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TELETANDEM BRASIL: Foreign languages for all

Principal investigator: João Antonio Telles, Ph.D.

Spencer Focus Area: **Teaching, Learning and Instructional Resources**
Program Director: **Lauren Jones Young**

Assis, Brazil
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1. Describing of the project

a) Introducing the problem

Due to its continental dimensions and geographical positions, Brazilian students and teachers of foreign languages have been (and will remain) isolated from the international community. Access to foreign languages and cultures in Brazil has not been extended to economically disadvantaged students. Contact with foreign languages and cultures is restricted to the economically privileged classes who can travel and pay for language courses.

b) Looking for, proposing and inquiring into a solution

We propose to combine two resources: *Tandem method* and new technologies. *Language learning in-tandem*, an innovative method not yet used in Brazil, involves pairs of speakers of different languages working collaboratively, autonomously and reciprocally in order to learn each other's languages (see Brammerts, 1996; Brammerts, 1999; Brammerts, 2003; Brammerts, Klepping & Zarco de la Hoz, 1986; Cziko & Park, 2003). Each of them plays the role of student of the target language he/she wishes to learn (the language in which his/her partner is competent) and teacher of his own language (the one his/her partner wishes to learn). The two most distinctive advantages of tandem learning are: (a) it involves personal and real relationships, and (b) it is based on learner autonomy. It can be either integrated to daily foreign language classroom activities (*integrated tandem*), or upon learners' voluntary decision to learn a foreign language (*free tandem*). We intend to explore the pedagogic possibilities of both. Tandem exists in two modalities: (a) *face-to-face tandem* and (b) *e-tandem* (or distance tandem). The first is the richest form, but it requires physical presence; the last one, generally based on e-mail, allows overcoming geographical distance, but it only applies to written media. We have devised a third mode of in-tandem foreign language learning – the *teletandem* (see Vassallo & Telles, 2006;



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Telles & Vassallo, 2006; Vassallo, 2006). It is a way of distance foreign language learning that uses the Tandem method by the free video teleconferencing device of *MSN Messenger*. Teletandem has the following presuppositions:

- Teletandem procedures are commonly agreed by both partners, according to the two principles of tandem learning – autonomy and reciprocity.
- Teletandem sessions consist of regular sessions of conversation, mingled by corrections that focus on vocabulary and grammar
- The languages are switched after, at least, 60 minutes of conversation
- Shared reflections on content and on form of language and conversation process must take place at the end of each session.
- Tandem partners are (reasonably) competent speakers of the language they intend to teach. They are not professional teachers.
- Teletandem partners are mentored by specifically prepared facilitators, in regular sessions, collaborating with institutional foreign language teachers. (Telles & Vassallo, 2006)

c) The three central research questions and their significance

Our research questions are as follows:

- *How does the MSN Messenger function as a tool and a multimedia context of distance foreign language learning?*



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- *What are the features of teletandem pair interaction and learning?*
- *What are the new roles and management procedures of the teacher-mediator within the teaching/learning context of the teletandem?*

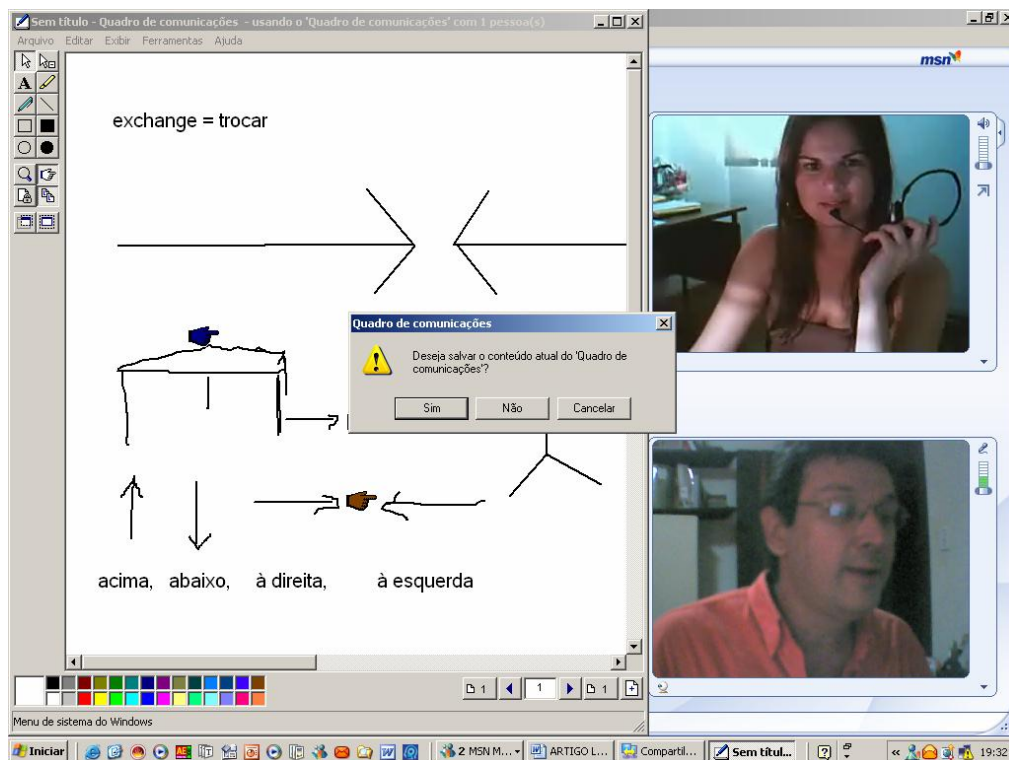


FIGURE 1: MSN screen with the White Board and video windows open

Through this research, we intend to:

1. promote the virtual contact of *teletandem* pairs of foreign and Brazilian university students;
2. offer an adequate virtual and structural context for the distance learning of foreign languages
3. Explore the different implications of integrated and free Teletandem and study under what circumstances this method may better implemented.



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d) *A brief summary of the relevant literature*

The literature on e-learning is restricted on web courses and virtual lessons. The literature on in-tandem learning through instant messaging was not found. Tandem literature concerns the description of single experiences within specific university contexts, always restricted on face-to-face and e-mail tandem.

e) Relationship between the literature and the proposal of Teletandem Brasil
Teletandem Brasil will be dealing with unexplored aspects of in-tandem learning:

- the study of teletandem facilitators' pedagogical roles
- the study of tandem through teleconferencing
- the study of the Messenger as a pedagogical tool and educational resource
- academic investigation on the theoretical aspects regarding the tandem method.

f) *The new knowledge expected to result from Teletandem Brasil*

We expect social, academic, practical, pedagogical and academic results:

- A better understanding of, theoretical and practical knowledge on the foreign language teachers' roles within this new multimedia context,
- A better understanding of teachers' views and management of the *teletandem* autonomous learning processes.
- An improved awareness of available methods for offering free and democratic access of the economically disadvantaged learner to foreign languages and cultures – a space for him/her to establish cultural links with partners.
- a better insight into in-tandem learning, as well as of the concept of *teletandem* that the project introduces.
- Increasing theoretical and practical knowledge to introduce *teletandem* in the public foreign language learning centers in the State of São Paulo, Brazil



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- Twenty one sub-projects (MA and Ph.D. theses – please, refer to http://www.assis.unesp.br/departamentos/docs/ANEXO_TELETANDEM.pdf) conducted within the three years, not counting the books and academic papers submitted to national and international journals.

2. Concise summary of the project

a) *The conceptual framework*

The notion of *teletandem* is theoretically grounded on socio-constructivist theories of cooperative and transformative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Kagan & Kagan, 1994, 2002; Millis & Cottell, 1998; Millis & Hertel, 2002; Souza, 2003^a, 2003^b, 2006) and on vygotskyan socio-interactionist views. Lexical approach, Focus on Form, CMC Theories, theories about Reflective Teacher and Learner Autonomy provide other relevant theoretical reference, as showed in figure III, below:



Figure III: The theoretical framework of the project and its relationship with the research questions



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Further information is supplied in the full version of the project at <http://www.assis.unesp.br/departamentos/joaotelles.php>

b) The research methods

According with the methodological framework of the project, we have adopted qualitative approaches to research and the use of methods such as case studies, ethnographies and narrative inquiry (participants' stories about their teaching and learning processes).

c) The data collection instruments

Data will be collected by video-taping teletandem sessions, diaries written by the participants and teacher-mediators, interviews, questionnaires, field notes and autobiographies.

d) The modes of data analysis

Data analyses will be done from the point of view of hermeneutic/interpretive approaches, discourse and conversation analysis.

e) How TELETANDEM BRASIL fits within the Spencer focus area of Teaching, Learning and Instructional Resources

Teletandem Brasil fits within this Spencer focus areas because:

- It explores new frontiers in computer mediated foreign language learning by focusing on a new approach to learning and alternative roles of teachers
- It focuses on a free instructional resource (the MSN Messenger) that facilitates inexpensive international communication: it will foster the intercultural contact of young university undergraduates and future foreign



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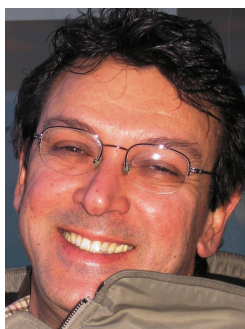
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language teachers with the peoples, cultures and languages of the world, at simply no cost.

- It is grounded directly in teaching practice as well as in research teaching.

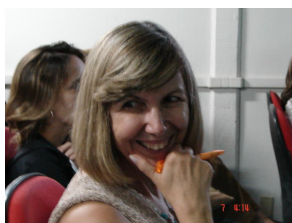
3. Principal investigators

a) Identification



João A. Telles, Ph.D. (University of Toronto, OISE, Canada)

João earned his Ph.D. degree in Educational Linguistics from OISE – Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada. He is associate professor at the Department of Education of São Paulo State University (UNESP-Assis) where he teaches *Foreign Language Teaching Practicum*. He also teaches, conducts research and supervises doctorate and master's thesis in the Graduate Program of Education of UNESP-Marília. He has conducted post-doctorate research at the Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille III, France. For over twenty years, João taught English as a Foreign Language at several high schools and acted as pedagogical coordinator in various foreign language institutes in São Paulo city. He was visiting professor at the Institute for International Development and Cooperation of Hiroshima University in Japan, where he taught graduate courses on Qualitative Research Methods and co-supervised dissertations. His research interests and publications are in the areas of first and foreign language acquisition, Portuguese as Second Language, teachers' life histories, teacher reflection, Arts-Based Educational Research and *in-tandem* learning. In the TELETANDEM BRASIL Project he acts as coordinator and conducts research on the role of video images in teletandem pair interaction. E-mail: jtelles@assis.unesp.br.



Maria Helena Vieira Abrahão, Ph.D. (UNICAMP – Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil)



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Maria Helena holds a Ph.D. and MA degrees in Applied Linguistics from UNICAMP - Campinas State University. She teaches graduate courses on Second Language Acquisition Research in the Graduate Studies in Language Arts at UNESP – S.J. do Rio Preto, where she supervises MA and Ph.D. theses in the areas of foreign language teaching and learning, teachers' beliefs and foreign language teacher education. She was editor of books and author of various articles in journals. She is vice-coordinator of the TELETANDEM BRASIL Project. Her research interests are in the areas of teachers' beliefs of foreign language teaching and learning and the role of the teacher mediator within the context of the *teletandem*. E-mail: caroabra@uol.com.br

Ana Mariza Benedetti, Ph.D. (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain)



Ana Mariza is Assistant Professor and vice-head of the Modern Languages Department, UNESP – S.J. Rio Preto, where she teaches Spanish. She is also vice-head of the Graduate Studies Program in Language Studies of UNESP-SJ do Rio Preto, where she teaches and supervises MA and Ph.D. theses in the areas of morpho-syntactic and semantic interferences of Portuguese in the acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language. Her research interests and publications in Brazil and abroad focus the areas of analysis and treatment of errors, interlanguage studies, contrastive analysis and the teaching and learning of foreign languages. E-mail: ana.benedetti@superig.com.br

Douglas Altamiro Consolo, Ph.D. (University of Reading, England)



Douglas holds a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics, an MA in Applied Linguistics from UNICAMP – Campinas State University (Brazil), and a Ph.D. in English as a Foreign Language, from the University of Reading, England. He has done post-doctorate research on language evaluation at the Institute of Language Studies - UNICAMP and at the University of



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Melbourne, Australia. He is Associate Professor at the Modern Languages Department of UNESP – S.J. Rio Preto where he teaches English and Applied Linguistics at the undergraduate level. Douglas teaches at the Graduate Course of Language Studies and supervises MA and Ph.D. theses in the area of Applied Linguistics (Second Language Acquisition). His research interests and publications lie in the areas of second language evaluation, particularly oral comprehension, classroom and virtual classroom interaction, beliefs and competences. He has also been the head of the Graduate Studies Program in Language Studies at UNESP – Rio Preto. E-mail: dconsolo@ibilce.unesp.br

Other principal investigators, their titles and their roles in the project can be found on the table below. Each of them has his/her own MA and Ph.D. supervisees:

b) Definition of the investigators' roles

The investigators, listed below, will develop their own study and supervise the studies of their Ph.D. and MA supervisees. The results will be published through books, academic journal articles and presentation in congresses.

Name	Title	Institution	Work Place	Role in the Project
Coordination				
João Antonio Telles	Ph.D., Associate Professor	UNESP – Assis	Depto. de Educação; Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação, UNESP-Marília	Head Researcher
Maria Helena Vieira Abrahão	Ph.D.	UNESP – S.J. Rio Preto	Graduate Program in Language Studies (Applied Linguistics), UNESP – Rio Preto	Vice-Head, Researcher
Ana Mariza Benedetti	Ph.D., Assistant Professor	UNESP – S.J. Rio Preto	Graduate Program in Language Studies (Applied Linguistics), UNESP – Rio Preto	Vice-Head, Researcher
Researchers from UNESP – professors				
Douglas Altamiro	Ph.D., Associate	UNESP – S.J. Rio	Graduate Program in	Researcher



Consolo	Professor	Preto	Language Studies (Applied Linguistics), UNESP – Rio Preto	
Sidnei Bergamaschi	Ph.D., Assistant Professor	UNESP - Bauru.	Computing Department, UNESP - Bauru	Researcher
Wilson Yonezawa	Ph.D., Assistant Professor	UNESP - Bauru.	Computing Department, UNESP - Bauru	Researcher

External collaborators				
Name	Title	Institution	Work Place	Role in the Project
Ana Clotilde T. Williams	Ph.D., Head of Department	University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign, USA	Department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese	Researcher
Vera Lucia de Oliveira	Ph.D., Associate Professor	Università degli Studi di Lecce, Italy	Facoltà di Lettere	Researcher
Paola Leone	MA	Università degli Studi di Lecce, Italy	Facoltà di Lettere	Researcher
Maria Luisa Vassallo	Teacher	Liceo Marco Foscarini, Italy	Liceo Marco Foscarini	Researcher
Liliane Santos	Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department Head	Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille III, France	UFR de Langues Romaines Section d'Espagnol et de Portugais	Researcher
Annick Rivens Mompean	Ph.D. Head of Centre des Ressources en Langues	Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille III, France	Centre des Ressources em Langues	Researcher

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Project temporary homepage: <http://www.assis.unesp.br/departamentos/joaotelles.php>

Project future homepage: www.teletandembrasil.org (on operation from August 2006 on)

Project homepage at the *Brazilian National Council for the Development of Science and Technology (CNPq)*: <http://dqp.cnpq.br/buscaoperacional/detalhepesq.jsp?pesq=5842613672024866>