



Teletandem: integrating e-learning into the foreign language classroom

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims at describing the characteristics of a blended foreign language learning context in which a series of teletandem sessions has been integrated into the syllabus of an EFL course at UNESP (in São José do Rio Preto). It focuses on the changes that have been made in the implementation of teletandem practice so that it became a pedagogic activity that is embedded in an EFL course with a number of tasks to be performed and subject to the professor's assessment. It is argued that such modifications have made it possible to characterize a new modality of teletandem in Brazil: institutional-integrated teletandem (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). This new modality, as implemented at UNESP-Rio Preto, entails the presence of some constituent elements, such as preparation of participants, integration of tasks and of assessment.

Keywords: teletandem, blended learning, foreign language.

Teletandem: integrando a aprendizagem online à sala de aula de língua estrangeira

RESUMO. Este trabalho tem como objetivo descrever as características de um contexto híbrido de aprendizagem de língua estrangeira no qual uma série de sessões de teletandem foi integrada ao programa de uma disciplina de inglês como língua estrangeira (ILE) da UNESP – São José do Rio Preto. Enfocam-se as mudanças feitas na implementação do teletandem a fim de que este se tornasse uma atividade pedagógica incorporada ao curso de ILE por meio de tarefas a serem desenvolvidas pelos alunos e sujeitas à avaliação do professor. Constatou-se que tais mudanças possibilitaram a caracterização de uma nova modalidade de teletandem no Brasil: o teletandem institucional integrado (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). Essa nova modalidade, conforme é implementada na UNESP – São José do Rio Preto, envolve a presença de elementos fundamentais, tais como preparação dos participantes, integração das tarefas e da avaliação.

Palavras-chave: teletandem, aprendizagem híbrida, língua estrangeira.

Teletandem: integrando el aprendizaje en línea a las clases de lengua extranjera

RESUMEN. Esta investigación presenta como objetivo describir las características de un contexto híbrido de aprendizaje de lengua extranjera en el cual una serie de sesiones de teletandem ha sido integrada al *syllabus* de una asignatura de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) de la UNESP – Rio Preto. Se enfocan los cambios realizados en el implemento del *teletandem* a fin de que se convirtiese en una actividad pedagógica incorporada a la asignatura de ILE, por medio de tareas realizadas por los alumnos y sometidas a la evaluación del profesor. Se proponen que esos cambios han posibilitado la caracterización de una nueva modalidad de teletandem en Brasil: el teletandem institucional integrado (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). Esa nueva modalidad, conforme se implementa en la UNESP-Rio Preto, involucra la presencia de algunos elementos fundamentales, tales como: preparación de los participantes, integración de las tareas y de la evaluación.

Palabras clave: teletandem, aprendizaje híbrido, lengua extranjera.

Introduction

Teletandem Brasil: Foreign Languages for all (Telles, 2006) is a research and a pedagogical project (Teledandem Brazil, 2015) that has been carried out at Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP, in Assis and São José do Rio Preto, and more recently in Araraquara) since 2006 and that allows university

students who live in different countries (and are proficient in different languages) to be in contact through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) tools so that they can learn each other's languages. The project is theoretically founded on the principles of tandem learning (Brammerts, 1996) – separation of languages, reciprocity and

autonomy – and has included technological resources and software (Skype, microphone, web cam, internet connection) that enable worldwide communication. By following tandem's theoretical principles, teletandem participants are expected to hold regular meetings on the internet (using chat, audio and video devices), negotiate their schedules, make sure they dedicate the same amount of time to each language, establish their own learning goals and strategies, assess their progress, and help their partner achieve their objectives. According to some authors (Telles 2009; Benedetti, Consolo & Vieira-Abrahão, 2010), these actions should entail (i) autonomy, (ii) commitment, (iii) openness to (both linguistic and cultural) negotiation and (iv) digital proficiency so that teletandem practice would last long enough for both partners feel they are learning.

Many perspectives on these interactions¹ within the course of the project have been studied: (i) power relationships (Vassallo, 2009), (ii) autonomy (Cavalari, 2009; Luz, 2009), (iii) beliefs (Kfoury-Kaneoya, 2008; Bedran, 2008), (iv) teacher education (Salomão, 2008; Funo, 2011; Souza, 2012); (v) assessment (Mesquita, 2008; Furtoso, 2011), (vi) communities (Aranha, 2009; Silva, 2012), (vii) activity theory (Araujo, 2012; Luz, 2012, Luvizari-Murad, 2011), (viii) teletandem interaction features (Silva, 2008; Santos, 2008; Brocco, 2009; Aranha & Telles, 2011); (ix) intercultural issues (Mendes, 2009; Salomão, 2012; Rodrigues, 2013); (x) genres (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014; Aranha & Bragagnollo, 2015) among other aspects that are inherent to this context of foreign language learning.

However, some of these research studies (Cavalari, 2009; Garcia, 2010; Luz, 2012) showed, that, in practice, the articulation of the teletandem principles is not an easy task for the language learner. Cavalari (2009) reports on the difficulties faced by a Brazilian participant in managing her own learning towards her goals. Garcia (2010) emphasizes the need for negotiation skills as teletandem participants try to establish the partnership conditions. Luz (2012) discusses a varied array of variants that may influence the (dis)continuation of teletandem partnerships and argues that having a clear learning goal seems to be one of the most important aspects of a partnership that would be considered long-lasting (and, thus, successful). These same studies

address some early discontinued partnerships (partnerships that lasted no more than two or three interactions) – hence unsuccessful from a learning point of view – and evidence some issues concerning the level of autonomy required by the learner for negotiating (i) topics to be discussed during interactions, (ii) appropriate topics that should circulate for both cultures, (iii) schedules of interactions, (iv) conflicting cultural aspects, (v) unknown genres that emerge within the interaction, among others. Moreover, Aranha and Telles (2011) state that the absence of a set of communicative purposes shared by the partners may take them to an asymmetrical relationship which may lead to a possible lack of genre development that might be shared and, eventually, to the discontinuation of the partnership. The authors believe that this failure in keeping a teletandem partnership would not be due to the lack of motivation towards learning, but to the absence of shared purposes.

Therefore, in search of long-lasting partnerships and, ultimately, of opportunities for students to improve their communicative skills, some adjustments to the original project have been made (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014). These changes aimed at alleviating the burden imposed on the students who are not used to being in charge of their own learning process and somehow facilitating the relationships of the ones who had other drawbacks related to their teletandem practice. The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the changes that have been made and how they were carried out at UNESP - São José do Rio Preto (UNESP-SJRP) within a partnership with the University of Georgia (UGA).

Teletandem: theoretical principles and their implication for the implementation of an integrated modality

Teletandem practice is guided by three theoretical principles (Vassallo & Telles, 2006):

- separation of languages: each teletandem interaction is composed of two parts and each one should be devoted to the practice of only one of the languages;
- reciprocity: participants should take turns as the learner of a foreign language and the expert of their native language (or language of proficiency);
- autonomy: each participant should decide what, when, where, how and how long they want to learn and should assess their progress.

¹ In this paper, interaction is the moment when the two partners are talking via web tools.

Vassallo and Telles (2006) point out that these principles can bear different interpretations, depending on whether (tele)tandem² 'is carried out within an institutional context, such as a school or a university (institutional tandem), or as a mutual agreement between individuals (independent tandem)'. As far as institutional practice is concerned, according to Brammerts et al. (2002), tandem can be considered integrated when the activity is (i) acknowledged by the institution, (ii) part of the course program and (iii) mandatory. In Teletandem Brasil project (Telles, 2006) teletandem practice was institutional, but not integrated, i.e., participants were regularly enrolled in a university course, but teletandem practice was neither part of the course syllabus nor mandatory. Considering the importance of a more integrative approach of language learning, Telles (2012) argues in favor of incorporating teletandem into the foreign language (FL) lessons. The author points out, however, that such practice has yet to be explored³.

This integrated modality may bring modifications both for the foreign language (FL) curriculum in which teletandem is incorporated and for the teletandem practice itself, once at the same time that the teletandem interactions are part of regular FL lessons, some of the content of the FL lessons is incorporated into the teletandem practice. Bearing that in mind, Aranha and Cavalari (2014) define institutional integrated teletandem (iiTTD) as a series of teletandem sessions that are embedded in regular FL lessons (thus mandatory) so that such lessons both feed and are fed by teletandem practice.

Such definition implies a sociocultural perspective of autonomy (Leffa, 2003; Little, 2007; Ushioda, 2011; Bonfim, 2014) that brings forth the inextricable relationship fostered by the individual and the social dimensions of learning how to learn. Consistent with this perspective, the autonomy principle in iiTTD can be (re)defined as the participants' ability to make decisions about their own learning, always in relation to the social and contextual conditions in which learners are immersed.

The following description of tasks and procedures is based on these assumptions and, although it has some characteristics in common with other (tele)tandem integrated contexts (Telles & Ferreira, 2010; Lewis, 2003), there are important distinguishing features that shall be addressed.

Institutional Integrated teletandem: description of distinguishing characteristics

The description presented is based on the iiTTD experience carried out at UNESP – SJRP (from February to April 2012) within a partnership with UGA. During this period, iiTTD was implemented within the second year EFL group of a 'Language, Arts and Literature' major⁴ at UNESP – SJRP, i.e., within a group of students who are going to be English as a foreign language teachers. This group was used to having two weekly lessons lasting two hours and the iiTTD tasks occurred once a week for 9 weeks. The activities comprised a tutorial lesson, followed by 8 interactions and a final evaluation moment. The procedures that characterize the shift from a non-integrated to an integrated modality are the ones that involve:

- preparing students for iiTTD both in practical and theoretical terms – the tutorial;
- blending teletandem interactions and FL syllabus – integrating tasks;
- assessment (by the learner, by the partner and by the FL teacher) – integrating assessment.

Therefore, it is argued that such procedures characterize iiTTD as a blended learning context (Motteram & Sharma, 2009) and distinguish it from teletandem settings described in other works (Lewis, 2003; Telles & Ferreira, 2010; Kiziltan, 2012).

The tutorial

The tutorial is a vital procedure in iiTTD for, more than informing students about some procedural aspects of the project, it is intended to assist students in understanding the learning potential of teletandem practice. At UNESP – SJRP, it is presented every semester by the Teletandem Laboratory Coordinator or the teacher-mediators⁵. The tutorial is divided in three moments: (i) presentation of some theoretical issues that underlie iiTTD practice, (ii) information about the tasks and procedures involved in iiTTD participation (calendar, rules, tasks, assessment), and (iii) assistance in setting a learning goal.

The first part of the tutorial is devoted to the presentation of some theoretical issues related to iiTTD. The focus is on the three teletandem principles (separation of languages, autonomy and reciprocity) and on how they are intertwined in order to foster

² The authors mention the tandem practice in their paper, but we understand this is also valid for teletandem practice.

³ Telles' new project "The cultural dimension of online intercultural English and Portuguese interactions through teletandem" (Telles, 2012, p. 6) has one of its research questions on issues of teletandem integration in the EFL curriculum: *What are the different procedures and views of institutional implementation of teletandem in the language learning curriculum?*

⁴ Our translation for 'Licenciatura em Letras'. It should be noted that teletandem is embedded into EFL courses of other majors at UNESP – SJRP and that at UGA, students who take Portuguese as a foreign language are from different majors.

⁵ In the original project (Telles, 2006), mediation is defined as the assistance (either pedagogical or technological) learners receive from the teacher-mediator, a graduate student involved with teletandem research. In iiTTD, the teacher-mediator may be the foreign language teacher.

foreign language learning with the collaboration of an individual who is not a language teacher. Moreover, some cultural aspects that might be perceived as taboos by the foreign partner are mentioned during the tutorial. As reported by Luz (2012) and Garcia (2010), it is crucial that participants are not judgmental about what they regard as different or contradictory to their own beliefs and lifestyles in order to try to soften tensions and conflicts. Despite some theories that argue in favor of the idea that, in such globalized world, nothing is essentially foreign (Welsh, 1999), since the beginning of teletandem project, experience has shown that the first interactions can, sometimes, bring about a strong feeling of belonging to an alien culture (Bedran, 2008, Mendes, 2009, Salomão, 2012). It is expected that this previous discussion about stereotypes and preconceived ideas may cushion possible conflicts or misunderstandings during interactions.

In the second part of the tutorial, students are informed about the practicalities of participating in iiTTD. The presentation of such practicalities relies on a calendar that is created by the FL teachers (at UNESP – SJRP and at UGA) in order to guide iiTTD practice. The following is the calendar of activities presented to students in the first semester of 2012.

The most important tasks shown in the calendar are (i) the eight interactions (and the week in which they occur); (ii) the three texts in the foreign language that each student has to write and send to his/her partner every other week. Some tasks are not explicitly shown in the calendar but are also discussed during this part of the tutorial: the reflexive diaries they have to write after each interaction and the three texts that they receive and revise in their native language. These shall be

addressed in detail in the following sections of this paper, which deals with the integrating tasks.

Still in the part of the tutorial that deals with the practical aspects of iiTTD participation, students are told that all the iiTTD-related files should be stored. Those files include: interactions⁶ (video/audio files); texts written in the foreign language and revised in the native one (word files); reflexive diaries (word files); initial and final questionnaires (word files); copy of any chat conversations they may have during interactions (word files). Except for the interactions (whose files are too heavy), all the other files are uploaded by learners' to an e-portfolio at Teleduc platform⁷.

The final part of the tutorial is devoted to answering the initial questionnaire, which is, in fact, some guiding questions to assist students as they set a learning goal. It has been long established (Little, 2005, 2009; Moeller, Theiler & Wu, 2012) that setting a learning goal is an essential aspect in autonomous language learning. At the same time, these authors have pointed out that students may need some support in doing so. Based on the fact that setting goals is essential, but unlikely to happen without some support, after teletandem practical and theoretical elements are presented, Brazilian iiTTD participants answer a short questionnaire that is meant to foster students' reflection on what their linguistic level is in different skills⁸ and on what their expectations are during this iiTTD experience – so that Brazilian students can try to establish what they may want (or need) to achieve as they start interacting with a North American university student. The following are the questions proposed as prompts for students' reflection:

Table 1. iiTTD Calendar (first semester, 2012).

week/ month	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Febr.			14 – 18 Tutorial with UGA students	20-24 Carnival	27/02-03/03 Tutorial with UNESP students
	05-09 interaction I	12-16 Spring break (UGA)	19 – 23 interaction II	26 - 30 interaction III	
March	UGA students send a text to UNESP students		UNESP students send a text to UGA students	UGA students send a text to UNESP students	
	01-06 interaction IV	09-13 interaction V	16-20 interaction VI	23-27 interaction VII	30/04 a 04/05 interaction VIII
Abril	UNESP students send a text to UGA students	UGA students send a text to UNESP students	UNESP students send a text to UGA students	UGA students send a text to UNESP students	evaluating the experience

Fonte: drawn up by the authors.

⁶ The interactions are recorded by means of 'Evaer video and audio recorder for Skype' (Excellent Video and Audio Recorder [EVAER], 2015).

⁷ Teleduc (2015) is a virtual learning environment. As its use was discontinued by UNESP in 2014, it is important to mention that these files are currently stored in Google Drive.

⁸ Based on CEFR self-assessment grid (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) (Council of Europe, 2015).

- Define Teletandem according to your own experience (or what you have heard about it).
- Read the self-assessment grid (http://cco.cup.cam.ac.uk/content/978/05/1166/733/6/9780511667336apx5_abstract_CBO.jpg accessed on October 5, 2016) and check the level you are in each of the skills.
- Based on your self-assessment (question 2), establish the goal(s) you intend to achieve by means of your participation in teletandem sessions.

Initial questionnaire

One of the strongest features of this integrated modality is that students are given the opportunity to reflect on what they can (or can't) do in/with the foreign language during their FL lesson – i.e. they can count on their professor to help them establish specific learning goals as part of the mediation process⁹. It has been argued by different researchers in the scope of Teletandem Project (Cavalari, 2009, 2010; Kami, 2011; Silva, 2012; Luz, 2012) how vital goal setting is for motivation, continuation of partnerships and for the learning process itself. It is expected, therefore, that this procedure may help Brazilian participants envision what their goals are and how such goals may guide their participation in iiTTD.

Blending teletandem interactions and FI syllabus: integrating tasks

The iiTTD integrating tasks are the ones that fulfill the eight-week period following the tutorial. There are four main tasks involved (i) interactions, (ii) writing texts (in the foreign language), (iii) revising texts (in the native language) and (iv) writing reflexive diaries.

Interactions last for eight weeks (as it can be seen in the calendar shown in the previous section) and, during this period, students interact with the same partner one hour per week and dedicate half the time for each language. The first interaction (test interaction) is a 'getting-to-know-your-partner' one, in which learners are free to talk about personal matters (if they feel comfortable in doing so), or about any other topics of their interest.

From the second to the seventh interaction, every other week students write a text in the foreign language on a topic that is part of the contents of their FL course. This is a fundamental aspect of iiTTD practice at UNESP-SJRP, for it evidences the notion that the integration of teletandem practice into the FL syllabus has a synergistic effect

instead of being a decorative feature in the lessons. That is possible by offering students input (movies, texts, videos, related grammar) and opportunity for output in class (discussion, oral/written production exercises), before they write a text in the foreign language and send it to their teletandem partner¹⁰. The text is revised by the partner and this revision will be discussed in the beginning of the following interaction, when students may address both the linguistic features and the topic of the text as they interact. In the subsequent week, students reverse roles – each Brazilian student receives a text from their partner and should revise it before the next interaction. It may be argued that this weekly exchange of texts and reversing roles (either as a foreign language learner or as an expert of their native language) may promote collaborative learning (from a Vygotskian perspective) as well as a sense of dependability and commitment between partners.

Besides, this procedure may encourage those students who feel that they do not have much to share during interactions. According to John and White (2003) and Garcia (2007), (tele)tandem partners may feel they run out of topics during interactions. In this iiTTD experience, the theme addressed by students in their texts is the suggested topic of the interaction, i.e., every week, either the Brazilian or the American teacher offers input that their students may bring for the interaction. As stated by Silva (2006) and Garcia (2007), in the original project (Telles, 2006), students were encouraged to prepare topics for the teletandem session in advance, yet some students felt they did not know what to talk about after a while. Within this new modality, the topic is suggested by the professor, who has already promoted sufficient input about it and may have led the student to further questions. If, on one hand, this new proposal may foster topics to be discussed, thus keeping partners enrolled in the task, on the other, it may be argued that the choice of topics by the teacher may impair one of the principles of tandem learning – the autonomy. This relationship between autonomy and predetermined topics to start the interaction (added to the fact that in this modality they are required to write texts to be exchanged) should be further studied¹¹.

It is important to mention that, as most American students' majors are not related to language studies, detailed explanations on grammar

⁹ See note 7.

¹⁰ Although the topic of the written work is given by the teacher, issues related to text type and genres are not addressed. Discussions about implementing projects related to genres are currently being developed by researchers.

¹¹ Bonfim (2014) and Bragagnollo (2016) address this issue in their thesis and dissertation, respectively.

rules are not expected as they revise the Brazilians' texts¹². Instead, the revision may offer the native's perspective of 'awkward' grammar constructions, inadequate or offensive language use, or, yet, a misinterpretation of what has been written about. It is believed that by encouraging a discussion on the revision work in the beginning of the interaction students may be helped to deepen their knowledge on language use and focus on certain (linguistic or cultural) aspects brought about by the revision.

The last integrating task concerns the autonomous aspect of teletandem practice. As a means to stimulate ongoing reflection about the learning process (Walker, 2002; Srimavin & Darasawang, 2003), students are asked to write a learning diary after each interaction, always having the goals they have set in mind so that they can check if adjustments should be made during the process (either in the goals or in the learning aspects in iiTTD). These are some guiding questions that are offered to students as they write the first diary:

- What have you and/or your partner learned during today's teletandem interaction?
- Write about (i) the moments when there was some kind of discomfort (or conflict), or when you felt embarrassed for some reason; (ii) how or if the conflict or embarrassment was dealt with.
- Go back to the questionnaire you answered and (re)think about goals you have established; then try to explain how teletandem experience has (or not) been helping you achieve such goals. What kind of adjustments you might need to make?

The relevance of writing diaries serves two purposes: it may foster autonomous learning by means of continuous reflection on the process and, at the same time, it may help the FL teacher realize how, when (or if) some kind of pedagogical intervention is needed during the iiTTD interactions¹³. Besides, teachers may have some elements for a formative assessment of learners, as it shall be discussed in the following section.

Integrating Assessment

Assessing is also a distinctive aspect of iiTTD practice at UNESP – SJRP. There are three constituent elements of assessment in this new modality: (i) assessment by the learner (self-assessment); (ii) assessment of one's partner's

production both orally and in writing (peer assessment), and (iii) teacher's assessment.

Consistent with a sociocultural perspective of autonomous learning (Leffa, 2003; Little, 2007; Ushioda, 2011; Bonfim, 2014) iiTTD practice offers different opportunities for participants' assistance and self-assessment. These are crucial issues from the start, in the tutorial, when students learn about the theoretical principles of teletandem practice and are given opportunities to find out their linguistic level according to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2015) self-assessment grid, which will guide the learning goal setting. Besides, the reflexive diary writing, as an integrating task, is believed to promote formative self-assessment that may orient the learning process (Srimavin & Darasawang, 2003; Walker, 2002) and the assistance the teacher might offer. This means that in iiTTD students are not asked to grade their participation as a form of self-assessment; they are, instead, encouraged to focus on their learning goals and their progress during the process.

Another feature that may contribute to self-assessment is the use of an e-portofolio (hosted at Teleduc). According to Wagner and Lilly (1999) and Little (2005, 2009), portfolios are a collection of activities carried out by learners so that they can keep track of their weaknesses and strengths during the learning process.

Finally, when the eight weeks are over, there is a final moment when learners may assess the whole iiTTD experience by answering a final questionnaire:

1. How do define teletandem after participating in this 9-week project?
2. Based on your experience, which are the three 'golden rules' for successful language learning in teletandem?
3. Go back to your answers to questions 2 and 3 in the initial questionnaire and check if you think you achieved your learning goals. Take a look at the assessment grid again and comment on possible achievements.
4. How do you think your teletandem partner has contributed (or could have contributed) to your learning.

Final questionnaire

This opportunity for self-assessment has also the purpose of sharing the learner's experience with the FL teacher who will assess his/her iiTTD participation. It also helps the teacher in orientating

¹² Issues related to how the revisions are actually made by teachers-to-be and by learners of language from others majors are also being approached by researchers in the project. Brocco (2014) is investigating how a group of Brazilian EFL teachers-to-be deals with the assessment of texts written in Portuguese as a FL in iiTTD.

¹³ Both the texts (in different versions (draft and revised text)) and the diaries have been stored in a databank within the project, as described by Aranha, Luvizari-Murad and Moreno (2015).

further groups and in raising new issues concerning the blended task.

The second element that constitutes assessment in iiTTD is coherent with a collaborative proposal of FL teaching-learning: peer assessment or the revision work participants have to do of their partners' oral and written production. There is no focus on grading or on judging such production. Instead, attention is directed to the partners' needs and interests and the only orientation participants get is concerning the use of tools that might help the revision of written production and the sharing of files between the two partners¹⁴.

The final assessment element in iiTTD is the FL teacher's assessment of students' participation. As a pedagogical activity embedded in the FL syllabus, teachers may assess iiTTD participation both in a formative (emphasis on the process) and in a summative way (emphasis on the product and on grading) (Brindley, 2001). This summative orientation of teachers' assessment may be said to be at odds with the theoretical basis of teletandem as an autonomous and collaborative teaching-learning context. However, it may be argued that there might be alternatives to establish assessment criteria which are coherent to autonomous learning¹⁵. Besides, experience has shown that students might feel awarded for their work and effort after all the tasks they have actually performed in the foreign language during iiTTD.

Final remarks

By describing the institutional integrated modality of teletandem that is being carried out at UNESP – SJRP, the present study is intended to characterize a blended FL learning context that builds on the experience gained since *Teletandem Brasil* Project was first implemented. The distinguishing features herein described reflect the partnership established between UNESP – SJRP and UGA and, in short, can be characterized as having three moments:

- preparing students for an autonomous and collaborative experience of learning;
- integrating teletandem activities into the FL syllabus so that teletandem practice both feed and are fed by FL lessons;

- integrating different perspectives of assessment into the process – self-assessment, peer assessment and professor assessment.

Making students participation mandatory (and subject to assessment) may seem an anti-autonomous procedure; however, experience has shown that the fact that autonomous learning does not usually play a role in students' academic life has a strong effect when they are expected to take control of and make decisions about their learning. This fact alone may justify a more guided way of presenting and implementing teletandem practice. Nevertheless, considering the sociocultural perspective of autonomy adopted in this paper, a gain in learning how to learn involves (i) giving students opportunities to make decisions about the process and to assess their progress towards their goals; (ii) offering continuous guidance and support during such decision making process. Bonfim (2014) argues that the integrating procedures and tasks in iiTTD are powerful instruments to scaffold the process of learning how to manage one's learning.

It should be mentioned that some of the tasks and procedures herein described have been adjusted overtime, according to the characteristics of other partnerships that have been established. However, the theoretical basis that underlie the blending of teletandem into the FL lessons is maintained so that practice may be different, yet consistent with the premises adopted in this work.

Based on these assumptions, it is expected that this new modality of teletandem (the iiTTD) may provide:

- FL learners with practice in dealing with authentic input and a meaningful experience with autonomous collaborative technology-mediated learning;
- teachers-to-be with an opportunity to participate in discussions about their own language and culture in a Portuguese as a foreign language learning context;
- FL teachers with favorable conditions to integrate authentic technology-mediated communication into their lessons, promoting a blended learning environment;
- researchers with rich elements to be investigated as far as FL teaching and learning and CMC (Computer Mediated-Communication) are concerned;
- Universities with an appropriate context for international partnerships.

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¹⁴ The tools usually suggested for these purposes are *Microsoft Word's* 'track changes' editing feature and *Google Drive* (<https://drive.google.com>).

¹⁵ In Lewis's (2003) report on an integrated experience with tandem learning, students' could grade their own work at the end of the project and that grade would constitute a percentage of their final grade. This, however, seems not to be coherent with the inherent formative orientation of assessment adopted in iiTTD at UNESP- Rio Preto.

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