of students' high engagement in those tasks was the demonstrated commitment to theirs and their peers' learning. In sum, the students rarely missed an oral session, and when they did, they apologized when they again met. A similar behavior was observed in their completion of the Writing Assignments, since only Mercedes did not submit her final text. Considering that the OSs and the Writing Assignments were integrated synchronous tasks, Chapter 6 continues addressing RQ 2: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions?, as it investigates the students' completion of another Teletandem task, the Learning Logs (LLs), which was a non-integrated asynchronous task. The goal of the analysis was to investigate how students participated in this asynchronous activity. To achieve this objective, I first review the literature on LLs, and later discuss their design within the Teletandem context, and finally report on how the task was implemented.

#### **What are Learning Logs?**

Learning logs are a type of dialogic journal that helps the learner develop a sense of direction while simultaneously helping the teacher evaluate the student's progress and articulate what is being learned (Shrum & Glisan, 2016, p. 264-265). Peyton (1993) describes LLs as

written conversations in which the students communicate individually with the teacher. In his description, the logs become a dialogic space for the learner to record their reflections on their learning and report on their experience.

In the field of language teaching and learning, LLs are also a medium for students to practice the target language, consequently increasing the amount of language produced by them (Shrum & Glisan, 2016). Nonetheless, Shrum and Glisan (2016) point out that the objective and outcome of LLs should be different from, for example, the one of composition writing (p. 265). The difference lies in the fact that when completing this task, students can respond to posed questions, describe what happened in the classroom, list new vocabulary learned, or reflect on their experience without being required to use the target language or be penalized for linguistic mistakes. Therefore, LLs have a use aside from offering opportunities for language acquisition. They can provide learners participating in experiences such as telecollaboration with a chance to reflect on their language learning and the benefits of learning through virtual exchange (Whyte, 2011).

### **The Benefits of LLs According to the Teletandem Literature**

Researchers on Teletandem also describe LLs as learning diaries or reflective diaries, having considered them a necessary reflective task in the Teletandem practice for over a decade (Rampazzo, 2021; Cavalari & Aranha, 2019). Although necessary, even in the integrated version of Teletandem (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016; Aranha & Cavalari, 2014), the LLs are not implemented as a macrotask like oral and mediation sessions; rather, they are a microtask that is asynchronously implemented during the integration (Aranha & Wigham, 2020).



Cavalari and Aranha (2016) postulated that the teachers who read and integrate LLs into their courses can have “an insider perspective of the learning that occurs (or not) during the oral sessions” (p. 574). This statement highlights using what students wrote to understand what is happening during the oral sessions. In the iiTTD version of Teletandem, this would be achieved during the mediation sessions. Moreover, in the Teletandem literature, LLs are a tool for the instructors to (a) be aware of the difficulties students face at linguistic, cultural, and interpersonal levels; (b) establish pedagogical procedures to approach recurrent topics in class; and (c) suggest individual consultation as the professor responds to each of the diaries each week (Cavalari & Aranha, 2019, p. 563).

Instructors who ask students to complete the logs could read them to 1) be aware of students’ linguistic, cultural, and interpersonal difficulties, 2) bring these topics to class in group mediation sessions, or 3) consult with the students on an individual basis in response to their logs (Cavalari & Aranha, 2019), while learners could use LLs as a reflective piece to think about their linguistic and cultural learning (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016). As a self-assessment, the task can promote reflection and become a space for them to describe the lived experience (Cavalari & Del Monte, 2021) of participating in Teletandem.

### **TLLs in the Teletandem Design**

Regarding the use of LLs in the Teletandem curriculum design, Cavalari and Del Monte (2021) describe a connection between log writing and learner autonomy. In their proposition, LLs are perceived as a task that is intentionally integrated into the course design to support students' learning (Cavalari & Del Monte, 2021; Aranha & Wigham, 2020; Cavalari & Aranha, 2019). Besides reading the logs to gain an insider's perspective of what happens (or not) during

the sessions as earlier proposed by Cavalari and Aranha (2016), the instructor or tutor responsible for the group that integrates Teletandem proposes, monitors, and assesses students' usage of the logs. This assessment is then used to evaluate the process of participating in Teletandem while the participation happens (Cavalari & Del Monte, 2021). To the extent of my knowledge, there is only one example in the Teletandem literature that highlights this expectation. Cavalari and Aranha (2019) observed how an instructor integrates the LLs into the course as an instrument to collect topics to be addressed during mediation sessions that happened in the classroom. In their study, learners were “given [the] professor's feedback before the following [oral] session.” (Cavalari & Aranha, 2019, p. 562).

### **The implementation of LLs in the Portuguese Program at UGA**

As a result of the integration of Teletandem into the language classroom, all students participating in the partnership between UGA and UNESP-SJRP attend a tutoring session organized by UNESP-SJRP before they start interacting with their peers. During the session, the students from both universities receive instructions on how to participate in the oral sessions and complete the LLs task, ideally, immediately after the sessions by reflecting on their experience through freewriting or by answering the questions created by the Teletandem program. For this study, the course instructor and I encouraged students to complete all Teletandem tasks, including the LLs, even though they were not listed in the syllabus.

When it comes to the LLs structure, in the fall of 2018, the task was composed of four questions written in Portuguese. Following the Teletandem protocol, immediately after the tutoring session, I created folders in Google Docs for each of the five UGA students. I then inserted the document with the LLs questions into each folder. While the UGA program usually

replicates the questions exactly as proposed by UNESP, I included a translation to English and added a fifth question about what the participant learned about their own country through interaction with their Teletandem partner. I made these two changes because 1) I wanted to ensure understanding and comfort using either of the two languages to complete the logs, and 2) I was interested in gauging reflections on intercultural competence gains. The addition was also inspired by the class instructor's proposition during the orientation session:

As our class is only 50 minutes, right? It is important to take the time for interactions. Then, the learning log you can fill in during the session or at the very end of the session... The only observation I was going to make is that in addition to reflecting on your partner's country, unexpectedly, through your partner's eyes, you learn something about your own country, right? About the United States and this, I think, fits well with the Teletandem spirit. (**Excerpt 7**, Course Instructor, 2018, my translation)

At the time of the addition, I did not think about sharing question five with UNESP-SJRP, and I did not want to interfere with how they conducted the task. Making changes to how UNESP-SJRP implemented Teletandem was not my interest since my primary aim in this dissertation was to study the integration of Teletandem as proposed by them. Nonetheless, as a qualitative researcher based on a critical collaborative epistemology, I am not *invisible* in the research context; on the contrary, I am part of the activity. Therefore, I included the new question and constantly encouraged the students to complete the LLs throughout the semester, following up when needed. The questions shared with the students are demonstrated in Table 7 below.

**Table 7***LLs Questions Used by Research Participants*

Questions prepared by UNESP and given to the Brazilian students:	Questions translated for the U.S. students + additional question:
1) O que eu aprendi hoje em inglês (palavras, frases inteiras...)?	1. What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)? 1. O que eu aprendi hoje em português (palavras, frases inteiras)?
2) O que eu aprendi hoje sobre o país do meu parceiro?	2. What did I learn today about my partner's country: people, music, etc.? 2. O que eu aprendi hoje sobre o país do meu parceiro: as pessoas, a música, etc.?
3) Minhas expressões preferidas e que vou me lembrar com certeza são...	3. My favorite expressions which I will remember with certainty are: 3. Minhas expressões preferidas das quais vou me lembrar com certeza:
4) Alguns erros que não vou mais cometer da próxima vez.	4. Mistakes I will not make next time are: 4. Erros que não vou mais cometer da próxima vez:
	5. What have I learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner? 5. O que eu aprendi sobre meu próprio país e/ou cultura através da interação com meu parceiro?

As observed above, the questions posed to the Brazilian students were in Portuguese, while the U.S. students received the questions both in Portuguese and English. Per the tutorial instructions, the students could choose either language to respond to the LLs. Interestingly, during the observed period, Brazilian students tended to respond to the questions in English even though the questions were posed in Portuguese. In contrast, U.S. students tend to use English instead of Portuguese in this course level. In the next section, I will present a breakdown of how the students of this specific group in the intermediate Portuguese course in 2018 responded to the

logs. The analysis is divided into three parts: promptness, language chosen, and quality of response. Table 8 displays the general completion of the LLs.

**Table 8**

*Students' Completion of the LLs*

Pairs	Teletandem Learning Logs Completion							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Vanessa</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	7 out of 7
<b>Hunter</b>	yes	invalid	invalid	invalid	yes	absent	invalid	2 out of 6
<b>Mercedes</b>	yes	yes	yes	absent <sup>34</sup>	yes	no	no	4 out of 6
<b>Sebastian</b>	yes	no	yes	absent	no	no	no	2 out of 6
<b>Fabiana</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes	6 out of 7
<b>Kathleen</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	7 out of 7
<b>Cida</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	7 out of 7
<b>Mateo</b>	yes	invalid	yes	invalid	invalid	invalid	yes	3 out of 7
<b>Maria</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	6 out of 7
<b>Zoe</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	7 out of 7

As observed in Table 8, in Brazil, Vanessa and Cida completed all seven LLs, Fabiana and Maria completed six, and Mercedes four. Looking at each case more carefully we learn that the only reason Fabiana did not complete seven logs was that she was absent from one session and that Mercedes only missed two logs because one of her sessions did not happen. Therefore, Vanessa, Fabiana, and Cida did not miss any LLs, Maria missed one, and Mercedes two. In the U.S., the situation is slightly different. Fabiana's partner, Kathleen's and Maria's partner, Zoe

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<sup>34</sup> Mercedes left the language lab when she learned Sebastian was absent.

completed all seven logs, Vanessa's partner, Hunter completed six, Cida's peer, Mateo's seven, and Mercedes' peer, Sebastian two. However, Mateo only had three, and Sebastian and Hunter had two valid responses each<sup>35</sup>.

The analysis revealed that the five Brazilian students had a higher completion rate compared to their U.S. peers and that students' behaviors were recurrent in terms of engagement and promptness to complete the task. That is, the five students (Vanessa, Cida, Fabiana, Kathleen, and Zoe) who always completed their log shortly after class, were consistent about it. On the other hand, three students were sometimes late (Mercedes, Maria, and Mateo), and two (Hunter and Sebastian) were late multiple times.

The results also indicated that LLs completion started to decline for Hunter, Sebastian, and Mateo right after the first oral session. Even though the students were encouraged to complete the task weekly and ask questions if they had trouble with the LLs and Google Drive, they never reached out to the course instructor or to me. From the five U.S. students, only Zoe asked for help using Google Drive. Therefore, these results suggest that the learners who did not complete the LLs made a conscious decision not to reach out for help. Since they needed to respond to the LLs on their own time outside of the classroom, we can imply that students who did not complete the logs did so intentionally.

Regarding language choice, even though students are not required to write in any specific language, using the language they are learning can be a way to practice the target language (Whyte, 2011). When I observed the language chosen by the students, I confirmed that Brazilian students tended to write in the target language (English). In contrast, U.S. students in the

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<sup>35</sup> The quality of students' responses will be discussed later in this chapter.

intermediate level Portuguese course wrote in their first language. As described in Table 9, the languages used varied in this group. English is marked in blue, Portuguese in yellow, and absences in gray. Invalid and not completed (nc) responses are also counted in the table.

**Table 9**

*Language Use*

Pairs	Language Used to Respond to the Learning Logs							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
<b>Vanessa</b>	English	English	English	English	English	English	English	7
<b>Hunter</b>	Port	invalid	invalid	invalid	Port	absent	invalid	2
<b>Mercedes</b>	English	English	English	absent	English	nc	nc	4
<b>Sebastian</b>	English	nc	English	nc	absent	nc	nc	2
<b>Fabiana</b>	English	English	English	English	absent	English	English	6
<b>Kathleen</b>	Port	English	Port	English	English	English	English	7
<b>Cida</b>	English	English	English	English	English	English	English	7
<b>Mateo</b>	English	invalid	English	invalid	invalid	English	invalid	3
<b>Maria</b>	English	English	English	English	English	English	English	7
<b>Zoe</b>	Port	Port	Port	Port	Port	Port	Port	7

The five Brazilian students used English to respond to their logs. In contrast, in the U.S., only one student, Zoe, consistently used the target language (Portuguese) to respond to her LLs.

Hunter, Sebastian, Mateo, and Kathleen used English, although the three male students would quote words in Portuguese, and Kathleen used Portuguese in two of her LLs.

When asked why she only used Portuguese two times, Kathleen responded that it happened when she had more time to write and proofread. Indeed, her logs in Portuguese have no grammatical errors. Differently, Zoe reported that she only used Portuguese “because she wanted to practice using the language and was not afraid of using Portuguese” Naturally, there were many spelling and grammatical errors in Zoe's logs, but it did not impact the understanding of her writing. Thus, while both Zoe and Kathleen completed all LLs, for Zoe, the ungraded nature of the assignment was an incentive to also complete it in Portuguese, which could be the opposite for Kathleen since she wanted to make sure she turned in her most polished work.

Looking back at the students’ demographics, Zoe is an older doctoral student fluent in French and Spanish. She is studying Portuguese for the first time and has a language requirement through her FLAS fellowship, therefore having several reasons to be engaged in her language learning. When asked, the student explained that writing in Portuguese was an opportunity to ensure additional practice. Another reason Zoe completed all Teletandem tasks, including the seven LLs, was because she sympathized with a fellow graduate student conducting research. Concerning the male students, when triangulating this data with their responses to the initial questionnaire and my observations, I noted that Mateo and Sebastian had participated in Teletandem before<sup>36</sup> and knew about the LLs. The fact that it was neither required nor graded could be the disincentive that kept them from completing the task. Moreover, Sebastian, Hunter, and sometimes Zoe, did not use a Portuguese keyboard to write their responses, and as a result,

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<sup>36</sup> Mateo was a volunteer in the previous semester (Spring of 2018) because the Port2002 class had fewer students than the Brazilian counterpart. Sebastian enrolled in the Port2002 before, but dropped the class and later returned to complete it.



accent marks are not present. This indicates how they considered the task to be low stakes, as they all knew how to use the keyboard and knew that in some assignments, they would lose points for not doing it.

Regarding these learners' profiles, Mateo was proficient in another Romance language (Spanish) and had sufficient Portuguese knowledge to respond to the LLs in the target language. However, he chose English because it was faster and more convenient. Sebastian only completed two out of the seven logs, which indicates his lack of interest in completing the non-required task. Moreover, his responses are compatible with his lower proficiency level, characterized by the use of isolated words followed by their English translation. Hunter used Portuguese, but his responses were terse, indicating that the student did not spend much time responding to the logs. The quality of their responses will be discussed next.

### **The Quality of Students' Response**

To help evaluate students' engagement in the LLs, I read the logs several times and established criteria for what constitutes a *good*, *poor*, or *invalid* response. *Good* responses were rated as *complete*. They showed students' engagement in the LLs as they included either a description, a list, or a reflection. In contrast, *poor* responses were incomplete sentences and isolated words, while *invalid* entries were related to instances in which students did not do anything. Tardy responses were also rated as *invalid* because, in the sample assessed, all late responses were generic or nonsensical. When students did not complete the LLs, I rated them as not completed.

**Table 10** *Rating Criteria*

<i>Rating Criteria used to evaluate the LLs</i>	
<i>Complete</i>	Following the literature review, a good response included a description, a list, or a reflection.
<i>Poor</i>	Did not include a description, a list, or a reflection. Consisted of isolated words, incomplete sentences, or responses to half of the questions.
<i>Invalid</i>	Late, generic, or nonsensical.
<i>Not Completed (nc)</i>	Did not complete the LLs.

To illustrate the rating criteria, if a student responded to #5 “What have I learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner?” or any other question with a “no,” the response was considered *invalid*. If they responded to the same question saying “Até agora, eu não tenho aprendido nada nova sobre eu o mesmo [So far, I haven't learned anything new about myself],” the response was considered *poor* because it did not include a description, a list, or reflection.

On the other hand, if a learner responded to the question by saying “Many people in Brazil love going to Disney, but few of them may know that there are two different Disney parks in the US. I was explaining to my partner that there is Disney World in Florida and Disneyland in California.” or “Eu aprendi que o que acontece nos Estados Unidos afecta muito o que pasa dentro de outros países, como o Brasil. Bolsonaro se formou por o modelo de Trump, según Maria, e se inspirou muito em a sua campanha. [I learned that what happens in the United States greatly affects what happens in other countries, such as Brazil. Bolsonaro was formed by

Trump's model, according to Maria, and was greatly inspired by his campaign], the responses were considered *complete* because they (1) described what happened in the classroom, (2) listed new vocabulary learned, or (3) reflected on the language learning and experience.

Following Teletandem guidelines and the literature reviewed, I focused on the parameters above and triangulated the self-reported responses to the peer's responses and to what happened during the oral sessions. I did not consider linguistic mistakes or language used when coding students' responses. Table 11 below summarizes the quality of students' responses.

**Table 11**

*The Quality of Students' Responses*

Pairs	Logs quality						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Vanessa</b>	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete
<b>Hunter</b>	complete	poor	poor	invalid	invalid	absent	invalid
<b>Mercedes</b>	complete	complete	complete	absent	complete	not completed	not completed
<b>Sebastian</b>	poor	not completed	poor	not completed	absent	not completed	not completed
<b>Fabiana</b>	complete	complete	complete	complete	absent	complete	complete
<b>Kathleen</b>	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete
<b>Cida</b>	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete
<b>Mateo</b>	complete	invalid	complete	not completed	not completed	invalid	complete
<b>Maria</b>	complete	complete	complete	complete	not completed	complete	complete
<b>Zoe</b>	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete	complete

As observed above, all Brazilian students', except for Mercedes (-3) and Maria (-1) had all LLs *complete*, when responding to the LLs all Brazilian students either (1) answered the questions posed (2) described what happened in the classroom (3) listed new vocabulary learned, or (4) reflected on their language learning and experience. The same was true in the U.S. for Kathleen and Zoe.

On the other hand, in the U.S., one of Hunter's LLs was considered complete, two poor, and three invalid. Mateo had three completed LLs, two invalid and two incomplete. In the case of Sebastian, the only two logs he wrote were complete. In the next section, I present a detailed analysis of Hunter's and Sebastian's engagement in the task. I then briefly compare their engagement with the other students. I conclude the section with general remarks on all the students' completion of LLs, as well as recommendations for the task redesign and integration into the course curricula.

### **Case Study Two: I Did Not Learn Anything**

Hunter started the semester with no previous experience with Teletandem, while Vanessa reported having a six-week experience prior to the Fall of 2018. He was an International Affairs major taking his fourth Portuguese class. In addition to taking 9 hours of Portuguese, in the summer of 2018, he participated in the UGA/ISA Intensive Summer Study Abroad program in Florianópolis, Brazil. The seven-week long program had the equivalent of 140 hours of instruction. I was the visiting program coordinator participating in all program's related activities with Hunter. Vanessa was majoring in Translation at UNESP-SJRP, therefore English courses were required.

From the six LLs responded to by Hunter, one was rated complete, two poor, and three invalid. This included an instance in which the student copied the answers from LL 1 to 5 verbatim and several rushed responses that varied from short, incomplete answers to isolated words. In Excerpt 8 below, in his first LL the student responds to #1 What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)? With “Hoje eu aprendi mais um pouco sobre assentos (sic) e a melhora (sic) maneira para formar sentenças (sic) em português.” [Today I learned a little more about seats (sic – the intended word “accentuation”) and the best way to form sentences in Portuguese.] Hunter’s response is generic, as it does not (1) answer the question posed (2) describe what happened in the classroom (3) list new vocabulary learned, or (4) reflect on his language learning and experience. For instance, what accent marks did the student learn about? What sentences did he practice forming? How does that increase his language learning experience? Still, reading the response to the first question, we can gather an insight into what happened during the session.

For #2 What did I learn about my partner's country: people, music, etc.? The student reported, “Hoje, eu não aprendi nenhuma nova coisa sobre Brasil. Eu acho que isso é por que eu fiquei no Brasil por oito semanas esse verão, então eu já tenho aprendido muito sobre o Brasil” “Today I didn't learn anything new about Brazil. I think it is because I stayed in Brazil for eight weeks this summer, so I've already learned a lot about Brazil]. This response is recurrent across Hunter's LLs. It demonstrates, like in his response to #3 and #5 observed below, that, for the student, this exercise of responding to the learning logs is unengaging. He is comparing his experience in the oral session with a much more extensive engaging and immersive study abroad experience in person in Brazil.

**Excerpt 8, Hunter's response to LL 1<sup>37</sup>**

	<b>Translation</b>
LL 1 sobre o dia 10 de setembro de 2018	LL 1 on September 10, 2018
1. O que eu aprendi hoje em português (palavras, frases inteiras)?	1. What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)?
Hoje eu aprendi mais um pouco sobre assentos (sic) e a melhora (sic) maneira para formar sentenças (sic) em português.	Today I learned a little more about seats (sic – intended word “accentuation”) and the best way to form sentences in Portuguese.
2. O que eu aprendi hoje sobre o país do meu parceiro: as pessoas, a música, etc.?	2. What did I learn today about my partner's country: people, music, etc.?
Hoje, eu não aprendi nenhuma nova coisa sobre Brasil. Eu acho que isso é por que eu fiquei no Brasil por oito semanas esse verão, então eu já tenho aprendido muito sobre o Brasil.	Today, I didn't learn anything new about Brazil. I think it is because I stayed in Brazil for eight weeks this summer, so I've already learned a lot about Brazil.
3. Minhas expressões preferidas das quais vou	3. My favorite expressions which I will remember with certainty are

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<sup>37</sup> I added the LLs questions to the excerpt to help the reader visualize Hunter's responses to each question. In the following excerpts the questions are not added. They represent the LLs in the exact way the student completed it (without the guiding questions).

<p>me lembrar com certeza:</p> <p>Eu não aprendi uma frase novo (sic).</p> <p>4. Erros que não vou mais cometer da próxima vez:</p> <p>Eu lembrarei que, quando eu escrevo (sic), é mais formal para usar o tenso futuro do que usar “ir + infinitive.”</p> <p>5. O que eu aprendi sobre meu próprio país e/ou cultura através da interação com meu parceiro?</p> <p>Até agora, eu não tenho aprendido nada nova (sic) sobre eu o mesmo.</p>	<p>I haven't learned a new phrase.</p> <p>4. Mistakes I will not make next time are:</p> <p>I will remember that, when I write, it is more formal to use future tense than to use “ir + infinitive.”</p> <p>5. What I have learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner?</p> <p>Until now, I haven't learned anything new about myself.</p>
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As observed in Excerpt 8 above, Hunter’s response to his first LL reveals some learning about what happened during the session “Hoje eu aprendi mais um pouco sobre assentos (sic) e a melhora (sic) maneira para formar sentenças (sic) em português.” [Today I learned a little more about seats (sic – the intended word was “accentuation”) and the best way to form sentences in Portuguese] (**Excerpt 8**, Hunter’s response to LL). Indeed, during the first part of OS 1, Vanessa revises her comments on Hunter’s first writing assignment, and they discuss his issue using Portuguese accent marks. To illustrate this point, I transcribed a piece of their interaction presented

below.

### Excerpt 9, Hunter's and Vanessa's OS 1

70. Hunter: Sim. (2.0) Você tem:: (.)  
[Looks to his left] algumas perguntas sobre  
eu?

71. Vanessa: Não, acho que não (estava::  
deu para entender o que você queria dizer.  
Foi tranquilo

72. Hunter: Oh.

73. Vanessa: Mas, é só para:: (.) só para  
poder:: (.) explica para você algumas, para  
você algumas coisas que eu fiz. (2.0) Éh, a  
maioria é por causa dos acentos. Eu não...  
sabe... acento é -- por exemplo -- você tá  
com isso [o texto] aberto?

74. Hunter: Ah! Acentos, ah, nas  
palavras.

75. Vanessa: I::sso.

76. Hunter: Sim. Entendo. Meu  
computador tem algumas problemas. Então//

77. Vanessa: Ah, sim. O problema//

70. Hunter: Yes. (2.0) Do you have:: (.) [Looks  
to his left.] Any questions about me [my text]?

71. Vanessa: No, I don't think so ((I)) was::, I  
could understand what you meant. It was easy

72. Hunter: Oh.

73. Vanessa: But, it's just to:: (.)// \*just to be  
able to:: (.) explain to you some, to you some  
things that I did. (2.0) Eh, most of it is because  
of the accents [accent marks]. I don't... you  
know... accent is -- for example -- do you have  
this [the text] open?

74. Hunter: Ah! Accents, oh, on the words.

75. Vanessa: Yeees.

76. Hunter: Yes. I see. My computer has some  
problems. Then//

77. Vanessa: Oh, yeah. The problem//

78. Hunter: \*Sorry for that.



78. Hunter: \*Desculpa para isso.
79. Vanessa: É um teclado diferente. Sabe o que é teclado? É “keyboard.”
80. Hunter: Keyboard. “Keyboard.” [Said “keyboard” in a Portuguese accent.]
81. Vanessa: Keyboard.
82. Hunter: É, não sei heh heh ele é (3.0) é diferente né?
83. Vanessa: Sim.
84. Hunter: Sim. //
85. Vanessa: \*Mas...//
86. Hunter: \*((mortodo))
87. Vanessa: Okay, então:: eu vou eu vou levar para você como que tá em português. ((Que)) você pode ver a pronúncia do que ((tô eu)) falo.
88. Hunter: Tá.
89. Vanessa: Eh (2.0) aqui é ((a)) autobiografia. Só tirei um acento porque não tem. (2.0) Fala ((biografia)) mas sem acento.
90. Hunter: Ato...biografia.
79. Vanessa: It's a different keyboard. Do you know what a teclado is? It's “keyboard.”
80. Hunter: Keyboard. “Keyboard.” [Said the word “keyboard” in English with a Portuguese accent.]
81. Vanessa: Keyboard.
82. Hunter: Yeah, I don't know heh heh it's (3.0) it's different right?
83. Vanessa: Yes.
84. Hunter: Yes. //
85. Vanessa: \*But... //
86. Hunter: \*((incomprehensible))
87. Vanessa: Okay, so:: I'll take it to you as it is in Portuguese. ((Que)) you can see the pronunciation of what ((I'm)) I speak.
88. Hunter: Okay.
89. Vanessa: Eh (2.0) here is ((a)) autobiography. I only took out an accent because it doesn't have one. (2.0) Speech ((biography)) but without accent.
90. Hunter: Act...biography.

91. Vanessa: É. É um “íá” autobiografia. 91. Vanessa: Yeah. It is an “I would” autobiography.
92. Hunter: Autobiografia. 92. Hunter: Autobiography.

As evident above, the first part of the oral session happened in Portuguese<sup>38</sup> with Vanessa revising Hunter’s first writing assignment. Hunter asks Vanessa if there were any issues with the text and she responds that there were no issues, that she could clearly understand him, but that he missed the accent marks. He justifies saying he had a problem with his computer, she gives a name to the problem teaching him the word keyboard in Portuguese (teclado) and saying he has a “um teclado diferente” [a different keyboard] and that is the problem.

Vanessa moves on to discuss each part of his text. They both laugh with the first line “Meu nome é primeiro nome e último nome.” [My name is first name and last name] because there was a famous song with the student’s name and both students knew about it. She also explains some mistakes that he made for example saying “senhor” [elderly] to say “senior,” while in Portuguese you would say “veterano” [old-timer undergraduate; veteran in the college] or “formando” [close to graduating]. The analysis of the LL in contrast to the OS reveals a clear relationship between the scene above and what was reported.

On the other hand, his response to question four “Eu lembrarei que, quando eu escrevo (sic), é mais formal para usar o tenso futuro do que usar “ir + infinitive”.” [I will remember that, when I write, it is more formal to use future tense than to use “ir + infinitive”] is directly related

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<sup>38</sup> Vanessa asks Hunter as soon as they start if he wants to start in Portuguese or English. He says “PORTUGUESE!” and she agrees saying that then they should start with her feedback on his first Writing Assignment.

to the grammar topic discussed in class, but not discussed at any moment during OS 1.

Finally, his response to question two “Hoje, eu não aprendi nenhuma nova coisa sobre Brasil. Eu acho que isso é por que eu fiquei no Brasil por oito semanas esse verão, então eu já tenho aprendido muito sobre o Brasil.” [Today, I didn't learn anything new about Brazil. I think it is because I stayed in Brazil for eight weeks this summer, so I've already learned a lot about Brazil], exposing a trend repeated across all his reflections. Already in the first session, Hunter interrupts Vanessa's feedback in minute 11 to tell her about his study abroad. She listens to him briefly and then returns to the feedback.

**Excerpt 10, Hunter's and Vanessa's OS 1, part 2**

183. Vanessa: Não, Recife é no Norte. Só em São Paulo. É mais para baixo.	183. Vanessa: No, Recife is in the north. Only in Sao Paulo. It's further down.
184. Hunter: Nordeste, meu Deus... eu não lembro.	184. Hunter: Northeast, my God... I don't remember.
185. Vanessa: ((É))	185. Vanessa: ((Yeah))
186. Hunter: Minha minha aula esse verão... uhm (2.0) Nós aprendeu? Não, aprendeu? Vanessa: Aprendemos? Nós aprendemos?	186. Hunter: My my class this summer... uhm (2.0) Did we learn? No, learned? Vanessa: Did we learn? We learn?
187. Hunter: sim, nós aprendemos sobre a cultura do... todo do Brasil, e hum os rejiões rejões do Brasil ((fuem)) é muito interessante eu acho. Porque, Brasil é muito grande e tem –	187. Hunter: Yes, we learned about the culture of... all of Brazil, and um the regions of Brazil ((fuem)) is very interesting, I think. Because Brazil is very big and has --
188. Vanessa: É muito grande.	188. Vanessa: It's too big.
189. Hunter: -- tem (1.0) diferentes partes da cultura (2.0)	189. Hunter: -- has (1.0) different parts of culture (2.0)
190. Vanessa: É, acaba falando muito diferente. E uma palavra que um lugar de fala de um jeito ((e a)) fala de outro..., mas aqui no seu texto, eh apesar eu não ((ta o que)) a palavra es-s-”senior” pra formando ou veterano. Porque a gente tem um jeito melhor de dizer isso.	190. Vanessa: Yeah, it ends up speaking very differently. It's a word that a place speaks in one way ((and a)) speaks in another... but here in your text, eh although I don't ((that's what)) the word es-s-”senior” for graduating or veteran. Because we have a better way of saying it.
191. Hunter: Tá.	191. Hunter: Okay.

As argued above, even though the student learned new words, expressions, and intercultural content during the oral sessions, in his LLs, he reported not learning anything. In the conversation under analysis on excerpt 10, it seems that while Hunter wanted to talk to Vanessa about his experience studying abroad in Brazil, Vanessa wanted to focus on providing feedback on his Writing Assignment. Hunter was correct about Recife being in the northeast of Brazil and wanted to share the knowledge he had acquired in the Culture class he took during the summer, but his peer wanted to return to text.

Although the first LL was considered complete, in LL 2, Hunter reduced the number of words from 99 to 41 and answered all five questions by stating that he did not learn anything new.

**Excerpt 11, Hunter's response to LL 2**

	<b>Translation</b>
1. Eu nao (sic) aprendi nenhuma palvaras (sic) nova hoje.	1. I didn't learn any new words today.
2. Tambem (sic), eu nao (sic) aprendi nenhuma coisa nova sobre Brasil hoje.	2. Also, I didn't learn anything new about Brazil today.
3. Eu nao (sic) aprendi uma frase nova hoje.	3. I didn't learn a new phrase today.
4. Nao. (sic)	4. No.
5. Eu acho que nao (sic), mas talvez eu preciso (sic) de mais tempo para pensar sobre minha conversacao (sic).	5. I don't think so, but maybe I need more time to think about my conversation.

The difference between what happened in the oral session to what was reported by Hunter was an indication that the student did not see the point of writing reflective diaries. The decline in the number of words used indicated his haste to complete this task. Compared to the 99 and 100 words in LLs 1 and 5, Hunter only used 41, 34, 25, and 5 words to complete LLs 2, 3, 4, and 7, respectively. This can be a result of maintaining the completion of the learning log as an optional activity that is not integrated to the language course nor discussed in class. If students have no indication that the task is going to be assessed, they may not spend a lot of time on it. As observed in LL3, excerpt 12 below, for #1 “What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)?”, Hunter mentions learning two new words in Portuguese. For #2 “What did I learn today about my partner 's country: people, music, etc.?” he responds, learning that the Brazilian elections were

held that month. However, he does not report learning any new expressions, thinking about mistakes he could have made, or learning about himself and his culture.

### Excerpt 12, Hunter's response to LL 3

	Translation
1. Hoje, eu aprendi as novas palavras “falsificar” e “falsear”.	1. Today, I learned the new words “counterfeit” and “falsify”.
2. Hoje, eu aprendi que Brasil tem eleicoes (sic) essa (sic) mesa (sic). Minha parceira, Vanessa, falou muito sobre isso.	2. Today, I learned that Brazil has elections at this table. My partner, Vanessa, talked a lot about it.
3. Hoje, eu nao aprendi uma nova frase.	3. Today, I didn't learn a new phrase.
4. Não	4. No
5. Nao (sic)	5. No

As observed in excerpts 11 and 12, the use of the word “Nao” [no] to respond to half of the questions. The generic responses to the first two questions and the negative statements in the other questions reflected a missed opportunity to reflect on his experience and respond to the questions asked. They also suggest that the student did not feel that the LLs were an effective tool for him to further develop an understanding of each oral session. This is evidenced in the terseness of the responses and the common refrain of “I didn’t learn...” to multiple questions. This is also substantiated by his negative responses about the LLs in the final questionnaire and in the evaluation session. For instance, when asked, “How would you evaluate your Teletandem experience? Please comment on the positive and negative aspects of each of these points: a) oral interaction sessions: b) learning diaries/learner logs c) orientation d) your Teletandem partner.”

Hunter responded, “A) Very good B) Poor experience c) Good d) excellent!” but did not comment on any of the responses. Similarly, during the evaluation session, the student was asked to list three things that did not work well in Teletandem and provide suggestions for improvement. His response was “O log, os assuntos, e também o rede de internet.” [the logs, the topics, and the internet connection], but he did not comment orally on how these negative points could be improved. I infer that Hunter rated his experience as poor with the LLs because it felt like additional work outside of the classroom. At the same time, the topics for the writing assignments [Nazism and the elections] might have been sensitive for the student, while the internet connection comment was possibly related to the issues sometimes experienced in Brazil.

**Excerpt 13, Hunter’s response to LL 4**

	<b>Translation</b>
1. Hahaha, eu aprendi a palavra “peidar”... to fart em ingles (sic).	1. Hahaha, I learned the word “fart”... to fart in English.
2. Eu aprendi sobre os candidatos para a presidencia (sic) do Brasil, como Bolsonaro.	2. I learned about candidates for the presidency of Brazil, like Bolsonaro.
3. Nao. (sic)	3. No.
4. Nao. (sic)	4. No.
5. Nao. (sic)	5. No.

In LL 3, Hunter reports learning two new words, while in LL 4, the student reports learning only a word “peidar” [to fart] and discussing the same topic he had debated in the previous week “os candidatos para a presidencia (sic) do Brasil, como Bolsonaro” [I learned about candidates for the presidency of Brazil, like Bolsonaro].

The short responses, combined with the constant comparison between his current experience in a Portuguese class on campus versus the one he lived in for seven weeks of his summer in Brazil, can indicate that Hunter might not have enjoyed having to participate in pre-established tasks and would rather spend the oral sessions talking about things of his interest and everyday language in use instead of spending time providing or receiving feedback on writing assignments.

In many instances, Hunter’s voluntary responses to the LLs also reveal the student’s lack of interest in the LLs as a task. Although given instructions and reminders to complete the LLs immediately after the oral session, the student completed four of his LLs (2, 3, 4, and 7) later.



The delayed responses affected his recollection of the teletandem experience and were salient in LL 5 and 7. As observed in excerpt 14 below, the student copied and pasted his responses to questions two and five from LL 1, repeating not learning anything because he had lived in Brazil before.’

#### Excerpt 14, Hunter’s response to LL 5

	Translation
1. Eu aprendi alguns (sic) palavras novas. Por exemplo, eu aprendi as palavras “incumbente” e “partido.”	1. I learned some new words. For example, I learned the words “incumbent” and “party.”
2. Hoje, eu não aprendi nenhuma nova coisa sobre Brasil. Eu acho que isso é por que eu fiquei no Brasil por oito semanas esse verão, então eu já tenho aprendido muito sobre o Brasil.	2. Today, I didn't learn anything new about Brazil. I think that's why I stayed in Brazil for eight weeks this summer, so I've already learned a lot about Brazil.
3. Eu aprendi uma frase nova. “Nao da (sic) uma bola”	3. I learned a new phrase. “Nao da uma bola”
4. Nao (sic). Eu nao (sic) aprendi uma coisa nove (sic) sobre isso.	4. No. I didn't learn a nine (sic) thing about it.
5. Hoje, eu não aprendi nenhuma nova coisa sobre Brasil. Eu acho que isso é por que eu fiquei no Brasil por oito semanas esse verão, então eu já tenho aprendido muito sobre o Brasil.	5. Today, I didn't learn anything new about Brazil. I think that's why I stayed in Brazil for eight weeks this summer, so I've already learned a lot about Brazil.

Therefore, even though Hunter uses 100 words to complete this LL, word count was not enough to learn if the student reflected about his experience. Nor would it tell us that the student copied and pasted the response from LL1. In his final LL, illustrated in excerpt 15 below, Hunter answers all the open-ended questions with a “Nao” [no]:

### Excerpt 15, Hunter's response to LL 6

	Translation
1. Nao (sic)	1. No
2. Nao (sic)	2. No
3. Nao (sic)	3. No
3. Nao (sic)	4. No
5. Nao(sic)	5. No

The analysis of Hunter's LLs confirms that the student did not use the task to reflect on the language learning or experience. Reading his LLs and comparing them to the OSs was essential to confirm that only the learner's first response was valid because, in general, the student shared zero information to help the instructors know what happened in the oral session in regard to his language and intercultural learning. He did not report on remembering mistakes or noticing new things about his cultures and peers, which was a feature at least once in all other students' LLs.

In the final assessment for the Portuguese course, the five UGA students were prompt to choose between one of the experiences they had in the Portuguese class that semester (teletandem, capoeira, or TedTalk presentation) to reflect on their experience. They were asked “What did you do? What didn't you know that you now know? How did this experience prepare you linguistically and professionally? Anything else?” Hunter responded:

“Esse semestre eu participei com minha universidade em um programa que se chama “Teletandem”. Teletandem é um programa que conecta estudantes dos países diferentes

que estão aprendendo a língua do outro estudante. Eu falei com minha parceira, Vanessa, todas as segundas por trinta minutos em português e trinta minutos em inglês. Eu aprendi muitas coisas novas nessa experiência! Especialmente sobre os times de futebol de São Paulo. Essa experiência me preparou para me relacionar e conectar com pessoas de países diferentes.” [This semester I participated with my university in a program called “Teletandem”. Teletandem is a program that connects students from different countries who are learning each other's language. I spoke with my partner, Vanessa, every Monday for thirty minutes in Portuguese and thirty minutes in English. I learned a lot of new things in this experience! Especially about São Paulo's soccer teams. This experience prepared me to relate and connect with people from different countries.]

Sharing that he “learned a lot” may indicate that at the end of the semester, five weeks after the Teletandem project was over, the student may have reflected about the experience with Vanessa, remembered something he really liked to learn about “São Paulo's soccer teams”, and one reason why the experience is useful for him: “[t]his experience prepared me to relate and connect with people from different countries”. The student’s responses to the LLs reveal that the student was comparing his recent experience studying abroad to the experience in class making it harder for him to note the affordances and limitations of the LLs. Later on, in his last assignment in the class, the student has the chance to reflect on one experience, and Hunter chooses to talk about Teletandem. This can be evidence that the student enjoyed the experience, but did not do well in completing the non-required asynchronous tasks such as the LLs. He cannot be blamed for not participating in a non-required task, but we can learn from this analysis to think about how to improve this task so that more learners can be encouraged to participate in it.

## **Hunter and Vanessa's partnership**

From the beginning, Vanessa's LLs were informative of the imbalanced use of speaking time during some of the OSs. There were a few instances in which her responses indicate that Hunter, 1) tended to monopolize the time of the OSs and 2) deleted some of what she wrote when he was correcting her texts. For example, after OS one, Vanessa reports:

### **Excerpt 16, Vanessas' response to LL 1**

On this day I talked to Hunter. For the first 30 minutes we discussed the text he had written. I do not think there is much for me to say about this first session, because we basically spent the rest of the time talking about the Brazilian culture and the time Hunter spent in Brazil.

Indeed the students “basically” spoke in Portuguese during their OS 1. The first part of the session was used to revise the comments Vanessa made in Hunter's text and the second part was used for Hunter to talk about his experience living in Brazil. Thus, while most students started OS 1 in Portuguese, using the first half to provide feedback to their U.S. peers in Portuguese and then the second half to talk about topics of the Brazilian students' interests in English, that was not the case in Hunter's and Vanessa's first interaction.




In excerpt 17 below, retrieved from the transcript of the first session, we noticed that when Vanessa asks Hunter to switch languages, he takes an entire minute to make the change:

### **Excerpt 17, Minute 29:42 of OS 1 between Hunter and Vanessa**

<p><b>232. Vanessa:</b> Ela [the instructor at UNESP-SJRP] me disse pra trocar de língua agora.</p>	<p><b>232. Vanessa:</b> She [the instructor at UNESP-SJRP] told me to switch languages now.</p>
<p><b>233. Hunter:</b> Ah. Entendo. Então, na verdade (continues speaking Portuguese) eu estava muito doente essa fim de semana. Uh, então.. Uh, eu nunca tive muito tempo, uh, para corrigir, MAS, agora, uh, nós podemos olhar, uh, ah, wait, why am I still speaking in Portuguese?</p>	<p><b>233. Hunter:</b> Oh. I understand. So actually (continues speaking Portuguese) I was really sick this weekend. Uh, then. Uh, I never had much time, uh, to correct, BUT now, uh, we can look, uh, ah, wait, why am I still speaking in Portuguese?</p>

The interaction above happened at minute 29:42, revealing that by the time the students changed languages, they had already used five minutes more of the 50 minutes of class in Portuguese. The pictures in Excerpt 18 below further illustrate the moment the Brazilian instructor reminds the student to change languages, and Vanessa in turn tells Hunter they need to speak in English:

**Excerpt 18. Screenshots of minutes 29, 30, 31 of OS 1 between Hunter and Vanessa**

		
Vanessa asks Hunter to change languages, she is pointing at the instructor at UNESP-SJRP	Vanessa is quickly checking the text to see if she forgot to explain any of her feedback to her peer	Hunter stops speaking Portuguese. They both smile when he changes languages

Despite the language change, Vanessa continues with the feedback until minute 36. Because they continued discussing Hunter's assignment written in Portuguese, the use of Portuguese as the operational language on his part was unavoidable. Even though Vanessa made the transition and spoke in English, Hunter continued using Portuguese to respond to her as illustrated below:

**Excerpt 19, Minute 37:22 of OS 1 between Hunter and Vanessa**

<b>333. Vanessa:</b> ... and that is it, I think! It is okay! Any doubts?	<b>333. Vanessa:</b> ... and that is it, I think! It's ok! Any doubts?
<b>334. Hunter:</b> Não. SEM DÚVIDAS.	<b>334. Hunter:</b> No. NO DOUBT.
<b>335. Vanessa:</b> Ookay. Sooo, I am also a senior. [referring to his autobiography in which he wrote he is a senior at UGA]	<b>335. Vanessa:</b> Okay. Sooo, I am also a senior. [referring to his autobiography in which he wrote he is a senior at UGA]

<p><b>336. Hunter:</b> ((Doutoranda))</p> <p><b>337. Vanessa:</b> Yes, I am also a senior. I think uhh//</p> <p><b>338. Hunter:</b> *e você tem planos para depois da faculdade?</p> <p><b>339. Vanessa:</b> no, não (laughs), my family is from São Paulo. a different city. I plan to go back to where my family is, but I am not sure about that.</p> <p><b>340. Hunter:</b> Você deve mudar para Floripa... [The city where Hunter was during the summer of 2018 for an intensive summer program]</p>	<p><b>336. Hunter:</b> ((PhD student))</p> <p><b>337. Vanessa:</b> Yes, I am also a senior. I think uhh //</p> <p><b>338. Hunter:</b> *and do you have plans for after college?</p> <p><b>339. Vanessa:</b> no, no (laughs), my family is from São Paulo. the different city. I plan to go back to where my family is, but I am not sure about that.</p> <p><b>340. Hunter:</b> You must move to Floripa... [The city where Hunter was during the summer of 2018 for an intensive summer program]</p>
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Hunter's use of Portuguese interferes with Vanessa's use of English (line 339) and with her overall perception of their first OS 1 since she reported in her first log that there was not much to talk about that session "because [they] basically spent the rest of the time talking about the Brazilian culture and the time Hunter spent in Brazil" (**excerpt 20**, Vanessa's response to LL 1). Observing the principles of separation of language and reciprocity, the second half of the session should have been spent helping Vanessa with her needs. Although they switched to English, the observation of OS 1 and Vanessa's LL 1 response revealed the switch to be far too late and inconsistently sustained to help Vanessa with her English. Unfortunately, this behavior was recurrent, being observable in four other sessions. For example, responding to her LL 7 on the final session, Vanessa reports:

### Excerpt 21, Vanessa's response to LL 7

On this day, me and Hunter talked about the text he had written on the Brazilian election. We basically talked in Portuguese, but when we got closer to the end of the session we talked in English about our personal perspectives on the subject.

As highlighted above, not only did the students use Portuguese for most of the final session, but topics related to Brazilian culture were again discussed in the portion dedicated to Vanessa. In their final oral session, the students mostly discuss the presidential candidates for the Brazilian election, which was the topic of Hunter's third writing assignment. At first, I thought that even though Hunter seemed to be more talkative, he also seemed to be responsive to his peer's needs; however, as I analyzed the OSs, other patterns began to emerge. For example, when watching OS 4 from a first glance, one will note that Hunter spent 30 out of the 40 minutes of interaction speaking in English and providing Vanessa with feedback on her second writing assignment. However, although they spent more time speaking English, 1) the session was shorter because Hunter had to leave 10 minutes early and 2) he had to dedicate more time to peer feedback as he did not read his peer's text before OS 4. As a consequence, both time and quality of analysis were lost attempting to read and provide feedback on the spot. This dynamic was noted throughout the interaction, but was especially apparent towards the end of the session Vanessa was very apologetic because they "did not get to speak much in Portuguese." She promised Hunter "[n]ext time it is you, and your text" (**excerpt 22**, transcript of OS four between Hunter and Vanessa). Keeping her promise, Hunter starts OS 5 ensuring he will speak Portuguese during the entire session, as highlighted in excerpt 23 below.



**Excerpt 23, Minute 2:20 of OS Five between Hunter and Vanessa**

<b>Hunter:</b> Na última semana nós falamos em inglês todo tempo, então essa semana vamos falar português todo tempo.	<b>Hunter:</b> Last week we spoke in English all the time so this week we are going to speak Portuguese all the time.
<b>Vanessa:</b> Tudo bem! [continues to provide him with feedback in his Writing Assignment 3]	<b>Vanessa:</b> Alright! [continues to provide him with feedback in his Writing Assignment 3]

As illustrated above, because Vanessa felt responsible to make up for speaking English during OS 4, Hunter was given the right to have the entire OS 5 in Portuguese. This signals Vanessa's commitment to the principle of reciprocity. Although the students can negotiate how they want to go about their sessions, it would be expected of any student that the next session is reestablished in the normal routine of equally divided time. Nonetheless, as observed watching the session, OS 5 lasted 55 minutes and the students only used Portuguese.

The analysis of Vanessa and Hunter's OSs revealed that, even when the students almost equally divided the time of the oral session (observed in sessions 1, 2, and 3), they really did not because the focus continued to be on the Portuguese language and culture. In sessions 4, 5, and 7, the time was unevenly distributed, and in two instances, despite the language used, Hunter had much more time speaking. Even when we did not consider the times in which the students spoke in English but continued talking about Portuguese-related themes such as the elections and Hunter's experience living in Brazil, not following the principle of separation of languages in all sessions resulted in an unbalanced use of the two languages. In total, during the seven weeks, the

students spoke for 250 minutes (about 4 hours)<sup>39</sup>. Of these, 142 were Portuguese, 34 minutes more than in English.

### **Vanessa's Perception of the Experience**

Up to this point, I have contextualized the partnership between Hunter and Vanessa and discussed how the dyad did not equally divide the time of the interaction between the two learners' languages and cultures, resulting in an asymmetrical communication. The analysis confirmed that Hunter often monopolized the interaction, even if unintentionally, but when asked, Vanessa reported that she did not notice an unbalanced division of time.

In Vanessa's words, "sometimes he was goofy and said things without thinking, but no [he did not monopolize the time]" (**excerpt 26**, Vanessa's response during the Teletandem reunion on February 13, 2021). When I told her that the data showed he spoke more and asked if she thought Hunter spoke more was because of his gender, Vanessa responded, "I did not even think about gender... he was goofy, and sometimes I would not get his jokes, and then he would do it again, and sometimes I would get it". (**excerpt 27**, Vanessa's reflection during the Teletandem reunion on February 13, 2021).

The unbalanced reciprocity can be due to Hunter being from a dominant culture, language, gender, and racial position and therefore not perceiving or reflecting on his position in the world. Although Hunter often decided on the language used and topics being discussed, Vanessa's view of the experience with her peer helps us notice other takeaways from their virtual exchange experience. For instance, in excerpt 24 below, the student reflects:

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<sup>39</sup> Students participating in Teletandem in the Fall of 2018 spoke an average of 350 minutes divided between seven 50 minutes OSs. The data for Hunter and Vanessa subtracts one session in which Hunter was absent and another session which was not recorded.

#### **Excerpt 24, Vanessa's response to Log 7**

"...the Brazilian election gave us a lot to talk about throughout the sessions. Even though they were a bit more focused on Brazil in general, I do not feel like it was a bad thing. The more we talk about something, the more we think about it, and I believe it was good for me to finally stop and think about so many details of our culture. This was our final session. It was really nice to talk to Hunter."

In this excerpt, Vanessa noted that even though the focus of the conversation was the Brazilian election and despite the higher use of Portuguese, it gave her an opportunity for deeper cultural reflection as it was helpful to talk more about her country. The same positiveness was exhibited when Hunter edited her writing instead of leaving suggestions on how to correct her first writing assignment. In LL 2, she shares:

#### **Excerpt 25, Vanessa's response to Log 2**

On this day, we discussed what Hunter changed in my text. I chose to write a blog post on my undergraduate course. He explained to me that "you all" is more formal than "you guys". I think that is something I probably will not forget. He also told me that "less is more" when it comes to writing in English (that's why he simply deleted some of the things I wrote) and that using the gerund form instead of the infinitive form would make the phrases sound more natural even though they make sense. Then we talked about the UGA football team. Their battle cry is "How 'bout them dawgs?", in reference to their mascot, a bulldog. We also talked

about the different ways to say "Ai, meu Deus!" (like "Jeez" and "Sweet Mary Mother of Jesus"), which led us to talk about the different accents both Portuguese and English have.

As observed in the excerpt above, the use of words such as "changed in my text," "told me," and the explanation that although what she said was correct, making a change would sound more natural, is an indication of Hunter's corrective approach instead of an approach of providing feedback. In another moment, Vanessa shared that Hunter "simply deleted" what she wrote. The use of the word 'simply' with 'deleted' highlights a moment in which the student considered what Vanessa wrote incorrect, and wrote it in the way he felt was appropriate. Evaluating how students are giving feedback is necessary to provide them with training and guidance so that their feedback is helpful and not harmful to their peers. Here again, Vanessa shifts the way towards a positive view of the experience. She notices that she learned more about language use (in this example, the use of formal and informal language in "you all" versus "you guys"), and English composition writing, which in contrast with Portuguese stylistics, requires more concise use of the language.

My takeaway from Vanessa's responses is that the student had a great awareness of her learning. She recognized the importance of spending time discussing their perspectives on relevant cultural topics such as the elections. She made the most of the meetings with Hunter, expanding her knowledge of the words and topics she already knew about (e.g., stream vs. broadcast; football and soccer), learning about composition writing.

In the final questionnaire, the student responded that she would participate in Teletandem again, sharing "My experience was very good. As I said, now I feel more confident talking in English. Besides that I met new people, which is always good." She believes that "talking to a

native speaker kind of "forces" us to actually practice the foreign language in a way we do not always have the chance to when learning English from Brazilian speakers." (**excerpt 28**, Vanessa's response to the final questionnaire).

In relation to her initial learning goal, "practice my abilities in each skill. I would like my partner to tell me what not to do, so I can leave any language vices/mistakes behind." (**excerpt 29** Vanessa's response to the initial questionnaire), it seems that Vanessa had achieved it, as she read, wrote, translated, listened, and spoke, the student said "I feel like I am much more confident to talk in English." (**excerpt 30**, Vanessa's response to the final questionnaire). Finally, we can infer that her experience was better than the first one with Teletandem. She was more confident speaking in English as she reports, "[t]he transition from Portuguese to [the] English language was easier to do than in my previous Teletandem experience." (**excerpt 31**, Vanessa's response to the final questionnaire)

On the other hand, I am not sure Hunter had a great awareness of his learning because of his responses to his LLs and the questionnaires. When asked to list three things that did not work well in Teletandem, Hunter mentioned the LLs as the first one: "O log, os assuntos, e também o rede de internet. [The log, the topics, and also the internet connection]" (**excerpt 32**, Hunter, evaluation session at UGA). I was intrigued by Hunter's responses and his reasoning for "not learning anything" because he "stayed in Brazil for eight weeks this summer" and "have already learned a lot about Brazil," as he repeated in LLs 1, 2, and 5.

Thus, at the end of the program, I conducted a group evaluation of the experience. During that meeting, I asked students to list what they thought Teletandem had helped them with and Hunter resported "Eu já tinha estudado no Brasil, então eu não aprendi muita nova." "Teletandem só me ajudou com minha fluencia de Portugues" ["I had already studied in Brazil, so I didn't

learn much new." "Teletandem only helped me with my fluency in Portuguese"] (**excerpt 33**, Hunter's response during the evaluation session at UGA). This is not comparable to other learners because none of them gave similar responses. Hunter is the only one who repeats not learning anything new with his peer; this directed me to analyze the students' oral sessions and documents, thinking about their conceptualization of learning.

If we return to both Hunter's and Sebastian's responses to the LLs, there were two instances in which the responses referred back to grammar:

#### **Excerpt 34, Hunter's and Sebastian's LLs**

"Eu lembrarei que, quando eu escrevo (sic), é mais formal para usar o tenso futuro do que usar "ir + infinitive"." (Hunter's response to LL 1)

"I will remember the proper conjugation for the future conditional and future indicative" (Sebastian's response to LL 1)

"I will not mistake the preterite for the imperfdect (sic)." (Sebastian's response to LL 3)

This was not discussed during the session. Thus, I infer that Hunter did not see the OSs as moments of learning but as conversations in which the other person helped them with pronunciation and new vocabulary. From my observations of Hunter's and Vanessa's interactions, moments of implicit learning were possibly appreciated differently by the student. When he asked Vanessa to explain a grammatical point, she would work with him to research it, but never taught him grammar explicitly. Maybe this, combined with his perception of having learned a lot during study abroad in Brazil, might be why the student felt he was not learning.

This finding suggests that Hunter may have connected explicit teaching to learning. However, language acquisition happens (mostly) as an implicit process (Henshaw & Hawkins, 2022). Implicit language acquisition is very much dependent on meaning uptake and negotiation. In the Teletandem context, interpretive tasks such as the TOSs are an opportunity to negotiate meaning and collaborate with a peer in a real-life situation. While communicating, students like Hunter and Vanessa are acquiring language, receiving, and sharing input. Later on, using the TLLs, students can continue processing the input and output received in the oral sessions as they reflect on them.

Returning to Vanessa, although she shared in the final questionnaire that she saw completing the LLs as the only negative aspect of the experience, "The only negative aspect of the experience was writing the logs. Even though I know they help us to track what happened on each session and even remember the things we learned, sometimes it is hard to write following a pre-established model." (**excerpt 35**, Vanessa's response to the final questionnaire). Similar negative feedback towards the LLs was also brought up during the mediation session at UNESP-SJRP. As observed below, the students commented that they had a tough time responding to the pre-established questions:

**Table 12**

*UNESP-SJRP Mediation Sessions*

DATE	DESCRIPTION	OBSERVATIONS
Sept. 24	Students had positive comments about the experience with Teletandem, they pointed out they had difficulties answering the questions on the log, which	The questions students need to answer on the Logs do not contribute to feeding the discussion during the mediation session.

	did not seem to promote reflection.	
Oct. 15	Students commented they didn't have major problems. They just mentioned there has been noise on the other side, which sometimes makes it harder to understand their partners. One student commented on the difficulty of writing the logs.	No further observations.

Even though Vanessa and other students commented on incongruences with the task, her responses revealed a reflexive practice that went beyond answering the pre-established questions. The student shared information that could have been used to monitor her's and her peer's work and improve their experience. For instance, by referring back to the principles of reciprocity and equal time between languages, instructors could use Vanessa's reflection to guide the group on how to provide each other with feedback and remind them to balance their time helping each other. Another positive outcome from her reflections was to see how the student connected her comments on the different Teletandem tasks (OSs, writing assignments, and peer feedback) to her future profession, as she said "completing those tasks was [a] good exercise because I want to become a good translator one day" (**excerpt 36**, Vanessa's response to LL 4).



### **Case Study Three: Sebastian and Mercedes**

Sebastian had a short experience (two weeks) with Teletandem before dropping the Portuguese class and then returning to it in the Fall of 2018<sup>40</sup>. Mercedes, on the other hand, was participating in Teletandem for the first time. She was the only Brazilian student who reported studying English in private language schools for eight years before joining Teletandem as a Math undergraduate student at UNESP-SJRP. Mercedes was 30 years old and was in her second degree, while Sebastian was 22 years old, working towards his undergraduate degree.

Like Hunter's, Sebastian's responses to the LLs consisted of isolated words, with no descriptions or deep reflections on his language learning or experience. He answered the questions posed but did not give much clue of what happened during the OS.

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<sup>40</sup> There is no indication that the student left the course because of the program. External causes potentially resulted in the suspension of his Portuguese studies.

### Excerpt 37, Sebastian's response to LL 1

1. What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)? 1. O que eu aprendi hoje em português (palavras, frases inteiras)?

Comediante (Comedian) Industria (Industry)

2. What did I learn today about my partner's country: people, music, etc.? 2. O que eu aprendi hoje sobre o país do meu parceiro: as pessoas, a música, etc.?

I learned that Brazil has a vibrant underground comedy scene.

3. My favorite expressions which I will remember with certainty are 3. Minhas expressões preferidas das quais vou me lembrar com certeza:

Comedia secreto (underground comedy)

4. Mistakes I will not make next time are: 4. Erros que não vou mais cometer da próxima vez:

I will remember the proper conjugation for the future conditional and future indicative

5. What have I learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner? 5. O que eu aprendi sobre meu próprio país e/ou cultura através da interação com meu parceiro?

NOT ANSWERED

### Excerpt 38, Sebastian's response to LL 3

1. What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)? 1. O que eu aprendi hoje em português (palavras, frases inteiras)?

Eu estava perdido no Mundo da Disney. (I got lost in Disneyworld) Me diverti (I had fun)

2. What did I learn today about my partner's country: people, music, etc.? 2. O que eu aprendi hoje sobre o país do meu parceiro: as pessoas, a música, etc.?

I learned that there is a show called Turma da Monica and it's a quintessential cartoon in Brazil. She wore a shirt with all of the characters.

3. My favorite expressions which I will remember with certainty are: 3. Minhas expressões preferidas das quais vou me lembrar com certeza:

N/A

4. Mistakes I will not make next time are: 4. Erros que não vou mais cometer da próxima vez:

I will not mistake the preterite for the imperfect (sic).

5. What have I learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner? 5. O que eu aprendi sobre meu próprio país e/ou cultura através da interação com meu parceiro?

I learned how internationally popular places like Disney World are, and how some of my less favorite parts are someone else's first stop in the USA

Contrasting the LLs above to what happened during the OSs and my notes on Sebastian's participation in the course, I confirmed that the words and topics reported "Comedian; underground comedy" in LL 1 are related to the student's major (Arts), which he discussed in his first writing assignment (an autobiography) revised by his peer Mercedes discussed during OS 1.

In his LL 3, the student reported on two short sentences learned during OS 3, "I got lost in Disneyworld; I had fun" and shared two cultural comments. The first, related to Brazil, emerged when Sebastian was searching for topics to talk about and asked his peer about her T-shirt. At that moment, he learned about Turma da Mônica (Monica's Gang), described in his LL 3 as "a quintessential cartoon in Brazil".

**Figure 10**

*Introducing Monica's Gang*



During the oral session, Mercedes used Disney World characters (e.g., Mickey Mouse) as a reference to talk about Monica's Gang and favorite cartoons "this is Monica, Monica's gang, like Mickey." Because of its global influence, Disney World is well known in Brazil, the brief mention of Disney characters by Mercedes was just to illustrate that Monica's Gang characters are famous in Brazil like Disney World ones are famous in the US, but it Sebastian commented about Disney in his LL3, in excerpt 38 above "I learned how internationally popular places like Disney World are, and how some of my least favorite parts are someone else's first stop in the USA".

Although the learner did not reflect on his language learning and experience, the comment about his culture is relevant as it reflects a criticism. Even though U.S. residents comprise the majority of visitors to those parks in the US, the student's comment on Disney World being "someone else's first stop in the USA" was not incorrect. The lack of details on his response to the LLs could also be intentional; although he wrote more words here (80), compared to the number of words in his first LL (31), he might have rushed or decided not to comment on Brazilians' like of a place he disliked.

In addition to exercising their autonomy to decide on topics of interest to discuss, during the oral sessions, Sebastian and Mercedes also attempted to observe the principles of separation of languages and reciprocity. In relation to the principle of separation of languages, Sebastian did not have enough language to sustain the conversation in one language at a time. This is confirmed by watching Sebastian and Mercedes' interactions during the OSs and analyzing Mercedes's responses to her first three TLLs. As highlighted in excerpt 39 below, the first OS demonstrates the students using the two languages simultaneously:

**Excerpt 39, Mercedes's response to Log 1**

On nine October, it was hard to understand and listen properly my pair. We talked about the information he put in his text, like about family, prefers and graduation. We talked in Portuguese and English at the same time, that was an interesting way. We didn't put/ I learned dumpster as a new word.

Then, in her second LL, Mercedes shares "We have tried to keep talking in English at the first half and in Portuguese at the second one" (**Excerpt 40**, Mercedes's response to LL 2). This

passage indicates the student's intention to follow the principle of separation of languages, which was proven to be a challenge due to their level of proficiency as observed in multiple instances of their interactions and highlighted in the annotation of OS two below:

**Excerpt 41, annotation on a misunderstanding between Sebastian and Mercedes in OS 2**

At Sebastian's request, the conversation starts in Portuguese. Mercedes apologizes for sending her 'text' late. Sebastian responds, "Que hago? que hago?"; Sebastian asks why she did not do well in her TEST. He misunderstood the word text (texto; Writing Assignment) to test (teste; an exam). Sebastian: "you told me you did not go well in your test, what happened?" Mercedes does not understand what her peer was trying to say; he continued repeating himself, but was not clear in Portuguese. They check the sound system; Mercedes says it is noisy, but it is okay. After checking the sound system, Mercedes considers speaking in English to clarify things, but she remembers they agreed on starting in Portuguese. She speaks slowly and makes signs with her hands: "você recebeu meu Texto?" [did you receive my text]. Sebastian responds: "what class?" she responds: "what class???", the misunderstanding continues until the students use English as noted in the transcription below.

While Mercedes wanted to confirm if "he had received her text," Sebastian tried to find out how Mercedes did on her test. After almost four minutes of trying to understand his peer, Sebastian checks the sound system again, confirms it is working, and changes languages to restart the conversation, as observed in excerpt 42, below:

**Excerpt 42, Transcript. OS 2, min 3:40**

**Sebastian:** "[what class] that you got your text back?", eu recebi um teste?! [Sebastian repeats what he thinks she said in Portuguese: "I received a test/text"]

**Mercedes:** "sim, um texto".

**Sebastian:** How did you do?

**Sebastian:** [Mercedes is completely lost, no response].

[Sebastian talks to professor and checks the sound system again. Mercedes reports that it is noisy, but that it is okay. He tells Mercedes the professor told them they needed to start the interaction speaking in English, he continues:]

**Sebastian:** SO., your test that you got back, what class was it in?

**Mercedes:** (looking up and thinking): Sooo, I sent (make a sign with the hand to signal past and speak slowly) the TEXT to you yesterday.

**Sebastian:** (take a few seconds) OH, that is not A TEST. That is a composition.

**Mercedes:** Test is like an exam.

**Sebastian:** yes.

**Mercedes:** I am sorry.

**Sebastian:** no no no, don't feel sorry, your English is better than my Portuguese.

**Mercedes:** ohhh, thank you.

The type of miscommunication shared in excerpt 42 was frequent in the students' interactions particularly when they used Portuguese. The misunderstanding between the words "texto" e "teste" made by Sebastian is not uncommon at the intermediate level. The student also

had a tough time understanding contextual clues, as although they exchanged “texts” as part of the exchange, during the oral sessions they also talked a lot about their lives, so sharing that she had a test in the context of being an undergraduate would not be unusual. When they got confused or misunderstandings occurred between them, they used gestures, spoke slowly, or switched to English, as reported in Mercedes’s response to LL 3, below:

**Excerpt 43, Mercedes’s response to Log 3**

Sometimes we stuck to speak some sentence, but we explain what we would like to say and we can understand each other. It has been a good experience to learn about daily things and improve my listening.

Mercedes’ responses, combined with the observations of the sessions and my familiarity with Sebastian’s background, reveals that despite not being able to divide the time equally between languages, the experience during the OSs was positive. That is, the students tried to speak the languages and tried to divide the time they took to focus on each language. Although not planned, Mercedes thought it was “interesting” to use both languages together (LL 1) and, above all, she felt that she was learning by talking about concrete topics (e.g., their weekend, football, food), and trying to maintain the separated use of each language (as observed in LL 2), ultimately reporting perceived improvement in her listening skills (as observed in LL 3).

In relation to the principle of reciprocity, in the final questionnaire, Mercedes reports having had a “complicated partner,” in the sense that Sebastian did not read her texts nor provide her with timely feedback. Sebastian's relationship with Mercedes was not always reciprocal. He did not read her first and second writing assignments before the OSs and when he read the first text, he took notes on his phone not providing Mercedes with adequate written feedback, which



probably motivated her not to turn in her third Writing Assignment and not complete her last two LLs. In relation to Sebastian's LLs, the student only completed two out of six LLs, and although he answered the questions posed, there was little information of what happened in the classroom, and reflection on his learning and experience, therefore his responses were considered *poor*. These results are consistent with Sebastian's overall participation in the class and completion of other Teletandem tasks, even integrated ones such as the writing assignments.

By detailing how Hunter's and Vanessas' partnership had positive results even when the analysis demonstrated that Hunter monopolized the time and illustrating how Sebastian and his peer Mercedes negotiated the use of translanguaging (García, 2009), this section shed light on the gains of implementing telecollaborative tasks even when issues emerged. Next, I return to Mateo and Cida to demonstrate a third divergent usage of the non-integrated asynchronous task.

Despite being familiar with iiTTD, Mateo had only three out of his seven LLs rated *complete*. In these responses (LLs 1, 3, and 7), Mateo answered the questions posed and reflected on his language learning and experience. The *invalid* responses resulted from the student completing the LLs later. For instance, when Mateo completed LL 2, he shared information about session four, for which he did not submit a log. I confirmed this finding by watching OS 2 and comparing the student's responses to his peers.

Moreover, when completing LL 6, Mateo only responds to one out of the five questions, making a comment about one thing he learned about the elections. He states: "In Brazil, the population is divided because of the election, and it seems that Bolsonaro is being projected to win the election, which could see the country enter another era of dictatorship and hardship" (**excerpt 44**, Mateo, LL 6). As a result of his tardiness, the late responses like the one above were short and incomplete. The reduced number of words, 25 in LL 2 and 34 in LL 6 as evidenced in

Table 13 below, combined with the lack of depth, made responses to LLs 2 and 6 stand out negatively in comparison to the student's responses to LLs 1, 3, and 7.

**Table 13**

*Word Count*

Pairs	Learning Logs Word Count						
Log	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Vanessa</b>	90	151	154	119	76	154	150
<b>Hunter</b>	99	41	34	25	100	absent	5
<b>Mercedes</b>	54	49	61	absent	54	0	0
<b>Sebastian</b>	31	0	80	absent	0	0	0
<b>Fabiana</b>	28	48	72	109	absent	56	64
<b>Kathleen</b>	153	182	231	244	238	293	361
<b>Cida</b>	98	82	164	79	79	69	25
<b>Mateo</b>	124	25	128	0	0	34	149
<b>Maria</b>	78	31	117	135	0	113	138
<b>Zoe</b>	236	236	185	236	272	312	419

I followed up with Mateo to ask about his late responses, particularly to check if he was aware that he submitted an LL for the wrong day. He said he did not notice he made that mistake.

The evaluation of Hunter's, Sebastian's, and Mateo's LLs helped me reflect on what constituted a *good*, *poor*, or *invalid* response to this reflective task. Taking into consideration that Mateo's, Hunter's, and Sebastian's responses were shorter and rushed when late, there is value in following Teletandem's suggestion of reflecting immediately "right after the oral sessions" or "as fast as they can before the following oral session" (**Excerpt 45**, notes from conversations with Teletandem mediators). Up to this point, I have compared students' responses to the LLs to highlight some inconsistencies in their completion of the LLs task. In the next session, I share

another case study<sup>41</sup> to illustrate what occurs when students complete the task. Following the case study, I share general remarks on the ten students' completion of the LLs and recommendations to improve engagement in this task.

### **Case Study five: Kathleen and Fabiana**

In the case of Kathleen and Fabiana, both were participating in Teletandem for the first time. Kathleen was a Romance languages major, studying Spanish and Portuguese, while Fabiana was a Translation major, with a focus on English. Kathleen uses Portuguese in only two of her LOGs (1 and 3) and English to respond to the other five. The student includes Portuguese terms in her English LLs and shows deep reflection on her language learning and cultural understanding. Kathleen's peer, Fabiana, wrote all LLs in English, increasing the depth of the second, third, and fourth LLs responses. Fabiana's reports aligned well with Kathleen<sup>42</sup> but they did not always yield critical reflection on par with Kathleen's. Nonetheless, cultural, and intercultural gains are visible in both students' LLs and confirmed in the observation of the oral sessions (e.g., when the students discuss their countries' political system, food, and a holiday as observed in LL 4, excerpts 46 and 47 below).

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<sup>41</sup> As I have already discussed three dyads (Mateo-Cida, Sebastian-Mercedes, Hunter-Vanessa) and the fourth dyad has a Ph.D. student (Zoe-Maria), I selected the fifth dyad (Kathleen-Fabiana) because as I believe they reflect what regular undergraduate students experience could be when they abide by the task guidelines.

<sup>42</sup> Considering that there were multiple instances in which Fabiana echoed what Kathleen shared, I will only focus on the most salient excerpts due to space limitations.

#### Excerpt 46, Kathleen's response to LL 4

#1 and #2: Today I learned two new words in Portuguese- estelionato and candidatar. I had never heard the word estelionato before I read it in Fabiana's text, which involved a superhero fighting villains in his city. After looking it up, I found out that in English it would be similar to a con or scheme that would be carried out by a conman. I also learned the word candidatar, which would be equivalent to running for office in English, while Fabiana and I talked about the elections in Brazil and in the United States also.

#3: Today talking to Fabiana, I learned that Brazil doesn't really celebrate Halloween but that it is popular in Brazil because it is an American tradition that Brazilians find amusing. Fabiana Told me that she always watches scary movies and sometimes goes to Halloween parties with her friends. She also told me that a couple of days ago, there have been manifestations in the street to protest Jair Bolsonaro's candidacy.

#4: Now that I know the word, I will remember what estelionato is. I will not make the mistake of saying "conservativo" instead of "conservador."

#5: Today I realized that there are a lot of similarities between Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump while talking about elections. I also realized how big the impact of the customs and holidays of the United States was when Fabiana told me about how many Brazilians know about and celebrate Halloween in their own way.

Here, Kathleen demonstrates that not only did she read an unfamiliar word in the peer's text "estelionato" [embezzlement], but also took time to look it up before talking to Fabiana

during the session. It is important to mention here that, in contrast with what was reported by Hunter, Kathleen and Fabiana share information about each other's countries, taking turns to discuss the political candidates while Hunter's responses reflect the discussion about each culture, especially Brazil, separately.

Reading Kathleen's LL 4, the instructors have a clear sense of what happened during the oral session: she confirms reading and discussing her peer's text which was due that week and discusses its contents along with other topics of their interest (music and an upcoming holiday). When reflecting on her language learning, the student used her L1 and L2 knowledge to commit to not repeating the same mistake in the future "I will not make the mistake of saying "conservativo" instead of "conservador." Finally, when reflecting on the similarities between Brazil and the US, Kathleen critically notices how Brazil seems to import North American influences.

Similarly, as observed in excerpt 47 below, Fabiana describes what was discussed in the oral session: the current political situation, their hopes for the elections, music, and artists they liked, and hearing about Kathleen's plans for Halloween. Fabiana also refers to the intercultural learning previously discussed by Kathleen, highlighting an awareness of how Brazil incorporated Halloween.

#### **Excerpt 47, Fabiana's response to LL 4**

Today we talked about the political situation in our countries. Kathleen told me what's been like to live on USA with Trump as the president, and how she deals with different political views on her family, we both hope Trump isn't reelected. And I told her about our situation with the elections coming. We also talked a little about music, I told her about Seu Jorge's most famous song, and she showed me a new band that she likes. At the end we talked about Halloween and how Brazil took a little of the USA's holiday (sic). She told me how's her Halloween usually, and she'll be doing this year.

The analysis of both log entries above suggests that Kathleen and Fabiana took more time to reflect about their oral sessions; their responses both went beyond the questions posed to cover experiences outside of the initial bounds of the questions. In another example located in excerpt 48 below, Kathleen goes beyond listing words. When responding to question one, the student explains learning and understanding unfamiliar words, knowing that, in that case, there is no literal translation for a word she and her peer discussed in the previous session: "Today I learned how to say the word "awkward" in Portuguese. Fabiana and I spoke before that word and first she told me that there is no equivalent word in Portuguese but today she told me that after thinking about it, "awkward" might be a combination of "rare" and "embarrassing." I also learned the word "handkerchief" which I never used but it means "tissue." (Kathleen's response to #1, LL 3, translated). She moves on to explain noticing the language used by her peer, making associations between what was heard, and the language young people use in Brazil

**Excerpt 48, Kathleen's response to question 2, LL 3**

	Translation
2. Eu aprendi que hoje em dia no Brasil os jovens dizem muito “tipo” e “mano” como nós nos estados unidos dizemos muito “like” and “bro.” Eu percebi que Fabiana especialmente diz muito “tipo.” Eu descobri que no Brasil o prato típico norte americano chamado “mac and cheese” não é muito comum e ela me pediu como se faz aqui.	2. I learned that nowadays in Brazil young people say “like” and “bro” a lot like us in the US say a lot of “like” and “bro.” I noticed that Fabiana especially says “like” a lot. I discovered that in Brazil the typical North American dish called “mac and cheese” is not very common and she asked me how it is done here.

When talking about food, Kathleen was surprised to learn that mac and cheese is not typical in Brazil, while also reporting that she knew what two Brazilian foods mentioned by Fabiana are. She goes beyond simply recalling their names (vocabulary) by both describing them and sharing an interest in trying them.

**Excerpt 49, Kathleen's response to question 3, LL 3**

	Translation
3. Vou lembrar da palavra “batatinha” que significa “chip” e também de que é uma coxinha, uma comida brasileira que tem frango frito com uma massa especial. Eu sempre me lembro de comida porque gostaria de prová-la.	3. I will remember the word “batatinha” which means “chip” and also that it is a coxinha, a Brazilian food that has fried chicken with a special dough. I always remember food because I would like to taste it.

Kathleen again relates the learning of Portuguese to her previous L2 (Spanish) experience, remarking that she has identified a pitfall regarding a cognate that she intends to not make mistakes on in the future “In the future, I will remember that the word “subtitles” in Portuguese is “legenda” and not “subtítulos” as in Spanish.” (**Excerpt 50**, Kathleen's response to #4, LL 3, translated).

Finally, when reflecting upon her intercultural competence, the student recognizes that her peer could explain word definitions in English that she, as a native English speaker, could not; Fabiana's perspective as a Portuguese speaker, novel to Kathleen, gave insight into the English words that Kathleen reports she would not likely have made by herself “Today I learned some English words that come from Portuguese like cashew, which comes from “cashew” and



banana. Fabiana also made me think about the difference between the words “nerd” and “geek.” She had a very specific definition for the two words and she made distinctions that I as a native English speaker don't.” (**Excerpt 51**, Kathleen’s response to #5, LL 3, translated).

**Excerpt 52, Kathleen’s response to LL 3 vs Fabiana’s responses**

	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Fabiana’s response</b>
#1 Hoje eu aprendi como dizer la palavra “awkward” em português. Fabiana e eu falamos antes dessa palavra e primeiro ela me disse que não tem uma palavra equivalente em português mas hoje ela me disse que depois de pensar, “awkward” pode ser uma combinação de “raro” e “constrangedor.” Eu também aprendi a palavra “lenço” que nunca usei mas significa “tissue.”	#1 Today I learned how to say the word “awkward” in Portuguese. Fabiana and I spoke before that word and first she told me that there is no equivalent word in Portuguese but today she told me that after thinking about it, “awkward” might be a combination of “rare” and “embarrassing.” I also learned the word “tissue” which I never used but it means “tissue.”	Today we talked about the typical food of our country, she taught me how to make mac’n cheese and I told her the ingredients of feijoada.
#2 Eu aprendi que hoje em dia no Brasil os jovens dizem muito “tipo” e “mano” como nós nos estados unidos dizemos muito “like” and “bro.” Eu percebi que Fabiana especialmente diz muito “tipo.” Eu descobri que no Brasil o prato típico norte americano chamado “mac and cheese” não é muito comum e ela me pediu como se faz aqui.	#2 I learned that nowadays in Brazil young people say “like” and “bro” a lot like us in the US say a lot of “like” and “bro.” I noticed that Fabiana especially says “like” a lot. I discovered that in Brazil the typical North American dish called “mac and cheese” is not very common and she asked me how it is done here.	We also talked about slangs and types of accents in the same countries and of different ones. We both really want to visit New Zealand!
#3 Vou lembrar da palavra “batatinha” que significa “chip” e também de que é uma coxinha, uma comida brasileira que tem frango frito	#3 I will remember the word “batatinha” which means “chip” and also that it is a coxinha, a Brazilian food that has fried chicken with a special dough. I always	I told her about a Catalan TV show I’m watching, and we discussed the similarities and differences between the romantic (sic) languages.

<p>com uma massa especial. Eu sempre me lembro de comida porque gostaria de prová-la.</p> <p>#4 No futuro, eu vou lembrar que a palavra “subtitles” em português é “legendas” e não “subtítulos” como em espanhol.</p> <p>#5 Hoje eu aprendi algumas palavras em inglês que vêm de português como cashew, que vem de “caju” e banana. Fabiana também me fez pensar na diferença nas palavras “nerd” e “geek.” Ela tinha uma definição muito específico pras duas palavras e ela fez distinções que eu como nativa de inglês não faço.</p>	<p>remember food because I would like to taste it.</p> <p>#4 In the future, I will remember that the word “subtitles” in Portuguese is “subtitles” and not “subtítulos” as in Spanish.</p> <p>#5 Today I learned some English words that come from Portuguese like cashew, which comes from “cashew” and banana. Fabiana also made me think about the difference in the words “nerd” and “geek.” She had a very specific definition for the two words and she made distinctions that I as a native English speaker don't.</p>	
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Excerpt 52 provides a picture of what happened during the session and exemplifies the quality of reflection the students experienced when responding to the LLs. Kathleen's responses are aligned with the goals she established for herself in the initial questionnaire: “Learn more idiomatic expressions and how to sound more Brazilian.” As noted above, she is paying attention to the language used by her peer and how the words sound so she can “sound more Brazilian.” On the same token, although Fabiana's reports are more concise, only 72 versus 231 words in comparison to Kathleen's response, the student is able to share what they have talked about in ways that are also aligned to her goal of “improving her communication skills and confidence while speaking with an English native speaker”.

When reading all LLs from these two learners, I observed that in most responses they provided excellent descriptions of what happened during the OSs. In Kathleen's case, she

constantly related what was learned during the discussions to what she was reading in Fabiana's Writing Assignments and on her coursework. Kathleen reported noticing everyday expressions and greetings that she then in turn later used with her peer, something that is demonstrative of the student's engagement and attention to her language learning. This is also evident in her reflections about her usage of English and Spanish, which reveal a maturity in language learning. Conversely, although all LLs written by Fabiana were shorter than those written by her peer (see Table 13 World Count, LL 1 28 words, LL 2, 28 words). Fabiana's LLs were complete and likewise demonstrated a positive engagement with her peer. In multiple instances, the student shares cultural learnings, e.g., "Coca-Cola was invented in Georgia, and it doesn't snow much there" (Fabiana's LL 1), and despite not having access to #5 "What have I learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner?", the student frequently reports on intercultural learning.

It was noticeable while watching the oral sessions that Fabiana and Kathleen collaborate to learn new things by asking each other questions, listening attentively, and comparing the two cultures, traits evident in several LLs. Moreover, the students saw one another as an essential resource. For instance, in the first oral session, both reported feeling nervous about speaking in the target language. Fabiana shared with Kathleen that she was the first North American she had ever interacted with; the student repeated this information to me during our Teletandem reunion by saying: "the interactions with Kathleen helped me, a lot. She was the first American I spoke with, ... I had a wonderful experience." Kathleen also told Fabiana she was the first Brazilian she had spoken to besides her university professors. As the time passed, they felt more comfortable speaking with each other and when Fabiana was absent, Kathleen was able to help Fabiana's friend who substituted her during the session. She helped her feel less nervous about

speaking to a native speaker of English for the first time; Kathleen was able to guide the conversation, asking questions and sharing that she had felt the same way before.

### **Remarks on All Students' Completion of LLs**

The analysis of the ten students' data revealed that in comparison to the students who fully completed the LLs, 40% of the students (Hunter, Sebastian, Mateo, and Mercedes) had a lower engagement with the task. The low engagement was perceived differently across the four learners who did not complete the task. In Mercedes's case, I argue that she felt unmotivated to complete the last two LLs because the instructors did not use the responses to her previous ones to make effective changes in her peer's behavior in relation to the Writing Assignments' revision, feedback, and unexcused absence that he did not reschedule.

In her LLs, Mercedes reported that Sebastian had neither read nor revised her Writing Assignments and during the oral sessions, she asked him about it and the reason why he missed one of the sessions. Although apologetic when interacting with Mercedes during the OSs, Sebastian did not make any changes. When analyzing the data, I reached out to Mercedes to schedule a follow-up interview and confirm my interpretation, but she did not respond. Nonetheless, in the final questionnaire, the student shared that she had a “complicated partner,” confirming their relationship was not reciprocal.

The simple observation of Zoe's and Kathleen's 100% completion rate along with the Brazilian student's high completion of the LLs confirms that students can fulfill the task even when they are not mandatory. I reached out to Zoe and Kathleen to ask what motivated them to complete all Teletandem tasks. Kathleen had already graduated college and did not respond, but Zoe talked about her commitment as a student with a FLAS fellowship, an eager language learner, and a sympathetic graduate student contributing to her colleague's research. The

relationship between committing to a major requirement and receiving funding for language learning needs further investigation to shed light on the positives of these external motivators to boost students' commitment and dedication to language learning.

Therefore, even if integrated and required, other issues may come into play regarding student engagement and completion of Teletandem tasks. Still, the integration of Teletandem tasks such as the LLs and mediation sessions is important because it gives instructors an insider perspective of the learning that occurs (or not) during the oral sessions (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016, p. 574), but only when completed satisfactorily. When it is not, it may be seen as an unnecessary and pointless activity for students who do not feel motivated to complete non-required or graded tasks, and as such, a reevaluation of the way the task is implemented is needed.

## **Conclusion**

To address the second research question: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions?, in this chapter, I discussed students' completion of the LLs and shared examples of *good*, *poor*, and *invalid* responses to argue for the integration of these tasks into the Portuguese course. In a previous chapter, I demonstrated that because the OSs were integrated into the course syllabus and curriculum, students were highly engaged in the task even when minor issues arose. Here, I addressed how the students responded to a non-integrated task implemented in the curriculum. Some of the main problems noted were the low engagement of Hunter, Mateo, and Sebastian on LLs in comparison to the other seven students, as well as to all students' participation in the face-to-face oral sessions.

Considering that Mateo and Sebastian had participated in Teletandem before and that Hunter reported knowing a lot about Brazil, a conclusion of this dissertation is that these learners saw the LLs as optional and had poor and invalid responses, especially when completing them late. The finding is similar to Terhune's (2016). In his study, the author observed diminished enthusiasm for the use of Computer-Mediated Communication when students could opt to continue using it on their own, not as part of a requirement. Mullen et al. (2009) also reported on the drawbacks of “free” participation in the tasks. These authors argue, and I concur, that task-based approaches that include selecting concrete tasks and specific learning goals as well as outcomes and sharing them with the learners will prove more effective in keeping students engaged. Tasks are more effective when integrated, assessed, and clearly connected (from a students’ perspective) to other classroom tasks.

Another study that was complemented by this analysis was conducted in 2021 by Klen-Alves and Rampazzo (submitted). The authors investigated whether or not students participating in iiTTD observe the teletandem principles of autonomy, reciprocity, and separation of languages during the OSs. Their analysis of one dyad that participated in seven oral sessions revealed that the students observed the principles from the initial to the final session. In this dissertation, with regard to the principle of separation of languages, three of the five peers (Zoe and Maria, Kathleen and Fabiana, Mateo and Cida) observed the principle by equally dividing the time between the languages used. Of the two peers who did not observe the principle of separation of language (Hunter and Camila, Sebastian and Mercedes), one dyad (Sebastian and Mercedes) attempted to observe the principle while the other (Hunter) possibly unintentionally failed to equally divide the time of the OSs between the two languages.

In this study, I deliberately chose to evaluate the implementation of Teletandem tasks through the students' experiences. Positives of the integration, such as the development of critical thinking, language proficiency gains, and intercultural communication, were also considered and will be exhausted in other papers. Here, I intended to present the Teletandem implementation evaluation, discuss its roadblocks, and propose changes for future usage. To achieve this goal, in the next section, I discuss the results of the analysis of the LLs implementation and make suggestions for the integration of Teletandem tasks that are yet not integrated into the observed course.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7 DISCUSSION

Chapters 5 and 6 addressed the second research question: How is the Teletandem program's structure reproduced at the partnering institutions? by providing a detailed account of how students participate in integrated and non-integrated tasks implemented in the partnering institution classroom. The results presented here corroborate with the body of literature on Teletandem by confirming that students observed the Teletandem principles of reciprocity and autonomy and the program's rules related to attendance and participation. This was particularly noticeable in the students' participation in integrated Teletandem tasks.

As argued in Chapter five, the face-to-face aspect of the exchange encouraged commitment and accountability. Well-integrated tasks can foster agency and autonomy and allow students to be responsible for justifying their absences, being reciprocal to one another by working together, finding solutions, and offering alternatives when they cannot meet some of the requirements. The experience helps these individuals become more responsive and responsible. Chapter five also revealed that the Teletandem protocols currently in place for the Oral Sessions are effective as they release the responsibility to the students to find a substitute or schedule a make-up session. The protocol was sufficient to ensure students' engagement and participation in these two tasks.

In chapter six, I discussed students' completion of the learning logs. Although considered a well-established Teletandem microtask, in practice, the implementation of the LLs, even in integrated or semi-integrated Teletandem experiences (Cavalari & Aranha, 2016; Aranha &



Cavalari, 2014), varied according to numerous factors, including the value placed on the task during implementation and its recycling during the mediation sessions.

The analysis confirmed that there was a disparity in participation in the tasks. In the US, three (Mateo, Sebastian, and Hunter) out of the five students did not complete the task as entailed by the program. Considering that Mateo and Sebastian had participated in Teletandem before and that Hunter reported knowing a lot about Brazil, a conclusion of this dissertation is that these learners saw the LLs as optional and had poor and invalid responses, especially when completing them late.

Going beyond students' completion of the learning logs, to evaluate the task's place in the language classroom, my study revealed that the information present in the LLs was not retrieved and brought to class during mediation sessions, particularly in the UGA context. These findings are relevant because the US institution does not hold mediation sessions. Thus, the learners' logs are not recovered by the instructors, nor are they shared with the whole group. In Brazil, the Teletandem program proposes that what students write in the LLs is retrieved during Mediation Sessions. Still, I am unaware of how often this is accomplished.

Another finding is that the criteria and objectives of the LLs are not established collaboratively by cooperating institutions and negotiated between the instructors (Del Monte & Cavalari, 2021), at least in the context of this study. This finding is relevant because if the criteria and objectives of the tasks are not established collaboratively, this can impact the partnering institution teacher's own perception and understanding of the tasks and the knowledge of how the task should be implemented and connected to other tasks.

At the UGA institution, despite the guidance given to the students during the tutorial session, minimal follow-ups on the students' completion of the LLs occurs during the semester.

Even though the students were informed about the task when they signed the consent form, the consent was used to collect their data for research on Teletandem. There is no mention of the LLs in the partnering institution course syllabus, nor does its completion affect students' assessments or grades; consequently, there is a disparity in the task completion.

The analysis of students' responses also revealed that even though students were directed during the tutorial session to “complete the logs, ideally, after each session,” and were given some explanation about what the LLs are, they are not automatically completed by the students immediately after the oral session in the way the program intends. On that note, the students would benefit from more guidelines that would help them to think about what happened during the OSs, how it is connected to their learning, and what considerations they should make moving forward.

To address these problems, I first propose that both the LLs and the mediation sessions become required tasks, fully integrated into the course design, detailed in the course syllabus, and retrieved by the professors in class<sup>43</sup>. This would improve the guidance given to the students. Yet, as exposed elsewhere, even when integrated and required, students might not complete Teletandem tasks that are deemed optional. However, as noted in chapter four, there is a degree of accountability when dealing with face-to-face communication. Therefore, combining the writing of LLs to biweekly face-to-face mediation sessions in which students have to share what they wrote could increase students' responsibility in completing the LLs task since there is an element of accountability inherent to it.

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<sup>43</sup> This suggestion is also influenced by my previous observations of the implementation of Teletandem into UGA courses. In the past, very few students responded to the logs and questionnaires. They only completed required integrated tasks (orientation, oral sessions, and Writing Assignments).

Second, I propose that teachers who integrate telecollaboration encourage students to complete the LLs within 48 hours of their OSs. This is important because the results of this study demonstrated that when students turned in their LLs late, they did not remember what happened during the OSs. This was evident in Sebastian's and Hunter's late and rushed responses and in Mateo's response to a log with information about another session. Providing students with a deadline is not a guarantee of engagement. In fact, "[i]t is difficult to measure internal and external factors, such as motivation, aptitude, and anxiety, in a reliable way [and] it is almost impossible to isolate some of these factors from others" (Henshaw & Hawkins, 2022, p.3).

Giving students a specific date and time to complete the task and using an official system such as the universities learning management systems (LMS) to monitor their progress is likely to increase accountability, reducing the number of extremely late submissions. Regarding the Teletandem principles of separation of language, autonomy, and reciprocity, this proposal would not interfere with the principle of autonomy because instructors could promote agency in parallel with structured learning (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Instructors are not telling the students what they should be doing constantly. Instead, the structured integration of the Teletandem tasks offers some basis:

They know that they:

1. are supposed to support each other with their language learning.
2. should provide each other with feedback on the Writing Assignments and likewise negotiate providing each other with feedback during the oral sessions.
3. can spend time during the interaction commenting on the Writing Assignment but can also decide to do something completely different.

4. have multiple tasks to complete, each task being important for their language learning, i.e., they have a purpose, guidance, and deadlines.

Having an established set of goals and providing students with in-class training and follow-ups could take them beyond the use of the designed task formats, responding to questions posed, and reflecting on their language learning to enhance quality of their work. In addition to that, a combination of clear tasks and instructions with deadlines and rubrics along with excitement, encouragement, and feedback from the teacher will motivate quality.

Third, expanding on my first point of integrating both the logs and the mediation sessions, I propose that instructors consider the dialogic nature of the LLs and their possible use as a tool for students to unpack what is happening in the oral sessions during class. It is vital that someone reads the logs and provides feedback to the learner. Although it was not the only factor, this study revealed that the LLs task could have been enhanced if students had a chance to share their experiences with their instructor or with their classmates often. Adding the biweekly mediation sessions where all students share their reflections would reduce the professor's amount of work of, for example, providing individual feedback to each student. It would also center the students' experiences in the classroom, ultimately motivating the less engaged ones to write something to share. If we retrieved, for instance, Hunter's "I didn't learn anything" responses during class time, we would be able to help the student notice something that he did learn. Sometimes students' "progress can be seen in something other than an increase in accuracy" (Lightbown, 2003, p. 5). In Hunter's case, the student improved his language usage, learned several unfamiliar words, and practiced pronunciation during the oral sessions, but this was not reflected in his reports of the experience. Retrieving his LLs could be an opportunity to help him challenge his responses or to request more detailed and careful accounts of his experience.

Reading the LLs or discussing them in mediation sessions would also help fix immediate problems as they occur, allowing the instructors to make adjustments, hold students accountable (e.g., follow-up with students who were late in completing the LLs or were not collaborating with their peers), and support students who struggled with the technology used. Mediation sessions could also be the space to challenge stereotypes, fix misunderstandings, and, more importantly, improve students' reflection, all necessary steps to help students unpack some conversations they had. Sharing the LLs in biweekly mediation sessions also breaks down the walls of each dyad that keep information sequestered for only that pair. This practice could potentially illuminate students' interpretations of their experiences as they reflect on what happened in the oral sessions, make connections and comparisons, and think forward.

Fourth, considering that the richness of the LLs lies in the incidental learning that it fosters regarding current linguistic and cultural topics discussed during the oral sessions, I encourage instructors to generate course materials based on topics that emerge from students' reflections. Retrieving information the students shared can help instructors advance learners' linguistic and intercultural skills and offer a unique opportunity for deep spiral learning. Each time the topic is reviewed or encountered, the student has a new opportunity to learn more about it (e.g., in the writing assignment, then in the oral session, and later in the learning log).

Moreover, observing students' responses can uncover if students are appropriating topics from the class and from the other Teletandem tasks (e.g., Writing Assignment). I noticed that the professor of this course did this by considering the elections' context and changing the writing text's themes that were used in previous years to engage the learners in related critical topics such as the presidential candidates and Nazism in Brazil. By doing this, the professor allowed for a

more meaningful connection between what the students were writing about and what they wanted to discuss/could not avoid discussing during the oral session.

Fifth, considering that *poor* and *invalid* responses could be a consequence of the LLs task design, I recommend that instructors revise the LLs to ensure that 1) students have enough time to complete the task, 2) the task has a clear purpose which is shared with the students, and 3) instructors follow-up appropriately to ensure quality and timely completion. These suggestions are broken down into two parts, but before discussing them we need to return to the guiding questions reproduced in Table 14.

**Table 14**

*LLs Current Guiding Questions*

LLs Current Guiding Questions	
1. What did I learn in Portuguese today (words, whole sentences)?	1. O que eu aprendi hoje em português (palavras, frases inteiras)?
2. What did I learn today about my partner's country: people, music, etc.?	2. O que eu aprendi hoje sobre o país do meu parceiro: as pessoas, a música, etc.?
3. My favorite expressions which I will remember with certainty are	3. Minhas expressões preferidas das quais vou me lembrar com certeza:
4. Mistakes I will not make next time are:	4. Erros que não vou mais cometer da próxima vez:
5. What have I learned about my own country and/or culture through interaction with my partner?	5. O que eu aprendi sobre meu próprio país e/ou cultura através da interação com meu parceiro?

## **Redesigning the LLs Questions**

The analysis of students' responses confirmed that although there is nothing wrong with the questions asked, the current wording may prompt learners to list things, limiting their responses and reflection. For instance, several students answered questions #1 and #3 with isolated words or short sentences instead of writing paragraphs about the words or expressions learned. Thus, I recommend rewriting them, leaving the topics more open. In addition, 40% of the students had incomplete, late, or poorly written logs. To address this issue, I suggest giving students more direction on how to use the LLs as a reflective tool, including explaining the task, having examples of former students' LLs available for reference, and discussing the LLs during mediation sessions. The redesign should include the task explanation, requirements to complete it, and information on how and when students will be assessed.

## **Assessing the LLs Task**

In terms of quality, when looking at the word count for all LLs, I first wondered if it made sense to require a minimum number of words from the students. Upon much thinking and conversations with my peers who were also familiar with the data set, I concluded that, although the LLs that lacked quality were overly terse and late, complete responses were not necessarily lengthy (as observed in Fabiana's LLs in comparison to their peers). . Thus, instructors should not require a specific number of words, but help students realize the importance of the task and the need to not rush to complete it. If the learners see the LLs as busywork, they miss the chance to reflect. This finding is evident in Hunter's responses. The student completed the task because, as the researcher, I followed up with him, but he may not have received any benefits from completing it.

Regarding the language used, the data analysis demonstrated that, even though it was not required, six out of the ten students used the target language to complete all LLs. Considering that the original questions were written in Portuguese, the task was more suitable for Brazilian students than intermediate-level language learners in partnering universities, and as a result, a translation is needed. Based on this experience, I suggest that in future implementations the questions are delivered in both languages, as it may encourage even more students to attempt using the target language, especially if they know there will be no penalties for trying.

The final concern of this dissertation is with the peripheral position occupied by the LLs both domestically and overseas. In my observation of the implementation of Teletandem, I have seen more focus put on the oral sessions, not only by the students but also by the researchers. Considering that the LLs are asynchronous, they require an elevated level of autonomy, responsibility, and agency from students, and therefore it is contradictory to me to position them as microtasks. Therefore, I propose the revision of the nomenclature of macro and microtasks. Currently, the oral sessions and the mediation sessions are considered macrotasks, but positioning all tasks at the same level can increase their perceived relevance, reduce any subconscious bias towards some tasks, and encourage instructors and students to dedicate more time to them. To conclude, these suggestions can increase students' participation in the task and instructors' awareness of students' experiences. Moreover, the redesign of the LLs task can support the students' learning and be in alignment with the Teletandem program's instructions and expectations.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8 CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this dissertation, I identified multiple critical problems plaguing CALL implementations in both the US and Brazil. Enrollment in US world language programs is declining, and very few students in both the US and Brazil graduate with a working proficiency level in the languages they are studying. Furthermore, with the exception of well-funded programs, the efficacy of less commonly taught language programs such as Portuguese have been curtailed by factors such as budget cuts and a reduction in face-to-face interaction of learners. Universities are uniquely situated to facilitate telecollaborative exchanges and help mitigate the factors impacting the issues stated. However, tools must be both created, and honed over time, to help focus the resources of universities and allow for that mitigation.

Teletandem is a tool situated to help mitigate challenges such as these, and like any other tool, Teletandem requires improvements periodically to ensure that it remains effective. Improvements include monetary investment to allow for better infrastructure and training for the facilitators of the telecollaborative exchanges and their students. My goal in this document was to highlight where Teletandem methodologies require improvements, and showcase, with analysis, why implementing Teletandem into the language classroom serves as the refinement needed.

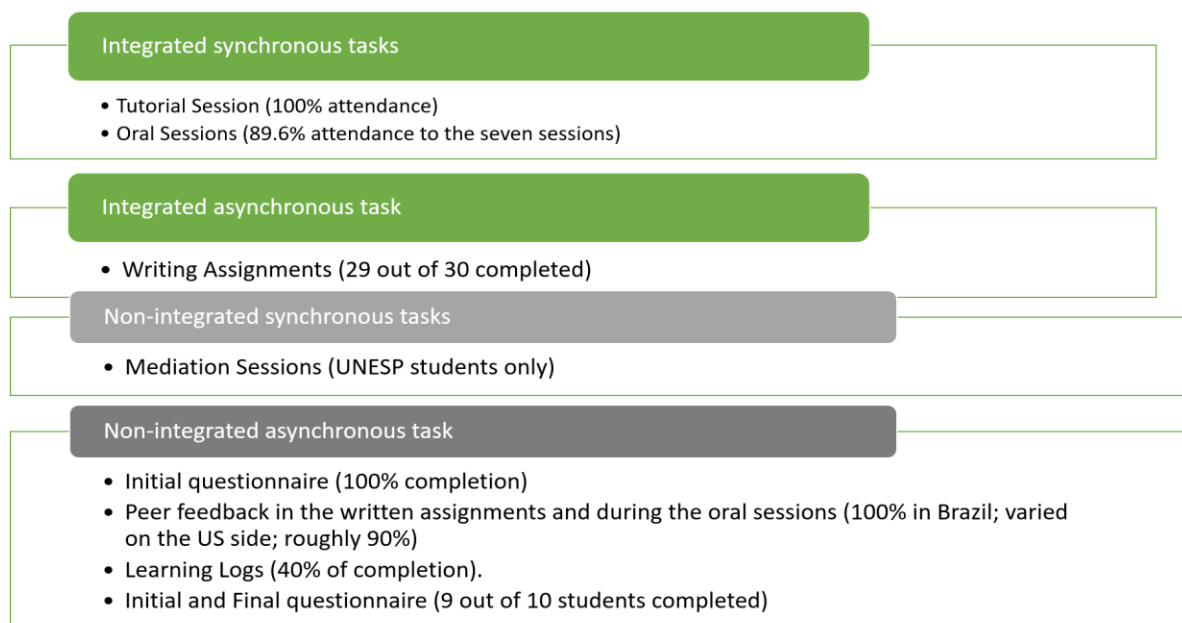
To achieve this goal, I have designed my research project and followed each step of the implementation of Teletandem to a) learn what the implementation looked like before, during,

and after the experience (RQ1) and to b) evaluate the ways the structure of Teletandem was reproduced in the partnering institution (RQ2). Based on the results of this analysis, I detailed what changes instructors and program coordinators can make in the administration and integration of Teletandem to better serve the students involved in the program.

By assessing the integration of Teletandem effectiveness and the ten learners' experiences with the program, I learned that students' participation in required synchronous tasks such as the OSs<sup>44</sup> was significantly higher (89.6%) than their completion of requested asynchronous ones such as the LLs<sup>45</sup> (40%). Figure 11 offers a breakdown of the students' completion of integrated and non-integrated tasks. ‘

**Figure 11**

*Completion of integrated and non-integrated tasks*



<sup>44</sup> Teletandem Oral Sessions (OSs).

<sup>45</sup> Teletandem Learning Logs (LLs).

As figure 11 illustrates, the students seem to have enjoyed participating in synchronous integrated tasks. They all participated in the tutorial session and were highly engaged in the oral session. Although there were four absences during the program's implementation, three of those were either rescheduled or were mitigated by a substitute.

When looking at the Writing Assignments task, all students at the partnering university complete it. In Brazil, only one student (Mercedes) did not complete her third writing assignment, but there is evidence that this was related to her peer not providing feedback on the first two Writing Assignments. Overall, this integrated asynchronous task worked well, with only one out of 30 Writing Assignments incomplete. These results indicated that the students demonstrated high accountability and willingness to participate in the two integrated tasks regardless of the mode (synchronous and asynchronous).

Concerning the non-integrated tasks presented in figure 11, the mediation sessions only happened at UNESP. They were synchronous sessions in which the students talked about their experiences, shared if they were having any problems, and could potentially unpack some of their perceptions about the experience. Although the Portuguese course professor asked students how things were going and I conducted an evaluation session with the students, this was not enough to learn about the students' experiences and address needed changes, nor did the mediation sessions accomplish that, considering that students complained about the learning logs format, which continued to be the same.

In regards to the asynchronous, self-reported data, 100% of the students completed the initial questionnaire and all students except for Mateo completed the final one. In relation to feedback, all Brazilian students provided the US students with timely feedback. In the US, all

students except Sebastian read their peer's texts and provided timely feedback, except Mateo and Hunter in one instance in which they were late. Although all students provided each other feedback during the oral sessions, it was not the same as taking the time to read what the peer wrote and give them suggestions. Consequently, Hunter and Mateo spend more time during the oral session reading and revising the texts in the presence of their peers.

Another asynchronous task that was not completed by four of the ten students was the learning logs, which should be the reflective component of their experience. The cross-analysis of the students' responses revealed that those who completed the task consistently did so soon after the oral session. On the other hand, three out of the four students who did not complete all LLs were usually late and did not demonstrate the same engagement in the task.

These findings corroborate current studies comparing students' perception of face-to-face vs online learning. For example, when asked to compare in-class to online instruction, even though students recognized the positive sides of working autonomously, such as accessing content online on their own time, they associate learning quality with activities in which they meet face-to-face (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010).

Considering that there was no significant difference in the participation of student volunteers (participating in the siTTD) and students enrolled in the course (iiTTD), the results of this dissertation suggest that the way the tasks are designed and implemented affect completion rates. Results further indicated that despite the differing levels of engagement between learners, all students reported having a positive experience with Teletandem, even when they had a less positive perception of their peers. This, combined with the discrepancy in participation between face-to-face and non-synchronous tasks, indicates a need for fully integrating Teletandem into the classroom.

The analysis also revealed that the process of implementing Teletandem has room for improvement in the areas of output delivery by the students, and connecting the assignments to what happens in the classroom. This document recommends several changes designed to implement these improvements. First, as addressed in Chapter six, a more precise Teletandem design is needed that includes rubrics, deadlines, and consistent forms of checking and assessing students' work. This could benefit learners' observance of the Teletandem principles and completion of asynchronous tasks.

Second, integration can help with the US issue of student retention by strengthening the sense of togetherness and shared goals and activities between learners from the two partnering institutions (Telles, 2015). For example, by implementing mediation sessions where students share their experiences from recent oral sessions (focused and reinforced by reflection in the TLL's) with the class at large, students may find commonalities in the successes and lessons encountered by other dyads, reinforcing that they are not alone in their learning process.

Third, the cyclical implementation of Teletandem tasks in the language curriculum can support teaching in non-Teletandem sessions (regular class), as instructors are able to recycle topics and information related to students' interests retrieved from completed Teletandem tasks, such as the LLs. As demonstrated in Chapter five, student-centered practices foster agency and responsiveness in the learners, which in turn leads to more outstanding commitment.

Fourth, currently, instructors teaching in hybrid programs struggle to find authentic materials and meaningful activities for students to complete independently when they are not meeting in class. When well-planned and integrated, Teletandem tasks such as the OSs can provide more substantial content and promote better accountability due to the fact that they are communicating face-to-face with their partners.

Fifth, Teletandem's practices can go beyond offering opportunities for language acquisition and language and culture learning. For instance, the principle of reciprocity has the potential to respond to the need for social justice, equity, and collaborative intercultural exchange, contributing to the field of CALL by fostering organic telecollaborative encounters that are based on more reciprocal relationships and global citizenry (Godwin-Jones, 2021).

## **Limitations**

The results discussed here are vital to rethink how Teletandem tasks are designed and implemented into the language classroom in iiTTD and siTTD partnerships. I have presented enough evidence to demonstrate that even within the UNESP context, students' engagement in synchronous and asynchronous Teletandem tasks varied, even when required or requested. However, my study is limited to one course with only five dyads, therefore further investigation comparing the successful implementation of the Teletandem tasks in different integrations could expand the lessons learned and provide suggestions for a more effective redesign of Teletandem.

## **Moving Forward**

“I just want to learn more with you as a person, beyond the English Language.”

—Maria (Brazilian student volunteer)

I close this study by returning to one of the first sentences Maria told her peer Zoe during the first Oral Session. To me, Maria understood English to be both content and a tool. She was aware of the importance of becoming proficient in the language, a language she would receive a

degree in by the end of her undergraduate career, yet, she knew that by coming to her regular language classroom every week, each Monday would be completely different.

Through her interactions via Teletandem, Maria could make comparisons between the Brazilian and the North American educational systems, discuss the current political scenarios of both countries, share reading recommendations and analysis, and complete Teletandem tasks that supported her learning goal of “building up confidence” (Maria’s response to the final questionnaire).

Joining a telecollaborative project allowed these ten students to get to know someone new across borders inside their classroom. It is not a replacement for studying abroad, but this experience is such a refreshing event compared to drills, unimaginative role-plays, and artificial communication with classmates or once-in-a-semester guest speakers. It is not perfect, but with enough rapport, changes can be made.

Implementing Teletandem integrated into the classroom is getting to work towards a goal while supporting someone in a similar role in doing the same. If we look at how things have changed in the past two years due to COVID-19, we are aware of how much many of us missed socializing, traveling, exploring and how many of us, more than ever, had to reinvent our use of computer and cellphone screens to support our students learning from a distance. Many of us have experienced Zoom fatigue and do not appreciate sitting in front of a screen for hours.

Telecollaborative work has a duration of time and depth. This collaborative creation of language and meaning provides an opportunity for a student to enter a North American classroom, but be immersed in the Brazilian context, discussing it in class and in the interactions with their peers. Teletandem invites students to have a reciprocal relationship by asking them to teach and learn with each other. Telecollaborative exchanges are essential to prepare our students

to study abroad, use the language meaningfully to communicate, and to help them make friends in the journey of learning a new language.

I chose to close with Maria's words because I believe in the power of foreign language education and interaction with more languages and cultures to create a more positive global environment (Ortega, 2017) where people can learn with each other. Through the opportunity to use an intercultural communicative tool like Teletandem, the students participating in this research gained more than linguistic growth; they had the chance to change their attitudes towards diversity and to better their understanding of each other's and their own countries.

Considering the broader contexts of Brazil and the U.S. presented in Chapter One, it is unfortunate that very few people who study a foreign language have a chance to use it in meaningful, communicative ways, not only because of the limited resources to study abroad, but because of the lack of access to programs like this, thus, telecollaboration can be an avenue for a more multilingual, diverse, and equitable society. Such orientation in the language classroom can cultivate diversity and solidarity, exposing students to the materials they are learning in real-life social contexts with real-life people.

With this future in mind, there is a critical necessity for researchers from multiple worlds to raise their voices in the field. I hope this work can inspire allied linguists to expand research in any of the following areas:

1. The limitations and affordances of synchronous and asynchronous tasks and their relationship with the integration of the tasks into the curriculum.
2. The role of the program coordinators and instructors in selecting technology and planning the telecollaborative exchange in ways that will support the completion of the tasks.



3. The (re)conceptualizations of the Teletandem principles and further analysis of the observance of these principles in practice.
4. The use of CHAT theories and methodologies to understand human-computer interaction, program design, and agency.

Telecollaboration and more recently virtual exchange are prolific fields of inquiry, yet, my work is not done, and I am not aware of other researchers investigating the implementation of Teletandem from the partnering institution. Therefore, the findings of this dissertation contribute to the field and should continue to be studied by researchers and practitioners interested in implementing telecollaborative exchanges in the language classroom.

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