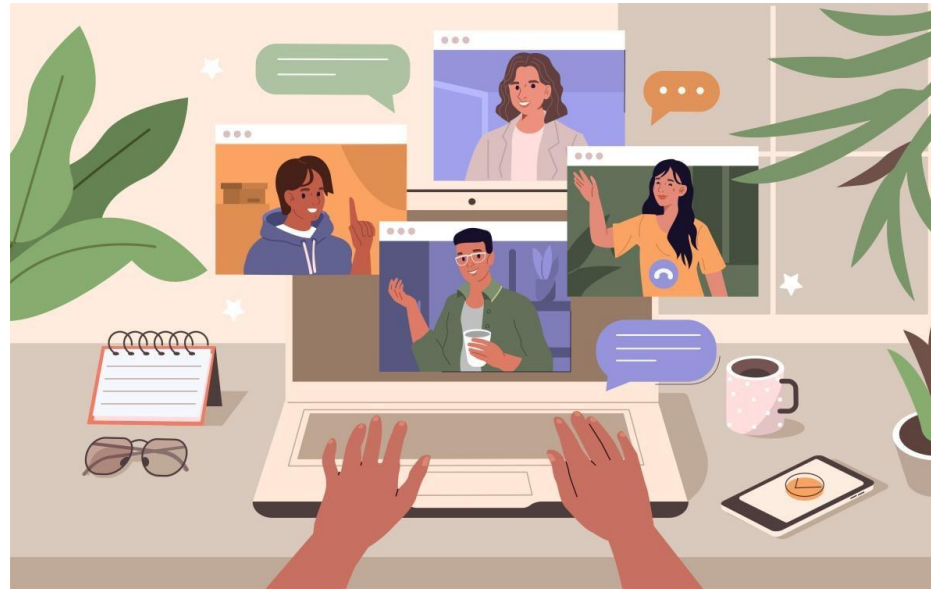


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Challenges and new directions in virtual
exchange environments

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



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Introduction

- In the past few decades, many Higher Education Institutes in Brazil have implemented initiatives to improve their internationalization processes.
- One of the initiatives to improve the internationalization process at the Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Brazil, was offering courses in a teletandem context.
- Teletandem interactions can become even more focused and meaningful if students work together on a project about a topic they must discuss and present their viewpoints (Figueiredo, 2024).
- This study presents a promising combination of teletandem and project pedagogy, offering a new perspective on language and culture learning. By exploring this combination's challenges and potential benefits, we aim to inspire optimism and intrigue in our audience.

Methodology

In the first semester of 2023, the teletandem course brought together participants from Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador:

These are the participants of the research:

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

The data for this case study (Nunan, 1992) was obtained through:

- video recordings of interactions during the classes;**
- interviews with two pairs of students, among others.**

This research:

- investigated possible challenges in combining project pedagogy and teletandem;**
- verified how this combination can enhance the collaborative learning of languages and cultures.**

The projects developed

- **Festividades en la cultura ecuatoriana y festividades en la cultura brasileña**
(Festivities in Ecuadorian Culture and Festivities in Brazilian Culture)
- **Platos Tipicos, Danzas y Fiestas Culturales de las Regiones de Brasil y Argentina**
(Typical Dishes, Dances and Cultural Festivities of the Regions of Brazil and Argentina)
- **Rol de la mujer en las culturas ecuatoriana, brasileña y turca**
(Role of women in Ecuadorian, Brazilian and Turkish cultures)
- **Análise sócio econômica do Brasil e do Equador**
(Social and economic analysis of Brazil and Equador)
- **Identidad para la gastronomía del Valle de los Chillos**
(Identity for the gastronomy of the Chillos Valley)
- **Educação no Equador x Educação en Brasil**
(Education in Equador x Education in Brazil)

Description and analysis

Time management

Excerpt 1:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Description and analysis

Time management

Excerpt 2:

Prof. João: How often did you and Chica interact?

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

Description and analysis

Time management

Excerpt 3:

Prof. Sarita: Would you like to continue interacting in teletandem?

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

Description and analysis

Integrating teletandem with project pedagogy

Excerpt 4:

Prof. João: What did you talk about during the interactions?

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

Description and analysis

Integrating teletandem with project pedagogy

Excerpt 5

Prof. João: Did you think the project development was significant?

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

Description and analysis

Integrating teletandem with project pedagogy

Excerpt 6:

Prof. João: Did you think developing the project was important?

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

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

Chael: Yes.

Prof. João: Why?

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

Final remarks

- The combination of teletandem and project pedagogy offered an innovative learning experience (Figueiredo, 2024; Hernández, 1998) by encouraging students to actively collaborate in a cross-cultural setting, rather than merely exchanging linguistic knowledge.
- By grounding their discussions in a project, the students were able to connect academic content to real-world issues, making the learning experience more relevant and impactful.
- The results of this investigation highlighted time management as a significant challenge when integrating project pedagogy with teletandem.

Final remarks

- **Furthermore, the combination of project pedagogy and teletandem has the potential to innovate and enhance virtual exchange experiences.**
- **By incorporating project pedagogy into teletandem exchanges, professors can create more dynamic and meaningful virtual learning environments that encourage collaboration, cultural awareness, and language proficiency.**
- **This innovative model has the potential to transform how virtual exchanges are conducted, paving the way for more effective and engaging language education in an increasingly interconnected world.**

Thank you!

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