



The use of project pedagogy in teletandem sessions: the points of view of Brazilian and Argentine learners

O uso da pedagogia de projetos em sessões de teletandem: o ponto de vista de alunos brasileiros e argentinos

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ABSTRACT: This article describes an online language learning context in which teletandem sessions (Telles, 2009) have been integrated into the syllabus of a Modern Languages Degree Course at the Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Brazil, as an internationalization at home action. In the second semester of 2021, the subject “Aprendizaje de Portugués y Español en Teletandem” was offered with the participation of ten Brazilian students who were majoring in Spanish at the UFG, nine Argentine students from different undergraduate courses from the Universidad de Cuyo, and one undergraduate student from the Universidad de Buenos Aires. In this virtual learning context, the Brazilians could teach Portuguese to the Argentinians and improve their fluency in Spanish through interactions with them. They also had to develop a project about a chosen theme and work on it, considering the Brazilian and Argentine contexts. The data for this case study (Johnson, 1992) was obtained through video recordings of the interviews of two pairs of students. The results show that the participants could learn an additional language, improve their intercultural skills, and talk about real-world problems in Brazil and Argentina, like the lack of water in some cities, the devaluation of women’s work, etc. The students’ reflections on these topics made them more socially aware of living in a more harmonious world where diversity is highly valued.

KEYWORDS: Teletandem. Additional languages teaching and learning. Linguistic development. Project pedagogy.

RESUMO: Este artigo descreve um contexto de aprendizagem de línguas *on-line* em que sessões de teletandem (Telles, 2009) foram integradas ao currículo do Curso de Letras da Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Brasil, como uma ação de internacionalização em casa. No segundo semestre de 2021, foi oferecida a disciplina “Aprendizaje de Portugués y Español en Teletandem” com a participação de dez estudantes brasileiros que estavam cursando licenciatura em espanhol na UFG, nove estudantes argentinos de diferentes cursos de graduação da Universidade de Cuyo e uma estudante da Universidad de Buenos Aires. Nesse contexto virtual de aprendizagem, os brasileiros puderam ensinar português aos argentinos e melhorar sua fluência em espanhol por meio de interações com eles. Eles também tiveram que elaborar um projeto sobre um tema escolhido e trabalhá-lo considerando os contextos brasileiro e argentino. Os dados para este estudo de caso (Johnson, 1992) foram obtidos por meio de gravações em vídeo de entrevistas com dois pares de estudantes. Os resultados

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mostram que os participantes conseguiram não apenas aprender uma língua estrangeira, mas também aprimorar suas habilidades interculturais e falar sobre problemas do mundo real do Brasil e da Argentina, como a falta de água em algumas cidades, a desvalorização do trabalho feminino etc. As reflexões dos alunos sobre esses temas os tornaram mais socialmente conscientes quanto a viver em um mundo mais harmonioso, onde a diversidade é altamente valorizada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Teletandem. Ensino e aprendizagem de línguas adicionais. Desenvolvimento linguístico. Pedagogia de projetos.

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1 Introduction

According to Crystal (2001), language classes until the 1980s practically took place in face-to-face environments. However, with the advent of digital technologies, teachers began to see the virtual environment as conducive to language teaching (Paiva, 2001; Warschauer, 1997), as it enabled interactions mediated by the computer.

As Coelho (1992) clarifies, an essential requirement for the learning of an additional language¹ is to provide students with “opportunities for frequent and extensive interaction in the target language” (p. 37). These opportunities are favored by a teaching model that promotes collaborative language learning.

Figueiredo (2018, p. 22) highlights a significant advantage of collaborative work, stating that “interaction maximizes the acquisition of the new language by promoting opportunities both for input and output.” This perspective is supported by Swain (1995, 1997, 1999, 2000) and Swain and Lapkin (1998), who assert that output is a pivotal element in language learning. By modifying the input and transforming it into production, learners not only enhance their understanding of the structure of the language but also internalize the meaning of the message.

¹ Based on Judd, Tan, and Walberg (2001), I use the concept of ‘additional language’ instead of ‘foreign language’ or ‘second language’, since “[t]he students may actually be learning not a second but a third or fourth language” (Judd; Tan; Walberg, 2001, p. 6, emphases in original).

Collaborative learning can also occur in the virtual environment. One way to encourage internationalization and learning additional languages is to develop telecollaborative projects, in which language learners can interact with people from other countries via the internet (Belz, 2002; Grazzi; Koslova, 2023; Nguyen, 2010; O'Dowd, 2010).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of computers for teaching was intensified (Bonifácio; Siqueira, 2022; C6; Amorim; Finardi, 2020; Didenko; Filatova; Anisimova, 2021), and some Brazilian universities used some approaches to strengthen their students' language learning process through activities involving internationalization at home. According to Beelen and Jones (2018), the concept of internationalisation at home was developed in Europe during the late 1990s. It is defined as "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments" (Beelen; Jones, 2015, p. 76).

As learners were prevented from going abroad due to the social isolation caused by the pandemic (Henrique, 2020), a plausible solution was to use telecollaboration to provide them with moments of interaction with international partners. Thus, telecollaboration not only bridged the physical gap but also significantly positively impacted the internationalization process of higher education, fostering a global perspective among students.

We live in a globalized world where higher education increasingly demands internationalization (Gorovitz; Unternbäumen, 2021; Guimarães; Finardi; Casotti, 2019; Maués; Bastos, 2017). In the process of internationalization, higher education institutions have invested heavily in the qualification of their professors and students, providing them with opportunities for insertion in international programs in partner institutions abroad and in partnerships that result in global research and publications (Stallivieri, 2017).

The university where I work – Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG) – has also improved its internationalization at home process, which results in the attraction and reception of international professors, students, and technical-administrative staff, as well as in the development of curricula that include a global orientation in its form and content, and in fostering the improvement of the teaching-learning processes of additional languages and the offer of Portuguese courses for international students.

The UFG's internationalization has been more institutionalized since the creation of the International Office, which has been in operation since 1987. As explained by Figueiredo, Aguiar, and Silva (2020, p. 75), since 1987 there has been “an intense effort to expand the UFG's participation in international mobility programs and other international cooperation projects, according to the objectives mentioned in the Institutional Development Plan (PDI) of the UFG².”

According to the PDI (UFG, 2018a, p. 34), internationalization at UFG

is conceived as a process that articulates the international, intercultural, and global dimensions of teaching, research, and extension activities. It aims to educate citizens to be better prepared to live and work in a more interconnected multicultural world and to increase the contribution that the university can offer to society as a result of the production of knowledge generated by actions based on international cooperation (UFG, 2018a, p. 34).

In this article, I will focus on the implementation of a teletandem course in which Brazilian and Argentine learners participated. Project pedagogy was used to stimulate their discussions and reflections on issues related to their countries. In the following sections, I will present a theoretical background for this study and describe the pedagogical experience of using project pedagogy in teletandem sessions. I will highlight the students' perceptions about their active involvement in interactions with their partners and the projects they collaboratively developed.

² A free translation has been provided in this and other citations of texts from non-English languages.

2 Language policies as an important factor for the internationalization process of higher education

Several authors emphasize the importance of well-defined language policies for the development of the higher education internationalization process (Finardi; Archanjo, 2018; Guimarães; Finardi; Casotti, 2019; Leal, 2019; Lunardi; Gomez; Corte, 2019). For example, for the Science without Borders Program³ to be more successful, the Languages without Borders Program was developed, which aimed to prepare students linguistically to be able to participate in international academic programs since experience showed that the lack of proficiency in an additional language was an obstacle to the success of some students (Abreu-e-Lima; Moraes Filho, 2016; Finardi; Archanjo, 2018; Leal, 2019).

Lunardi, Gomez, and Corte (2019, p. 133) state that “languages constitute one of the elements of the structuring basis of the internationalization of Higher Education Institutes, which allow, among other possibilities, to disseminate and strengthen research in Brazil for the world.” Although English is considered a lingua franca and the language of internationalization (Finardi; Porcino, 2015; Fonseca, 2016; Mendes, 2020), we should defend linguistic diversity in the global construction of knowledge. According to Muñoz (2021), just as humanity is plurilingual or lives in multilingual environments, the university institution itself, scientific production and the construction of knowledge have been built from multilingual discursive and communicative practices. In this way, by defending linguistic diversity, we will enable the learning and the use of other languages in the Brazilian university context, in addition to English, to guarantee interaction between the most varied cultures, thus

³ Sciences without Borders was a federal government program resulting from the partnership between the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI) in Brazil. It aimed to strengthen and expand science and technology initiatives, innovation, and competitiveness by placing the best Brazilian students in the best universities in the world (Abreu-e-Lima; Moraes Filho, 2016).

providing greater engagement between students and teachers who come to interact with people who speak other languages.

In a significant development, CONSUNI⁴ Resolution No. 15 was approved in 2018, thereby establishing the Language Policy of the Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG, 2018b). This Resolution, detailed in Article 2, outlines the fundamental principles of UFG's Language Policy:

- I- recognition and appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity;
- II- respectful coexistence between multilingual communities;
- III- citizenship education in language learning;
- IV- learning of cultural values inherent to languages;
- V- democratic access to language teaching;
- VI- social inclusion of the academic community;
- VII- humanitarian reception, inclusion, equal treatment, and the promotion of academic recognition to migrants, refugees, and stateless persons protected under the terms of the law;
- VIII- internationalization as an institutional, transversal, and comprehensive commitment to qualifying management, teaching, research, extension, and cultural activities. (UFG, 2018b, p. 1-2).

Being able to communicate in an additional language is not just a prerequisite for the university community to participate in international academic programs, but also a tool for fostering intercultural competence. The UFG contends that engagement in international educational programs can facilitate the learning of another language, cultivate personal, academic, and professional skills, and enhance intercultural competence (Figueiredo, 2010; Figueiredo; Aguiar; Silva, 2020; O'Dowd; Dooly, 2020; Spitzberg; Changnon, 2009). As Roberts *et al.* (2001) underline, the concept of 'interculturality' recognizes that communication is always a cultural process, and that communication in an additional language involves mediating and establishing relationships between our own cultures and other cultures.

⁴ Consuni stands for Conselho Universitário (University Council). The University Council is the highest regulatory, deliberative, planning, and resource function body of the University.

In 2019, I had the opportunity to represent the UFG for the first time at the Nafsa⁵ Annual Conference & Expo, held in Washington, D.C., USA. When interacting with people from universities in other parts of the world, I was always asked what subjects we offered in additional languages, especially English. These questions made us aware of the need to internationalize our curriculum to make our professors and students more proficient in additional languages and to make our university attractive to students from other countries, as many of them are not skilled in Portuguese to take our courses. Therefore, as we were going through the COVID-19 pandemic and mobility programs were interrupted, we thought of an alternative way to guarantee students the opportunity to learn or improve an additional language and to be able to interact with students from other countries.

Thus, as UFG is part of the Asociación de Universidades Grupo Montevideo⁶ (AUGM) and, due to this, we have many partners in South America, we were asked to offer a course in the teletandem modality for students from the Universidad de Cuyo, in Mendoza, and from the Universidad de Buenos Aires, both in Argentina. Brazilian students would teach Portuguese to their Argentine partners through this interactive and collaborative learning. At the same time, they could practice Spanish with their Argentine partners, the language they were majoring in during their undergraduate course at UFG.

3 (Tele)tandem

One type of collaborative language learning that can occur is tandem learning. In this context, “two people with different mother tongues communicate with each

⁵ Nafsa stands for Association of International Educators (for more information, see: <https://www.nafsa.org>).

⁶ For more information, see: <http://grupomontevideo.org/site/>

other, to learn from each other” (Brammerts, 2002, p. 17). Generally, the language pair consists of oral languages⁷ (English X Portuguese, Spanish X Portuguese, etc.).

According to Brammerts (1996, p. 10),

[L]earning in tandem can be defined as a form of open learning, whereby two people with different native languages work together in pairs in order to learn more about one another’s character and culture, to help one another improve their language skills, and often also to exchange additional knowledge – for example, about their professional life (Brammerts, 1996, p. 10).

Tandem is the English word for a bicycle with two seats, one in front of the other. Thus, this word evokes the metaphor of collaboration, as it portrays a bicycle whose movement is achieved by the joint and collaborative effort of two cyclists.

Brammerts (2002) adds that the primary objective of tandem learning is to allow learners to develop their communication skills in an additional language. To this end, learners practice their partner’s language of competence as a means and object of communication. As a means, the linguistic variety spoken and written by one of the interactants becomes the linguistic model for the learning of the other, and, as an object, it is through the mediation of the partner that the other will have access to the sociocultural norms of language use and accuracy.

However, different themes and those related to linguistic and cultural issues also make up the topics addressed in the communication. Therefore, “in each tandem dialogue, the circumstances of life, the experiences and knowledge of the partner become the almost natural theme of the conversation” (Brammerts, 2002, p. 17), thus enabling language learning by authentic means of communication. Vassalo and Telles (2009) agree with Brammerts (1996) when he states that tandem learning favors free

⁷ Oliveira (2017), Figueiredo and Oliveira (2019), and Oliveira and Figueiredo (2020) carried out examples of tandem studies with languages of different modalities (oral X visuospatial), in which the linguistic pair consisted of written Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language.

and mutual exchange of knowledge not only of languages but also of cultures. Therefore, by interacting with people from different countries, learners also have the chance to discuss cultural aspects related to their country or the place where they live (Leone, 2014).

Tandem learning is a unique method of learning additional languages. It is collaborative, autonomous, and reciprocal, and it consists of regular sessions of collaborative bilingual work for didactic purposes (Vassallo; Telles, 2009). What sets it apart is that these sessions⁸ are voluntarily established by two speakers of different languages who are interested in learning the language in which the other is more proficient.

Tandem learning is guided by three principles: reciprocity, bilingualism⁹, and learner autonomy (Brammerts, 1996; Figueiredo; Silva, 2016; Lima-Lopes; Aranha, 2023; Souza, 2018). The principle of reciprocity ensures that both interactants benefit equally from the partnership, committing to offer as much help as they receive. The principle of bilingualism guarantees that participants use the languages involved in the partnership equally, thereby ensuring that each learner can access the language in which the other is proficient. The principle of autonomy emphasizes that learners are responsible for their learning process, for defining their objectives, for the topics to be addressed in interactions, and for the best method for successful learning.

Teletandem is a language learning context that follows the principles of learning in a tandem context but is carried out only in a virtual context. According to Vassallo and Telles (2006, 2009), teletandem is described as a synchronous learning context of additional languages, mediated by the computer through software or communication services such as Skype, Openmeetings, Google Meet, Zoom, etc., which makes use of oral and written production, reading and oral comprehension, as well as participants'

⁸ Sessions can occur on the same day, respecting the same amount of time for each language, or on different days when one of the languages is worked on a given day.

⁹ In the teletandem context, Telles (2015) later named this principle 'separate use of both languages', and Piccoli and Salomão (2020) expanded it, calling it 'the principle of equality.'

webcam images. Furthermore, it follows the principles of tandem learning previously described. Through the interactions, the students can help their partners when they have linguistic problems, providing them with more suitable input in the target language (Cavalari; Freschi, 2018; Pereira Filho, 2022). This mutual commitment to each other's learning causes the interactants to develop a sense of trust and closeness (Campos; Salomão, 2019).

Among the many virtual tools that can be used as a language learning context, teletandem has proven to be an innovative and successful context to provide students with opportunities to communicate with people from different regions of the world and, for instance, to learn additional languages (Benedetti; Consolo; Vieira-Abrahão, 2010; Messias; Telles, 2020; Rampazzo; Cunha, 2021; Telles, 2009), and, through interactions, develop their communicative competence (Messias; Ferreira, 2018). By having access to people from other cultures and interacting with them, participants in teletandem interactions take an opportunity to learn about the other's cultures and deconstruct stereotypes that might exist (Brocco; Baptista, 2014; Salomão, 2019).

Interactions allow the learners to have their mistakes corrected by their peers (Figueiredo, 2005, 2019, 2023). Cavallari and Freschi (2018, p. 207) state that "error correction can play a fundamental role in the teletandem environment by involving both the learner and their linguistically more competent partner." In this way, interactions allow learners to correct their partner and self-correct when they realize they have produced something incorrect in the target language.

Studies involving the context of teletandem have generally been implemented in Modern Languages Degree courses to bring linguistic and (inter)cultural development to the interactants, such as those conducted by Santos (2015), Garcia (2017), Zakir, Funo and Telles (2016), Freschi and Cavalari (2020), Schaefer (2020), among others.

There are also studies in which the researcher participates in teletandem interactions, such as those carried out by Vassallo and Telles (2006, 2009) and Luvizari-

Murad (2011). There are also some studies whose focus is on teacher education, such as those undertaken by Salomão (2011), Evangelista and Salomão (2018), and Souza, Zakir and Garcia (2021)¹⁰.

As teletandem consists of a collaborative learning approach, it is possible to suggest that students develop a project together during interactions, as discussed in the following section.

4 Project pedagogy in language learning

Project pedagogy is a problem-oriented and student-centered learning process, organized around a project where students can develop knowledge and skills by investigating real-world problems (Carreira, 2013; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Hernández, 1998a, 1998b; Lorenset, 2022). The origin of the word ‘project’ derives from the Latin *projectus*, which means something thrown forward (Prado, 2005). It implies leaving where we are to look for new solutions to a given problem. In education, a project is a planned and organized undertaking that allows students to apply and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and creativity in a real-world or simulated context (Thomas, 2000). Projects in learning often involve research, problem-solving, collaboration, and presentation of findings, and they can cover a wide range of subjects and disciplines. Project work “enhances the integration of different areas of knowledge and various media and resources, allowing the student to express their thoughts through different languages and forms of representation” (Prado, 2005, p. 15).

According to Thomas (2000), projects: (i) are central, not peripheral, to the curriculum; (ii) focus on questions or problems that drive students to encounter (and struggle with) a discipline’s central concepts and principles; (iii) involve students in a constructive investigation; (iv) are student-driven to some significant degree; (v) are

¹⁰A vast list of publications about teletandem can be found on the Project Teletandem Brasil: Foreign Languages for All page from Universidade Estadual Paulista – Unesp.

realistic. In project pedagogy, students engage in an extended inquiry process in response to a designed question, problem, or challenge that usually requires more than an individual effort to handle and overcome. This gives the project an extremely collaborative aspect.

Project pedagogy incorporates active methodologies (Mota; Rosa, 2018; Silva; Figueiredo, 2023). Its key objectives include fostering student protagonism and autonomy and promoting collaborative knowledge construction (Barbosa; Matos, 2022; Carreira, 2013; Hernández, 1998a, 1998b; Santos, 2006; Vygotsky, 1998). This way, the student actively participates in the project's development, "and the teacher assumes a much more participatory and less imposing hierarchical role; that is, it presupposes a change in educational procedures" (Carreira, 2013, p. 19). By adding the role of apprentice to the teacher, there is a restructuring of the act of teaching and learning in which the educator is not the holder of knowledge and should learn to deal with the unusual and share the construction of meanings with learners (Carreira, 2013).

Project pedagogy is "part of a tradition in schooling that favors research into reality and active work on the part of the student" (Hernández, 1998a, p. 80). It favors "the attitude of cooperation, and the teacher is a learner, not an expert (as he/she helps to learn about topics that he/she will study with students)" (Hernández, 1998a, p. 83) since projects can address topics that are also new to the teacher. Thus, it has an interdisciplinary¹¹ (Prado, 2005) or transdisciplinary (Hernández, 1998a; Lorensen, 2022) character.

Hernandez (1998a) defines **project pedagogy** not as a methodology but as a teaching concept, a different way of raising students' understanding of the knowledge

¹¹ "Interdisciplinarity concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another. [...] Interdisciplinarity overflows disciplines, but its goal remains within the disciplinary research framework. Transdisciplinarity concerns that which is at once **between** the disciplines, **across** the different disciplines, and **beyond** all disciplines. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge" (Nicolescu, 2014, p. 19, emphases in original).

that circulates outside of school and helping them build knowledge in a transdisciplinary way, making learners more autonomous and critical citizens who can learn to relate local social issues to global issues. Thus, “topics such as the environment, water, prejudice, black consciousness, quality of life, consumerism, and women in society are presented from a local perspective” (Carreira, 2013, p. 36), but relationships are established with global problems. This way, project pedagogy contributes significantly to globalizing practice in this cosmopolitan world.

In project pedagogy, the teaching/learning relationship is aimed at building knowledge in a collaborative and contextualized way. This involves the effective participation of students and educators in a mutual process of exchanging experiences. Project pedagogy can educate individuals capable of acting in society in a participatory, critical, reflective, autonomous, and supportive manner. Thus, it prepares students not only for school life but also for social life (Dewey, 1916, 1938).

Although ‘project pedagogy’ and ‘project-based learning’ are often used interchangeably, subtle nuances differentiate them, significantly impacting their implementation and results. According to Dewey (1916, 1938), an American philosopher and pedagogue, ‘project pedagogy’ transcends mere methodology and constitutes an educational philosophy. It proposes that learning is based on the student’s experience and authentic problem-solving. It fosters social and cultural change through experiential learning and community engagement. On the other hand, scholars like Kolb (1984) and Merrill (2002) define ‘project-based learning’ as a teaching methodology that empowers students to take the reins of their education. Here, projects serve as the central tool for knowledge construction. Students are not passive recipients of information but active investigators, problem-solvers, and creators. This methodology not only facilitates the construction of knowledge but also encourages students to bridge the gap between their experiences and academic life, fostering deep thinking as they acquire new knowledge (Efstratia, 2014). It is worth

noting that project-based learning is interdisciplinary in nature, requiring the integration of multiple academic disciplines (Crestani; Machado, 2023).

Dewey’s seminal work, *Experience and Education* (1938), highlights the importance of experience as the basis for learning. He believed knowledge is not acquired through passive reception but through active engagement with the world. This emphasis on experience aligns with project-based learning and project pedagogy, as both engage students in hands-on learning activities¹².

Dewey also stressed the significance of problem-solving as a driving force for learning. In his book *Democracy and Education* (1916), he argued that education should not be confined to transmitting facts but should prepare students to think critically and solve real-world problems. This problem-solving orientation is a hallmark of both project-based learning and project pedagogy, as both approaches challenge students to tackle authentic problems and develop solutions.

While Dewey’s ideas underpin both project-based learning and project pedagogy, there are subtle distinctions between the two approaches, as we can see in Table 1:

Table 1 – Differences between Project Pedagogy and Project-Based Learning.

Characteristics	Project Pedagogy	Project-Based Learning
Focus	Social and cultural transformation: It fosters social and cultural change through experiential learning and community engagement.	Emphasis on knowledge construction: It primarily aims to facilitate the construction of knowledge through the conduction of projects.
Scope	<i>Broader scope:</i> It encompasses the overall school philosophy and organization, transforming the learning environment into a student-	<i>Specific scope:</i> It focuses on an interdisciplinary teaching method that utilizes projects as the central learning tool. Project-based learning begins

¹² John Dewey’s ideas laid the foundation for both ‘project-based learning’ and ‘project pedagogy,’ but he did not explicitly differentiate between the terms in his writings. However, his works (Dewey, 1916, 1938) provide insights into these approaches’ underlying principles.

	centered hub. It is characterized by being inter- or transdisciplinary. Projects in Project Pedagogy are often long-term and span multiple subject areas, allowing students to see connections between different disciplines and apply knowledge holistically.	with a question, problem, or challenge that students investigate through research, experimentation, and analysis to deepen their knowledge about the subject they are taking.
Teacher's role	Teacher as a guide and participant in the learning process: The teacher acts as a guide, supporting students in their exploration and problem-solving endeavors and learns from them and with them since projects can address topics that are also new to the teacher.	Teacher as mediator: The teacher guides students through the project cycle and ensures effective learning. Thus, the teacher suggests in advance some specific tasks to be completed by the students.
Students' role	<i>Students seek to understand the knowledge that circulates outside the school through a transdisciplinary approach:</i> Students become more autonomous and critical citizens who can learn to relate local social issues to global issues. Project pedagogy involves the effective participation of students and educators in a mutual process of exchanging experiences.	<i>Students seek to expand their knowledge about a given subject: They actively investigate, solve problems, and create products.</i> The core idea of project-based learning is to connect students' experiences with school life and provoke serious thinking as they acquire new knowledge.
Assessment	Holistic assessment: It evaluates students' progress based on their overall development, including individual growth, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.	Assessment of knowledge: It emphasizes evaluating the knowledge and skills acquired through project completion.

Source: elaborated by the author.

John Dewey's philosophical contributions laid the groundwork for project pedagogy and project-based learning. While the latter focuses on a specific teaching methodology, the former encompasses a broader educational philosophy to trigger transformations in the entire school environment. Despite these subtle differences, project pedagogy and project-based learning aim to promote active, meaningful, and engaging learning experiences for students.

The implementation of project pedagogy in language learning has been advocated by many scholars at various levels and contexts (Beckett, 2006; Fragoulis, 2009; Guslyakova *et al.*, 2021; Kavlu, 2015). As students work collaboratively to develop a project, they can share their knowledge about the language they are learning and help each other in their learning process. The use of project pedagogy provides students with opportunities to research a given topic, and, as a result, they have access to authentic and varied input on the theme being researched, thus expanding their vocabulary in the target language. Through this type of collaborative work, students have the opportunity to develop interpersonal communication, as they need to learn to deal with different points of view and reach a consensus to conduct the project.

However, what are the possible benefits of using project pedagogy in teletandem learning contexts? This study aims to analyze the students' perspectives on including project pedagogy (Barbosa; Matos, 2022; Hernández, 1998a, 1998b) during teletandem sessions. It seeks to verify if project pedagogy can help students not only learn an additional language and cultural aspects but also become citizens more attuned to the problems faced in the world.

5 Methodology

In the second semester of 2021, a 64-hour teletandem course, entitled "Aprendizaje de portugués y español en teletandem", was offered to ten Brazilians and ten Argentinians. The course was taught by three professors, including myself,

who worked collaboratively to teach the course. In total, sixteen meetings took place during the semester, each lasting four hours.

The Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG) in Goiânia, Brazil, the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo in Mendoza, and the Universidad de Buenos Aires, both in Argentina, participated in this telecollaborative language learning project¹³. We used Google Meet as a medium for the interactions among the participants.

Interactions occurred on Fridays, from August 13th to November 26th, 2021, from 8 to 12 am¹⁴. These interactions were audio- and video-recorded using the recording device available in the Google Meet software and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Before initiating the teletandem sessions, a series of steps were taken to present the course and select the pairs of students. The participants also used WhatsApp to interact with their peers.

In the first three meetings, theoretical and practical aspects related to teletandem were presented to the students so they would become aware of their responsibilities and learn how to act and what to do during the interactions. They also learned some information about the state of Goiás, Brazil, and UFG. They received some instructions on how to do a project since the pairs of students, during the semester, would have to develop a project in which a critical problem would be dealt with, considering the Brazilian and the Argentine contexts, through an instructional approach known as project pedagogy (Carreira, 2013; Chen; Yong, 2019; Hernández, 1998a, 1998b; Moran, 2018; Peraza; Furumura, 2022). At the end of these three meetings, the students signed a Free and Informed Consent Form, agreeing to participate in this research¹⁵.

¹³ We had nine students from the Universidad de Cuyo and one from the Universidad de Buenos Aires.

¹⁴ The clock time was the same in the three cities (Goiânia, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires), as there is no difference between time zones.

¹⁵ This study is part of more extensive research, approved by the Universidade Federal de Goiás Research Ethics Committee, protocol number CAAE 70953817.7.0000.5083.

As part of their active participation, the students were asked to prepare a padlet¹⁶ board. On this board, they should write information about themselves and the themes they were interested in discussing. The participants then took the initiative to read all the information posted on the padlet board and chose an international student with similar interests as a partner. After this process, ten pairs were formed, each by one student from Brazil and the other from Argentina. The Brazilian students were majoring in Spanish at UFG, and the Argentine students came from different areas of study.

After these procedures, the students started to interact with each other, and to do so, Google Meet rooms were opened for them. They interacted with their partners every week during the semester, video recorded the interactions, and posted the recording in a file on Google Classroom. During their interactions, the professors were not present.

Once a month, all the students gathered in the Google Meet room to tell us what they were discussing, the difficulties they might be facing, what they were learning, etc. One of the professors recorded these interactions. These meetings with all the students were repeated throughout the semester until they had to present their projects, which occurred in the penultimate and antepenultimate classes.

The themes the participants selected for the projects were folklore, racism, the water scarcity in Mendoza and the Northeast of Brazil, the devaluation of women in the labor market, the use of television series for learning English, literature, and music. This vast quantity of topics characterizes the transdisciplinary aspect of project pedagogy, as proposed by Hernández (1998a, 1998b).

To do their projects, the students received guidance from the other two professors who taught the “Aprendizaje de portugués y español en teletandem”

¹⁶ According to Fisher (2017), padlet is a digital tool that allows the creation of a dynamic and interactive virtual wall or board to record, store and share content (images, videos, text documents, etc.).

course¹⁷. All the pairs had 15 minutes to present their project. In their presentation, the Brazilian students spoke in Spanish, and the Argentinians spoke in Portuguese. In the last class, all the participants were interviewed in their native language to discuss their participation in this teletandem course. For this text, all the interview transcripts were translated into English.

This qualitative case study (Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992) investigates and documents the participation of Brazilian and Argentine learners in a teletandem course. The use of qualitative methods (Nunan, 1992) ensures a thorough understanding of the students' perceptions about their participation in the teletandem sessions and the execution of the projects. Due to space constraints, data from two pairs, Jennifer (Brazilian) and Alexia (Argentinian), and Bibiana (Brazilian) and Lorena (Argentinian), are analyzed to provide reliable insights. Jennifer and Alexia developed a project about water scarcity in Mendoza, Argentina, and the Northeast of Brazil. In turn, Bibiana and Lorena carried out a project about the devaluation of women in the labor market. The categories used in the data analysis emerged from themes raised by the participants during the interviews.

6 Data analysis and discussion

This section is divided into two parts. In the first part, I present the students' perceptions about their participation in the teletandem sessions. In the second part, I present some information about the projects developed and the students' perceptions about carrying them out jointly.

¹⁷ After the pair chose the project theme, students had weekly meetings with the teacher-mediator to receive guidance on reading texts and the best way to conduct the project.

6.1 Students' perceptions about their participation in the teletandem sessions

During the interviews, the students mentioned many positive points regarding their participation in the teletandem sessions, such as the opportunity to talk to a native speaker, interact intensively in the target language, and not be afraid of making mistakes.

6.1.1 The opportunity to talk to a native speaker

Teletandem sessions allow interaction between people who speak different languages and live in other countries (Benedetti; Consolo; Vieira-Abrahão, 2010; Garcia, 2017; Telles, 2009). Indeed, the participants valued the opportunity to talk to a native speaker because, by interacting with them, they could learn new vocabulary and cultural aspects and experience the accent of their partner, as we can see in the following excerpts.

[1]

Bibiana (Brazilian): Getting to know a native speaker of Spanish was something I have always wanted. It was a unique opportunity to talk to someone who lives there, speaks the language, and has an Argentine accent. Being able to talk to a native speaker was something very, very important because I was able to learn a lot about their cultures. I got to know her city, which I had never heard of, and I got to know her university and the services that exist there. My confidence in speaking Spanish increased because, at the beginning, I was terrified of making mistakes, and then I expressed myself more calmly.

[2]

Alexia (Argentinian): The virtual context of teletandem made it possible for us to interact with native speakers of the language we are learning, even if they are far from us.

As we can see in these excerpts, both Bibiana and Alexia value the possibility of interacting with people who live in other countries and being able to learn the local accent and their cultures from them, which allows them to develop their intercultural

competence (Figueiredo, 2010; Figueiredo; Aguiar; Silva, 2020; Grazzi; Koslova, 2023; O'Dowd; Dooly, 2020; Spitzberg; Changnon, 2009).

6.1.2 The opportunity to interact intensively in the target language

As we know, interaction plays a pivotal role in the cognitive and social development of learners (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Vygotsky, 1998). Through the teletandem sessions, the participants could interact with one another every week, and this fact created a bond of friendship between them and provided them with an environment of trust (Campos; Salomão, 2019) since both students were learners of each other's languages. Hence, they reported not feeling ashamed to express themselves in the language they were learning and, with that, being able to interact intensively in the target language, which might develop their communicative competence in the target language (Messias; Ferreira, 2018). They also valued the opportunity to systematically have someone to talk to in the additional language, as illustrated by Bibiana's and Jennifer's reports.

[3]

Bibiana (Brazilian): The positive point was that I could talk for a long time with my partner. As I am naturally shy, I feel a sense of shame when speaking in face-to-face interactions. However, I found that through online interactions or via WhatsApp, I could express myself more calmly. This was because it was just me and her, and a strong bond of trust was created. I wasn't ashamed to take a risk. I became more self-confident. In the classroom, I am still shy, so I listen more and observe more.

[4]

Jennifer (Brazilian): Teletandem allows for more concrete contact with the language because finding someone willing to practice is usually challenging. As it was their mother tongue, and it's the language I study, it was much easier to use the language than this whole time I've been in college. So, it was an opportunity to get someone to talk to me in the language I'm learning.

As we can see in the previous excerpts, the interactants stated that, through

interactions, they were able to loosen up and practice the language, increasing confidence and self-esteem and losing shyness to communicate in an additional language.

6.1.3 The opportunity to not be afraid of making mistakes

Many studies (Bartram; Walton, 1994; Cathcart; Olsen, 1976; Figueiredo, 2005, 2023; Horner, 1988; Mattos, 2009) have found that some types of error correction employed in conventional classrooms can inadvertently make students feel ashamed of their mistakes.

The following excerpts reveal that the conventional classroom can transform into a repressive place where errors are spotlighted, and students are consequently hesitant to engage in the target language for fear of mockery.

[5]

Jennifer (Brazilian): In the classroom, I sometimes feel ashamed to speak because everyone is Brazilian, so I am afraid of making mistakes and saying something incorrect. Now, during the teletandem sessions, I no longer felt uncomfortable because it was just me and the Argentine colleague. For example, it wasn't a heavy atmosphere where I would say something wrong, and everyone in the classroom would notice it. It was a calmer atmosphere; I felt more comfortable talking to her. My colleague corrected me; she told me not to use Portuguese as a basis for me to speak Spanish, but it was easy because she said it nicely, explaining everything to me; it wasn't so heavy. She also allowed me to correct her, so correction was part of it. There was no fear of correction. I expected her to correct me, and I think she also expected me to correct her. When there was an error, we pointed it out, but we also congratulated each other when we got it right. In the classroom, if I make a mistake, everyone will realize that I made a mistake, and that makes me feel ashamed. I think 'shame' describes it well.

[6]

Lorena (Argentinian): I was initially ashamed to speak Portuguese with my partner. I spoke a lot in Spanish, but she told me I had to speak Portuguese. And I said, "No, let's continue in Spanish." One day, Bibiana patiently said, "Well, it's important for you to speak Portuguese," so we started interacting in Portuguese. It was beautiful. At first, I was ashamed, but now I'm a little more confident; I take more risks. I'm not embarrassed anymore. With

Bibiana, we practiced a lot; we practiced the part we had to present. We talked about our project. So, I listened, wrote, and highlighted the mistakes I saw. So did Bibiana. I read aloud, and she corrected me. My colleague supported me, so I was no longer ashamed of making mistakes.

These reports make us aware that correction, whether in the conventional classroom or teletandem sessions, must be done in a way that does not embarrass the learner, leading them to have access to correct input in the target language (Cavalari; Freschi, 2018; Figueiredo, 2019, 2023). It is worth mentioning that, during the interactions in teletandem, only the two interactants are present, and the learners are not inserted in the classroom context, with the presence of the other learners and the teacher. This fact makes students less afraid of making mistakes, giving them a more positive view of error and correction, as was illustrated in excerpts 5 and 6.

6.2 Students' perceptions about the projects they had developed

As previously mentioned, the “Aprendizaje de Portugués y Español en Teletandem” course allowed the students to work jointly on a project, considering the Brazilian and Argentine contexts. During the classes dedicated to the oral presentation of the projects, the Argentine students presented them in Portuguese, and the Brazilians presented them in Spanish, demonstrating their effort to learn the target language.

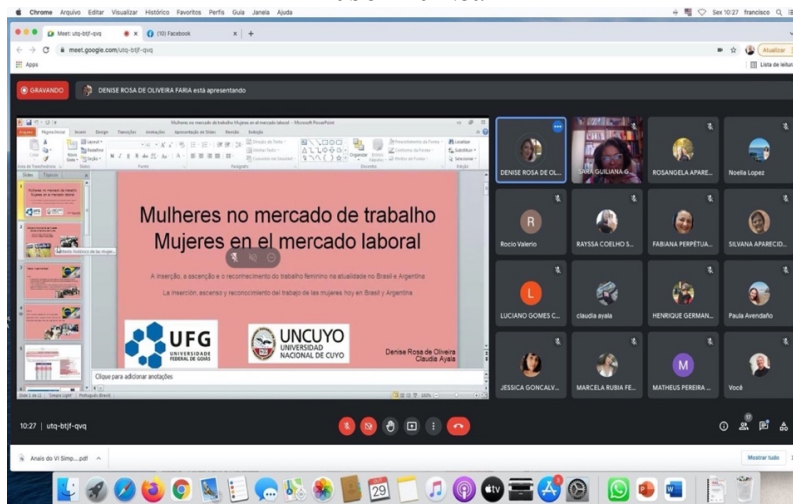
We can see screenshots of some of the students' presentations in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 – PowerPoint used by Jennifer and Alexia to talk about the water scarcity in Mendoza and the Northeast of Brazil.



Source: material produced by pair 1.

Figure 2 – PowerPoint used by Bibiana and Lorena to talk about the devaluation of women in the labor market.



Source: material produced by pair 2.

Through the presentations, we could observe that Brazil and Argentina have similar problems that affect people in both countries. Talking about these problems allowed all the participants to learn and reflect on the discussed topic since, on the day of the presentation, all the students were together to watch their colleagues' presentations.

During the interviews, the participants mentioned that they were able not only to develop themselves linguistically and learn the other's cultures (Benedetti; Consolo;

Vieira-Abrahão, 2010; Leone, 2014; Telles, 2009) but also to reflect on the social problems present in both countries. They could perceive that a person is not different just for being from another country and, consequently, having other cultures. Thus, through their conversations, some stereotypes could be deconstructed (Brocco; Baptista, 2014; Salomão, 2019), such as that Argentinians are closed-off people.

[7]

Lorena (Argentinian): I didn't know teletandem, this method, but I liked it a lot. I could share so much knowledge by conducting the project with my partner, and I wouldn't have gotten to know so much about a person from Brazil if it hadn't been for these interactions. It was wonderful. I'm thrilled. Now I have a friend in Brazil, a connection that I cherish and that has made my language learning journey even more rewarding. I learned a lot about Brazilian cultures, and through our conversations, we discussed the social problems we have in common. It makes us more global citizens.

[8]

Jennifer (Brazilian): I could see that my partner is just like me. Sometimes, we think a person from another country is very different from us because they have other cultures but are not. I thought they would be closed-off people, and it's not like that. They are open-minded and friendly people. The differences we might have only make us realize the value of diversity, and by accepting differences, we can live in a more harmonious and respectful world. So, having to do the project with my friend not only made me learn about the water scarcity in Mendoza, but it also provided us with a rich moment for exchanging personal experiences and information about the places we live in.

Students also mentioned the importance of collaboratively carrying out the project, as they could learn more about a particular topic (Thomas, 2000) and have access to new vocabulary related to the investigated theme. The project theme also served as a guide for their interactions during the teletandem sessions.

[9]

Jennifer (Brazilian): It was great to develop a project because we had to do some research, and we could learn more about the topic. The project also

helped us focus more during our interactions as a guiding line for our conversations. We could also learn specific vocabulary about the investigated topic through research on the project, which greatly enriched us as learners. We also realized that problems exist everywhere, such as the problem of water scarcity. Not only does the Brazilian Northeast region have this problem, but Mendoza also has it, as they need water from glaciers to supply the city. It was exciting to see how the Argentinians learned from the Incas how to reserve water and create an irrigation system to bring water to the town through canals. These canals run along most streets, and water comes from this reservoir. Through the project, I also learned about something entirely new for me, that is, the irrigation system in Mendoza.

It is important to mention that only one of the professors had been to Mendoza and seen the canals along the streets. The other two learned about this fact from the students' presentation, which emphasizes the role of the teacher as an apprentice in project pedagogy (Carreira, 2013; Hernández, 1998a; Lorensen, 2022).

Based on the participants' viewpoints, project pedagogy has proven to be an efficient approach for a teletandem course because, in addition to learning about each other's language and cultures, students had the chance to reflect on social problems in both countries through the projects they developed (Carreira, 2013; Chen; Yong, 2019; Hernández, 1998a, 1998b; Moran, 2018).

7 Final remarks

Students evaluated their participation in teletandem sessions as positive, as they could count on the support of a person who is also in the learning process and could talk extensively to them in the language they were learning. As a result, they could express themselves more calmly in the target language without being ashamed of making mistakes. As was observed in some excerpts, some students considered the classroom a place that represses them and makes them afraid of making mistakes. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that several students still maintain contact and continue to interact with their partners despite the end of the course.

Through the teletandem sessions, the students could interact with their peers in

the language they were learning and learn about the cultural aspects and social problems of the country where their partners lived. They strengthened their bonds of friendship and expanded their international networks.

The results of this study indicate that, through the interactions in teletandem, it was possible to involve students in relevant and collaborative investigations (Thomas, 2000) about their countries, making them more aware of potential problems faced by countries in the global south. As for language learning, Argentinians could learn Portuguese and learn about Brazilian cultures. On the other hand, Brazilians could improve their Spanish skills, learn about Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and Argentine cultures, and have access to the Argentine accents. Through the projects the students developed, they could discuss critical issues involving the Brazilian and Argentine contexts, such as racism, devaluation of women in the labor market, etc. Thus, teletandem, combined with project pedagogy, has the potential to enrich the internationalization at home process and make learners become citizens more attuned to the world's real problems.

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