

# Chapter 7

## Spanish Teaching-Learning Process in the Context of Teletandem: Dialogues on Literature



Kelly Cristiane Henschel Pobbe de Carvalho , Fernanda Tamarozi de Oliveira , and Jheniffer da Silva Cruz 

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents partial results of the development of research projects at master's and scientific initiation levels, which have been undertaken since mid-2020. Such studies are based on reflections about the dissemination of culture, language, and literature through virtual exchange, since this practice has become an important tool for the development, among its participants, of linguistic, discursive, and interactional skills, as well as for the expansion of their knowledge through the exchange of scientific and cultural knowledge.

From this perspective, the research aims to reflect on the circulation of literary texts in the context of virtual exchange of the Teletandem (Telles, 2009), more specifically, to observe how reading and sharing these texts can contribute to enhance interactions and improve the process of teaching and learning Spanish language, as well as the training of Spanish teachers.

It is important to highlight that this experience is linked to an international network research project (CAPES PrInt Program – UNESP), which develops studies on the processes of dissemination of culture, language, and literature in the context of telecollaboration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Dissemination of culture, language and literature in contexts of telecollaboration.” Project linked to the CAPES/PrInt/UNESP agreement - PROPG 02/2019 – International Research Networks, under the coordination of Dr. Karin Adriane Henschel Pobbe Ramos (UNESP).

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K. C. H. P. de Carvalho (✉) · F. T. de Oliveira · J. da Silva Cruz  
School of Sciences, Humanities and Languages, Assis, São Paulo State University (UNESP),  
São Paulo, Brasil  
e-mail: [kelly.carvalho@unesp.br](mailto:kelly.carvalho@unesp.br); [fernanda.tamarozi@unesp.br](mailto:fernanda.tamarozi@unesp.br); [jheniffer.cruz@unesp.br](mailto:jheniffer.cruz@unesp.br)

The scope of studies of this network has multiple facets. On the one hand, issues related to the democratization of access to foreign languages as well as their artistic-cultural products are discussed, especially in the context of a course in Letters of a Brazilian university, located in the interior of the State of São Paulo, whose students, for the most part, have never had an experience of cultural exchange. On the other hand, studies on the processes of dissemination of knowledge through telecollaboration also provide reflections on the education of readers, in a broad sense, as producers of meaning. There is also a research strand that encompasses the contributions of telecollaborative experiences to the training of language and literature teachers (Ramos & Carvalho, 2020, pp. 131–132).

In this context, the research considered here unfolds based on the following objectives:

1. To investigate the concept of telecollaboration, as well as to characterize the Teletandem.
2. To monitor and participate in the mediation process of the Teletandem Portuguese x Spanish sessions, developed between Brazilian and Hispanic students, from our university and partner universities.
3. From this context, collect data (through questionnaires and interviews with the interactants) to investigate how/if questions related to the literature emerge in these contexts.
4. To investigate how the circulation of literary texts can contribute to the exchange of knowledge and, consequently, enhance the Teletandem sessions.
5. To discuss about the results, based on data observed in this mediation process, also considering its implications in the teaching and learning process of Spanish/foreign language and in the training of Spanish-language teachers and their literatures.

For its development, we are based on studies already conducted on the Teletandem, as a context of virtual exchange, considering its principles and the mediation process, besides also considering the conception of Candido (1972) about the humanizing function of literature and the cross-cultural perspective, according to Welsch (1999, p. 7), which proposes a relationship of mixture and interaction between cultures.

Methodologically, the projects are based on qualitative research, of an interpretive character, in the terms explained by Lüdke and André (2013), when they state that in this type of research, there is emphasis on the process and concern to portray the perspective of the participants, besides the natural environment being a direct source of the data. These characteristics fit our objectives, since we developed a research in the context of the Teletandem, focusing on the process of mediation of interactions in the context of initial training of Spanish-speaking teachers, as well as the production of their independence and the development of their reflexive capacity. Thus, the qualitative methodology, besides allowing us to observe every movement of the process, is characterized by this emancipatory character.

The reflections we present here are due to the activities of Teletandem developed in the partnership between the Universidade Estadual Paulista (São Paulo State

University – UNESP, FCL/Assis) and the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (National Autonomous University of Mexico – UNAM, Mediateca/ENALLT), in interactions that occurred during the second half of 2021.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the chapter is organized as follows: initially, we present the theoretical references that support our reflections; then, we describe the context of the investigation, in addition to explaining methodological aspects of the actions in the Teletandem UNESP-UNAM; and then discuss and analyze the data observed in the development of these studies until then.

## 7.2 Theoretical Discussion

Virtual exchange has been growing a lot in recent years, both in the field of research and teaching, as well as in the construction of partnerships between universities around the world and, thus, has occupied an important place for language teaching and learning. Telecollaboration has already been defined by several scholars. In 2011, O’Dowd refers to this term as “the application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work” (O’Dowd, 2011, p. 342). What’s more, virtual exchange can refer to a variety of contexts such as learning environments in global networks, *online collaborative international learning*, global virtual teams, e-tandem, and teletandem.

*In-tandem learning* proposes that two apprentices work together according to their goal, which in this case is to learn a foreign language. Teletandem, in turn, consists of a form of virtual exchange; recently, O’Dowd and O’Rourke (2019, p. 4) has presented a summary table with an overview of the terminologies used to refer to the main research contexts on virtual exchange, spread around the world. According to this scenario, the general term *virtual exchange* encompasses the contexts of telecollaboration, online intercultural exchange, learning environments in global networks, *international collaborative learning online*, global virtual teams, e-Tandem, and Teletandem (Ramos & Carvalho, 2020, pp. 134–135).

The reflections we undertake here refer, therefore, to the context of virtual exchange of Teletandem, defined by Telles as follows:

Teletandem is a mode of telecollaboration – a virtual, collaborative and autonomous context for learning foreign languages in which two students help each other to learn their own languages (or language of proficiency). They do so by using the text, voice and webcam image resources of VOIP technology (such as Skype), and by adopting the three principles

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<sup>2</sup>A medialibrary is a center for self-directed language learning that has the resources to learn and practice German, Russian, French, Chinese, Portuguese, etc. The media library offers advice, workshops, materials for learning languages, teletandem sessions, and a wide range of printed and digital resources to support the learning of an additional language (<https://mediateca.enallt.unam.mx/>)

of tandem learning: autonomy, reciprocity, and separate use of both languages. [...] (Telles, 2015, p. 604)

As noted, the Teletandem is defined by three basic principles. The first is *the separation of languages*, which suggests that time is divided between languages in a balanced way; however, the alternation between them can be a strategy for communication at times. The second principle is that of *reciprocity*, which presupposes a commitment on the part of the interactants to participate and contribute to the partner also achieving its objectives, thus seeking to meet each other's expectations. The principle of *autonomy* can have different definitions, according to the teletandem modality, whether institutional or not institutional. Our context is a non-integrated institutional Teletandem partnership, so, in this case, autonomy proposes that each participant be responsible for the decisions and management of their own learning.<sup>3</sup>

Teletandem should also be understood as a context in which interactants have as a common objective, the teaching and learning of languages; that way, it can not be confused as a simple chat. The word *tandem*, in this sense, refers to the idea of two apprentices working together according to their objective, which, in this case, is to learn a foreign language.

[...] *tandem* is performed through frequent bilingual sessions, with didactic purposes. They are meetings established in consensus by two speakers of different languages who are not necessarily native, nor professors with degrees. Both are interested in studying the foreign language in which the other is more proficient. (Telles, 2009, p. 21)<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these aspects, it is important to consider that Teletandem in the way it has been establishing itself in recent years, in our institution, encompasses in *its configuration not only* the virtual interaction sessions strictly but also the entire *mediation process*. Thus, mediation is understood here as a broader process that, although it includes the *mediation session* in its strictest sense (Telles, 2015), as a moment of group discussion held after the interactions (shared meeting, held jointly in the laboratories themselves or in virtual environments, as in the context of the pandemic), includes several procedures: “[...] it is a whole process that begins in the first contacts with foreign institutions and extends to organization, monitoring, supervision and evaluation” (Carvalho & Ramos, 2019).

In view of the objective of this proposal presented here, namely, that of inserting dialogues on literature in the context of Teletandem, it is also necessary to observe the perspective from which we leave in this regard. With regard to literary education, we emphasize the humanizing function of literature (Candido, 1972), considering

<sup>3</sup>Mode of *Non-Integrated Institutional Teletandem* (Aranha & Cavalari, 2014): when interactions are agreed between the two institutions, through mediators, but are not necessarily integrated into the curriculum or course, in both contexts

<sup>4</sup>Original in Portuguese: “[...] o *tandem* é realizado por meio de sessões bilíngues frequentes, com finalidades didáticas. São encontros estabelecidos em consenso por dois falantes de diferentes línguas que não são necessariamente nativos, nem professores com licenciatura. Ambos estão interessados em estudar a língua estrangeira na qual o outro é mais proficiente. (Telles, 2009, p. 21).” Translated by the authors.

that it can act directly in the formation of the subject, both with regard to psychological issues of capacity or need to fantasize and with regard to aspects of educational formation and also with regard to the social dimension of identification of the subject with the universe represented in the literary work.

Now, if no one can spend twenty-four hours without diving into the universe of fiction and poetry, the literature conceived in the broad sense to whom I have referred seems to correspond to a universal need, which needs to be satisfied and whose satisfaction constitutes a right. (Candido, 2004, p. 175)<sup>5</sup>

In this sense, we agree with Candido that access to literature is an indispensable right of every human being, being a universal manifestation that transcends the boundaries of time and space. Therefore, this study developed within the scope of research projects seeks to reflect the extent to which literature can contribute to language learning in the Teletandem, considering these aspects.

For this, a cross-cultural perspective is also assumed, according to Welsch (1999, p. 7), which proposes a relationship between cultures. Thus, it is not a relationship of isolation and conflict but of entanglement, mixing, and interaction. It promotes, therefore, not separation but exchange and applies to the political, social, scientific, educational, and artistic spheres, supporting reflections that concern issues emerging from contemporaneity.

The importance of these discussions lies in the constitution of a space for studies on the processes of dissemination of culture, language, and literature in contexts of telecollaboration, using technology for the reason being language learning as well as literary education, that is, verbal interaction, with subjects historically situated in concrete language practices, discussing subjects that concern the interactants, from literary texts, and assisted by the mediators.

### 7.3 Research Context

For the development of this study, data from the interaction and mediation sessions in Teletandem between UNESP and UNAM are observed and analyzed, which took place during the second half of 2021. It is a partnership between our university and the Mexican university, which promotes the teaching and learning of languages, in this case, Portuguese and Spanish, as well as contributes to the process of teacher training (as Spanish/foreign language teachers), with regard to the Brazilian context. It is important to note that the Brazilian participants are mostly students of Letters/Spanish; Mexican participants are students from various careers of higher education, including Administration, Philosophy, Geography, History, and Engineering.

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<sup>5</sup>Original in Portuguese: Ora, se ninguém pode passar vinte e quatro horas sem mergulhar no universo da ficção e da poesia, a literatura concebida no sentido amplo a quem me referi parece corresponder a uma necessidade universal, que precisa ser satisfeita e cuja satisfação constitui um direito (Candido, 2004, p. 175). Translated by the authors.

The sessions were held on Tuesdays, once a week, in 1-h and 30-min meetings over 8 weeks, during October, November, and December. For UNAM students, Teletandem's activities are part of the Portuguese/foreign language course, whose activities are considered part of the Mediateca classes. For UNESP students, Teletandem was a voluntary activity; thus, the students enrolled according to their interest in the project; in general, they were encouraged by the teachers of Spanish language and literature.

Both the interaction sessions and the mediation sessions were performed via *the Zoom application*, and each student's access to the<sup>6</sup>platform took place from their homes and their own *equipment, usually notebooks* and mobile phones, in view of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it impossible to access the laboratories of the institutions involved, due to the need for social isolation due to sanitary issues. The proposal was to make up this group of 30 interactants, 15 Brazilians (students of the bachelor's degree course in Letters with qualification in Spanish) and 15 Mexicans (students of Portuguese as a foreign language at Mediateca/UNAM). The entire process of organizing the activities was under the responsibility of the mediators: on the one hand, the Portuguese professor who works at the Mexican university and, on the other, the professors of Spanish and methodology at the Brazilian university and their research mentors.

During this period, each weekly session, all participants initially entered the same virtual environment (in a single *Zoom room*) a few minutes in advance. This moment was dedicated to the reception of students, presentations, instructions on the practice of Teletandem, its principles and objectives, clarifications related to technical questions, information about questionnaires and forms, etc. This room was then subdivided into 15 others, through the *Breakout Rooms tool*,<sup>7</sup> where the pairs were virtually displaced in private environments. For this moment of interaction itself, an hour was reserved, in which the alternation of languages should occur, being dedicated 30 min for each of them.<sup>8</sup>

After the *interaction session*, all students were again virtually relocated to the home room, when the last 20 min were used for the *mediation session*, which was also used for information recording and data collection. This moment was, in fact, a great differential in the sessions of this semester, since all students, both Brazilian and Mexican, participated in the discussions together, which was made possible by the synchronous virtual context. Based on this follow-up and discussions, the mediators had access to peer information, and this allowed a greater understanding of the whole process, especially about what occurred in the interactions.

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<sup>6</sup><https://zoom.us/meetings>

<sup>7</sup>Small-group rooms allow you to divide the meeting of *Zoom* up to 50 separate sessions. The meeting host can split meeting attendees into independent sessions automatically and manually and can switch between sessions at any time (<https://support.zoom.us/hc/es/articles/206476093-Introducci%C3%B3n-a-las-salas-para-grupos-peque%C3%B1os>)

<sup>8</sup>We try to keep the same pairs in all interactions throughout the semester; however, due to some of the options, substitutions of participants were necessary.

In the mediation sessions, the members could talk about the contents worked, their difficulties, and the positive and negative points, as well as observe the objectives outlined for the interactions, besides reflecting on their language learning process in teletandem. Also, at this moment of mediation, there was the alternation of languages, 1 week in Portuguese and another in Spanish; this allowed the interactants to express themselves in the foreign language before the whole group, which constituted for them a very challenging aspect. Through this conversation, the mediators passed orientations as well as outlined some strategies with the objective of potentiating interactions so that the interactants could deepen their discussions and, consequently, expand their linguistic and cultural knowledge.

We also asked the students to record their interaction, through Zoom's own tool; to do so, their authorization as well as the participants' consent form was required so that all the data generated in these sessions could be used for research. The mediators also took responsibility for explaining to the students how the use of the recorded material and the responses of the forms would be used, ensuring their confidentiality and the secure storage of such data.

All these recordings, both of the mediation sessions, made by the UNAM technician, and those of the interaction sessions were stored in Google Drive folders, created by the mediators. These folders were identified with the name of each pair, and weekly, participants should insert the videos.

#### 7.4 Data Analysis: “Teletandem with Literature”

As we already pointed out, the edition of Teletandem between UNESP and UNAM, related to the second half of 2021, focused on promoting the exchange of literary texts and their discussion among pairs of interactants. The proposal aimed to enhance interactions in order to contribute to the process of teaching and learning foreign languages, in the case of Spanish and Portuguese.

In this context, the mediators played a fundamental role in the forwarding and supervision of the activities suggested to peers, during interactions, especially in order to promote the reading and sharing of literary texts. It is necessary to point out that mediation, in the partnership considered here, is understood as a broader process that includes beyond the moment of group discussion, carried out after the interactions (shared meeting, made jointly in the laboratories themselves or in virtual environments, as in the context of the pandemic), various procedures, which begin from the first contacts and negotiations with foreign institutions and extend to the organization, planning, monitoring, supervision, and evaluation of all actions throughout the process (Carvalho & Ramos, 2019).

Thus, the mediators on the Brazilian side, in partnership with the mediating professor of the Mexican university, previously selected some texts, in Spanish and Portuguese, from both Brazilian and Mexican authors, which were presented to the group initially. It is important to note that all participants were aware of the proposal since its disclosure, according to an invitation conveyed by the institutional email:

*Teletandem UNESP – UNAM (2nd. semester 2021)*

*Teletandem with literature*

*Public: Students of Letters/Spanish*

*This semester, the interactions between Unesp and Unam teletandem will focus and aim at the exchange of literary texts and their discussion among pairs of interactants. There will be a pre-selection of texts in Portuguese and Spanish. The proposal is to contribute to the process of teaching and learning foreign language is very productive and enriching!*

*Fill out the form with your information and wait for confirmation e-mail from the Teletandem Brasil team. Interactions will be performed at home, via zoom, due to restrictions and security measures arising from the Coronavirus pandemic. Initial guidance on the interactions available in the link below.*

*[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1np\\_OT7lmt8OcJJoXjiGu2Nmfvx00wGwRqs\\_hYdNmZu0](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1np_OT7lmt8OcJJoXjiGu2Nmfvx00wGwRqs_hYdNmZu0)*

*In case of questions, please contact us by e-mail: [teletandemassis@gmail.com](mailto:teletandemassis@gmail.com). Do you want to participate? Write down the days of the interactions, fill out the form with your information and wait for confirmation e-mail from the Teletandem Brasil team. Interactions: duration of the interaction 60 minutes + 20 minutes of mediation.*

Chart 7.1 lists the literary texts presented: in the first column, the selected authors are included; in the second and third columns are their respective works and *genres*.

The sharing of the selected literary texts was carried out through *Google Classroom*, a digital platform that is easy to access students. In the activities tab, two themes were created, the first of Brazilian literature and the second of Mexican literature; thus, in these fields, the interactants found the texts and made their options for reading and discussion, according to their preferences and interests.

For the analysis of the data presented here, we considered, according to the objective of this study, to observe some aspects related to the learning process of Spanish/foreign language by Brazilian students. Thus, initially, we examined a transcribed excerpt from one of the mediation sessions; then, we observed some transcribed fragments of the interactions themselves between one of the pairs of interactants that remained fixed from beginning to end; and finally, we commented on some answers extracted from a questionnaire sent to the participants at the end of the process.

The mediation sessions, as already explained, took place together with Mexican and Brazilian interactants, with the supervision of the mediating teachers, all in the same virtual environment, alternating languages each week, in a period of 20–30 min, after interactions in pairs. In this context, the students were encouraged to report about their experience, talk about the chosen texts, and the subjects discussed and, in particular, present those triggered by shared literary reading, in addition to observing their difficulties and facilities, expectations, and learning objectives. These moments constituted an important space for the monitoring of the process and the conduction and referral of actions, in order to enhance the participation of those involved as well as to observe their motivation and engagement in the activities of “Teletandem with Literature.”

From the participation in the mediation sessions, we observed the potential of Teletandem, because it allows, through literary reading, the discussion about social, historical, and cultural contents and contact with another reality, which contributes greatly to the development of linguistic competence in the foreign language, in a cross-cultural perspective (Welsch, 1999). To illustrate, we present an account in



<b>Brazilian Literature</b>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Literary work</b>	<b>Literary genre</b>
Carlos Drummond de Andrade	<i>A flor e a náusea (1988)</i>	Poem
	<i>Mundo Grande (1988)</i>	Poem
Cecilia Meireles	<i>Retrato (2016)</i>	Poem
	<i>Canção (2016)</i>	Poem
Conceição Evaristo	<i>Olhos d'água (2016)</i>	Short story
	<i>Vozes-Mulheres (2017)</i>	Poem
	<i>Fêmea-Fênix (2017)</i>	Poem
	<i>No meio do caminho: deslizantes águas (2017)</i>	Poem
Ferreira Gullar	<i>Bananas podres 4 (2010)</i>	Poem
João Cabral de Melo Neto	<i>A educação pela pedra (2006)</i>	Poem
	<i>O Sertanejo Falando (2006)</i>	Poem
Lygia Fagundes Telles	<i>O dedo (1981)</i>	Short story
Marina Colasanti	<i>A moça tecelã (1999)</i>	Short story
<b>Mexican Literature</b>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Literary work</b>	<b>Literary genre</b>
Juan Rulfo	<i>El llano en llamas (2005)</i>	Short story
Horacio Quiroga	<i>Cuentos de amor, locura y de muerte (1917)</i>	Short story
Sor Juana	<i>Redondillas (2021)</i>	Poem
	<i>Poemas de amor (1998)</i>	Poem

**Chart 7.1** Suggestions of literary texts for “teletandem with literature”. Colasanti (1999), de Andrade (1988), de la Cruz (1998), de la Cruz (2021), de Melo Neto (2006), Evaristo (2016), Evaristo (2017), Gullar (2010), Meireles (2016), Quiroga (1917), Rulfo (2005), and Telles (1981)

which a pair of interactants comment on their experience of reading literary texts in this context.

Interactant (Br) – First of all I wanted to thank you for this opportunity, because I was lucky enough to be there on a pair with a philosopher. In the **first meeting I had the idea of passing the poem “No meio do caminho”, by Drummond and, well, she read this week and told me that she was thinking all week. We then discussed in counterpoint with the poem “No meio do caminho: deslizantes águas” by a writer, Conceição Evaristo, and we were able to make a counterpoint to the original poem and this other one that talks a lot with him.** Talking a little about the context and how incredible she had another different look, which I had not had yet. And well the time is very short, if we had two hours we would be there talking, but **that’s how we talk about social issues and as she is a philosopher she has many reflections about the moment we are going through and we were able to reflect on these issues** and, well, it is being something incredibly profitable and, well, I wanted to thank you for being part of that.

Mediator 1 – Very well, thank you very much for the interest. How cool! Where is the philosopher?

Interactant (Mx) – Here I am. I think I liked this session a lot, I mean, I think we just read something in common, and I like that something, that is, from the same point we are both starting and adding our reading, he told me just how the poem was made from the life of the author’s biography and I tell him, well, precisely this poem he tells me that it is quite well known in Brazil that is a classic, we gave it as a political reading, where the stone can be the same government, that **precisely the river of water that is spoken with Conceição Evaristo we can be the same society and it is something that we can travel beyond, We just review a little of the social history, of the social problems, of the current problems that each of us has and that still converge in a way, right? Precisely maybe because of this Latin American experience in which we are and because for next week we plan to talk about 1968,** in which there are many literatures and so we are learning poems and so also our history and where we come from. I liked it very, very much.(Excerpt extracted from mediation session, 26/10/2021).

According to the report of the interactants, transcribed here, we confirm that the reading of literary texts allowed a discussion not only restricted to aesthetic and linguistic issues (more punctually) but, above all, about social and historical themes, which led to a better understanding of the world and its relations, especially on issues with which we identify ourselves as Latin Americans, which corroborates its humanizing potential. The pair discussed about social aspects of their countries, entering into problems of the past and present, resignifying them, including, as in the construction of meaning attributed to the word “stone,” from one of the analyzed poems, to refer to the difficulties faced in relation to the established governments. Furthermore, it is interesting to observe how the report of these interactants complements itself; in this sense, we believe that the mediation session with the participation of both groups can favor both the scope of learning, teletandem practice, and research in Teletandem.

By entering more specifically the data from the interaction sessions, we observed that literature could also trigger deeper conversations, providing the learning of the Spanish language in a more significant way. We present an excerpt in which the interactants discuss their perceptions of reading the poem *Hombres necios que usáis*, by the Mexican writer, popularly known as *Sor Juana*. This pair chose to make a previous reading before the interaction and mark parts of the text to make

the discussion of what seemed most interesting to them; also the Brazilian interactant pointed out in advance words and expressions in which he had difficulty understanding. In the following excerpt, extracted from this interaction, we observe that their discussion triggers conversation on topics related to very relevant issues, such as the condition of women in society, especially in the Mexican and Brazilian context, which leads participants to a reflection on gender inequality and abusive relationships, based on their perception:

BR. I think the ending is very interesting. Ah, the **part you underscored “la que peca por la paga/ o ¿el que paga por pecar?”** The sense of sin, because sin may be of a more sexual connotation, but sin is error, then it can be any attitude other than that which is put as good. [...]

ME. Yes, because... I mean, **even if the situation is bad if it's a woman, it's worse, even if a certain man does badly, for a woman it's much worse**, and I think so, this is what you want to express in this part, right?

BR. Yes.

ME. I think the text in general speaks to you like... **In other words, it is a criticism of machismo, a macho society** as well, but **also of inequality**, right? That there is, not so much gender, but also inequality within the power of relationship that people have, even more a loving relationship.

BR. Yes.(Excerpt extracted from interaction session, 09/11/2021).

We noticed that although the initial concern of the pair was to deepen the linguistic aspects to ensure a better understanding, this fact did not prevent them from advancing in the study of the content, since the reflection expressed by them started from the recognition of their structure/form in search of meaning, at the same time. This is precisely due to the characteristic of the literary genre of awakening in its reader the interest to observe lexical choice, the mode of expression, and how this is configured in the reconstruction of the senses, in the composition of the poem, for example. We also confirm the potentiality of the literary text in telecollaboration interactions, since the issues addressed by the interactants move from a more superficial level of comparison of the differences between countries and their cultures and ways of life to lead to reflection on the convergent aspects, such as the issue of gender inequality, present in both cultural contexts represented here.

Thus, we identified the humanizing potential of literature, which has both the ability to represent man and to contribute to his own education (Candido, 2002). In the excerpt discussed and analyzed by the duo, it is possible to perceive that fiction is part of a real situation (the woman who is marginalized), and this allowed the interactants to create a bridge that connects the explanatory imagination, identified in the interpretative discourse of the literary text of the interactants, and the fictional imagination, that of the author of the poem, recognized through the literary text itself.

Candido (2002) argues that literature can be understood mainly as a way to achieve knowledge, since the literary work develops through the author's observation of the world and the personalities he finds in it, that is, its context, which demonstrates that the fact that literature is inspired by the real does not minimize its ability to influence it. In the following excerpt, we have an example of how one of the

interactants was influenced by this literary inspiration, after reading the short story “Olhos d’Água,” by the Afro-Brazilian writer Conceição Evaristo:

BR: Why, there is, I don’t know if it’s like that in Spanish, but it’s because it talks about, ah. Sensitive matters and made me remember a little of my mother, then, my mother already, as they say. My God, I do not know how to say in Spanish but, she died in two thousand thirteen, so, ah... I remember her, you know? And it was a very interesting read.

ME: Ok.

BR: So, sometimes the character talks about ... She speaks that she remembers the color of her mother’s eyes and sometimes I keep thinking that I don’t remember much of my mother’s voice. So, I have in my head but it is not clear, and I do not have many recordings of her because at the time she was “starting” whatsapp, so she still did not have and then I do not have audios or recordings of her to remember what her voice was like, **and I think that’s why I got very excited.**

ME: I understand, what you know is like... I don’t know how what happens but if the memories become blurred, not then...

BR: Yes.

ME: Yes, that, hum.

BR: And what do you think if we start reading, can it be?

ME: Hum.

BR: Do you want to start reading?(Excerpt extracted from interaction session, 16/11/2021).

We realized, in the discourse of the Brazilian interactant, how much his relationship with the chosen text had a great socioaffective impact, causing him to identify with the main character of the narrative, who did not remember the color of his mother’s eyes; likewise, he shares with the Mexican interactant the gaps in his memory as to the timbre of his mother’s voice, who has already died. Thus, we observe how such readings can add values to subjectivity in an unconscious and subconscious way, and this is because literature is capable of representing life indiscriminately, moving paradoxes, which allows the reader to identify the existing clash between the conventional idea of fiction and its representation of the real, and such characteristic can be considered as one of the ways to experience its profound humanizing role.

With this, we agree with Candido (2002), because the author points out that the educational character of literature will always be beyond the pedagogical field; this occurs because it would not be committed to pedagogical training, nor is it constituted by virtue of political groups, precisely because it has no interest in meeting the interests of dominant groups but, rather, to provide the reader with ways to better interact with the social environment and appropriate this understanding, through expressiveness in the reality presented.

We also observed, through the excerpts of the interactions, moments in which reflections about specific linguistic uses are triggered, configuring itself as a very fruitful foreign language learning strategy in the Teletandem environment, which contributes greatly to the understanding and awareness about the functioning of the language, from an authentic context of virtual interaction. As an illustration, we observed, not in the following passage, that the interactants, while sharing their perceptions of reading about the *poem Redondillas*, by *Sor Juana*, discuss the use of the future form of subjunctive, absent in the Spanish language, one of the difficulties of Brazilians in learning the language to express conditional construction, as he

himself states. Upon receiving rectification, he reveals to his partner this aspect of grammatical difficulty with the language, demonstrating the receptivity to the correction received as well as his understanding:

BR. And it is that even in this time of the pandemic the cases of, I do not know if in Spanish it is the same but, the femicide.

ME. Yes, it's the same.

BR. It's the same. They went up in this period. Because women had to stay locked up with their...

ME. Couples, right?

BR. Couples, then, because of this, it is a question that although there are some changes, the situation is far from no longer a situation, to be, to be resolved, yes?

[...]

BR. Yes, I think it's a struggle that... It is a struggle that... A great struggle that has a lot to happen, but it is a struggle that we have to start now, now, and that makes the ... Hum...

**If we want** that to improve, we need to start ah... then and start in some village and

ME. True, **yes we want**, uhum

BR. Yes, **we want** that. **Want... Want... is we want... It's because we study the subjunctive and sometimes I ... I'm wrong** with the conjugation of... that requires more time that is a bit difficult for us, ah... put into practice.<sup>9</sup>

ME. Yes, why?

BR. Oh, I don't know, I don't think we use much in Portuguese, in oral language, no. We use, but it's a little different because now I'm not going to know how to explain to you, it's a little different (laughs).

ME. Yes, **I think I understand you**, it is, for example, I suffer with the personal infinitive and this future of subjunctive we really do not have. That is, the subjunctive future is already in disuse and the other we do not have then. **Well, as without a doubt one always resorts to what** you already know, no, that is, the verb tenses that already have your fixed, then this is given so that we get a little confused but stay calm. You know a lot, you talk a lot. Well, there you can ask me "**Oh, how am I going to be a writer and Spanish teacher?**", (couples laugh) **because I don't know, everything is calm, because I continue studying.**

BR. Uhum. (Excerpt extracted from interaction session, 16/11/2021)

When the interactions ended, we sent students, also through *Google Forms*, a questionnaire with the objective not only of gathering data but, above all, with the purpose of encouraging, once again, that participants reflect on the experience, throughout this period of interactions, and to observe, eventually, the contributions of literary reading in the context of telecollaboration. Through the answers, we verified, first, that the proposal of "Teletandem with literature" triggered, in addition to the discussion of suggested texts, the sharing of many other texts of various authors, not only of Brazilian and Mexican literature, which allowed the expansion of their reading and knowledge repertoires. Among the authors mentioned, we

<sup>9</sup>BR. Sí, yo creo que es una lucha que... es una lucha que... una gran lucha que tiene mucho que ocurrir, pero es una lucha que tenemos que empezar ahora, ya, y que hace la ... hum... **si queremos** que eso mejore, necesitamos empezar ah... luego y empezar en algún pueblo y

ME. Cierto, **si queremos**, uhum

BR. Sí, **queremos**, eso. **Queremos... queramos... es queremos... es porque estudiamos el subjuntivo y a veces me... me equivoco** con la conjugación de... que requiere un tiempo más que es un poco difícil para nosotros, ah... poner en práctica.

record the following: Alexander Soyen Itzin, Edgar Allan Poe, Elena Garro, Flora Figueiredo, Inés Arredondo, José Martí, José Revueltas, Lau Siqueira, and Pablo Lugones, among others.

The answers to the questionnaire also corroborated what we have already observed in the interactions, the fact that these readings promoted conversations on other topics, in addition to the most common and predicted, related only to daily life, way of life, the narrower environment of pairs of interactants, and their perceptions and worldviews. In the following excerpt, we observe this thematic progression caused exactly by the shared reading of one of the suggested short story:

Question: What cultural aspects did you and your partner discuss during the interactions?

Interagent 1 (BR): I believe that the aspects mainly related to our life in our countries: we were able to talk about what our daily life is like; climate differences; the geographical differences from where we live; the differences in our experiences in our universities; **social issues in common such as the rate of paternal abandonment (due to reading *Olhos d'água*) and other topics.**

In this sense, we reiterate that the discussion on literary texts motivated the discussion on social issues and could enhance interactions, since such subjects boosted the development of orality, advancing to deeper levels of conversation, contributing to language learning from a critical literacy perspective. Among the themes mentioned in the questionnaires, the following were pointed out: the role of women in today's world, especially their living conditions in Brazil and Mexico, feminism and feminicide, racism, and machismo, in addition to issues related to historical issues, such as the colonization process in both countries, the *Tlatelolco* massacre, periods of dictatorship, etc.

In relation to the language learning process, more specifically, we confirm that the interactions were very successful, in order to provide the experience of language as a social practice, besides enabling the construction and deepening of culturally relevant knowledge, from the literary texts, as observed in the answers:

Question: What were the contributions of reading and discussing literary texts for their learning and teaching of language in the teletandem context? Comment.

Interagent 1 (BR): I believe that the main contributions were to be able to perceive the literary text and especially the language from the perspective of a native speaker. At times when my partner or I did not understand any expression/word, we could ask and explain to each other from both the meaning and the context in which the expression/word was within the text. In addition, from a dialogical posture, we were able to build knowledge that referred to the culture of both parties and that were present in the literary text.

Interagent 2 (BR): The practice of reading texts beyond the mandatory undergraduate texts and the historical and human deepening on Mexican customs and beliefs.

Based on these data, we also reaffirm the idea of *in-tandem learning being compared to the two-seat bicycle* (Telles, 2006), in which the pairs of interactants, as well as in their movement, build knowledge together, dialoguing about their cultures, their histories, their customs, and beliefs, perceiving the literary text from the perspective of native speakers of the language, in this case.

## 7.5 Final Considerations

In the context of the development of this study, inserted in a broader research context, whose objective is to reflect how the sharing of literary texts can be a potentiating means of Teletandem's interactions, it is possible to confirm, to date, that the literature has contributed significantly in this sense.

In the position of mediators, we had the fundamental role of making the proposal of sharing literary *genres* since the dissemination of the sessions, in the context of teletandem with literature, with the previous selection of texts. Throughout the mediation process, it was also essential to motivate them not only to discuss the suggested texts but also to resort to others of their preferences, respecting their autonomy in interactions.

As we observed through the analysis of some data extracted from the transcriptions of mediation sessions, interaction sessions, and also the final questionnaire, these readings triggered the discussion on various topics, enabling the expansion of knowledge about cultural, historical, and political issues of Mexican and Brazilian societies, as well as Latin American, among the participants, which, of course, requires deeper and therefore more significant levels of conversation. In addition, we confirm the humanizing role of literature in this process, establishing not only the possibility of confrontation about cultural divergences but especially the reflection about the identification about social problems experienced by all of us.

Thus, in relation to the learning of Spanish/foreign language by Brazilian participants, more specifically, such discussions constituted an important strategy to improve the linguistic and intercultural development of students, at each reading and interaction and, above all, for their constitution as social subjects. Consequently, such experiences will be reflected in their actions in initial training as Spanish teachers.

Thus, we believe that, for teletandem participants, telecollaboration has contributed significantly not only to provide proficiency in a foreign language but also to promote the exchange and sharing of knowledge about cultural and literary issues between partnerships, in a context distinct from the traditional classroom, in order to contribute to their training and action in the world.

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