DELTA

Interactants' beliefs in teletandem: Implications for the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language

Crenças dos interagentes em teletandem: Implicações para o ensino de Português como língua estrangeira

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ABSTRACT

Based on the principles of autonomy and reciprocity, Teletandem connects language teaching with technology, by furthering interaction between college students aiming at providing a virtual context for language teaching and learning. A system of beliefs and values can emerge in this fruitful environment and such emergence can directly affect the process. This study aims to investigate the belief system, which emerges out of Teletandem mediation sessions, and to discuss its implications for the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Key-words: *Teletandem; Beliefs; Portuguese as a Foreign Language; Critical Language Awareness.*

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RESUMO

Com base nos princípios da autonomia e da reciprocidade, Teletandem conecta ensino de línguas com a tecnologia, por promover a interação entre os estudantes universitários com o objetivo de proporcionar um contexto virtual para o ensino e aprendizagem de línguas. Um sistema de crenças e valores pode surgir nesse ambiente fecundo e tal emergência pode afetar diretamente o processo. Este estudo tem como objetivo investigar o sistema de crença, que emerge de sessões de mediação Teletandem, e discutir suas implicações para o ensino do Português como língua estrangeira a partir da perspectiva da Análise Crítica do Discurso.

Palavras-chave: *Teletandem; crenças; Português como Língua Estrangeira; conscientização crítica da linguagem.*

Introduction

This paper is a result of readings, observations and reflections, which have oriented our work both in supervising courses of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL) within the context of the *Center of Languages and Teacher Development*[1] and in conducting mediation sessions within the project *Teletandem Brazil: Foreign languages for all*[2]. These activities are carried out at UNESP in Assis, SP, Brazil. We believe that the features under discussion here are pertinent and relevant to all professionals concerned with education, language teaching-learning processes, mediation provided by the computer and the other multiple factors, which come up when one broaches such an important issue for a society that is constantly changing.

Language studies today increasingly focus on its close relationship with social practices and cultural processes, showing clearly the central

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1. ***Center of Languages and Teachers' Development*** is a Service Rendering Project for cooperation between the Modern Foreign Language Department and the Education Department of Faculdade de Ciências e Letras de Assis/UNESP, supported by PROEX (Office of Continuing Education) and AREX (Office of International Relations) of Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP). (www.assis.unesp.br/centrodelinguas)

2. ***Teletandem Brazil: foreign languages for all*** was a Thematic Project supported by FAPESP (**Process 2006/03204-2)** from 2006 to 2010 which is still in process, by cooperation between the Foreign Language and Literature Courses of Faculdade de Ciências e Letras de Assis/UNESP and Instituto de Biociências, Letras, e Ciências Exatas de São José do Rio Preto/UNESP. (www.teletandembrasil.org)

role played by linguistic usage in bringing about historical change. In this way, one realizes that discourse not only reflects or represents entities and social relations, but it also helps develop them, being a key element in taking one's stand as a social being (Fairclough, 1992b:4).

The aim of Education has become not only the mastering of a certain content, but also the development of a critical world awareness, mainly by means of reflecting on language. This attitude produces a knowledge of linguistic practices understood both on an operational and descriptive level and establishes a critical awareness of how such practices are socially constructed and, at the same time, constitute social and power relations. Fairclough (1992b) argues in favor of the organization of a Critical Language Awareness for language teaching, which might supply learners with knowledge capable of bringing about changes in their own discursive practices and in those of their community.

Therefore, for language teachers in the process of initial education, it is necessary to take a reflexive and critical attitude towards language and its uses to produce a social teaching and learning practice that may bring about effective change in society. According to Fairclough:

> Critical Language Awareness aims to draw upon learners' own language and discourse experience, to help them become more conscious of the practice they are involved in as producers and consumers of texts: of the social forces and interests that shape it; the power relations and ideologies that invest it; its effects upon social identities, social relations, knowledge, and beliefs; and the role of discourse in processes of cultural and social change. (Fairclough, 1992b:239)

The influence of social and cultural change on discursive practices may be an evidence that language plays a fundamental role in changing society and that most likely attempts to define the direction taken by change should gradually include efforts to change language practices.

In this article, we intend to discuss the emergence of beliefs out of discourse produced within a virtual context for language teaching and learning: Teletandem. Some guiding principles are the basis for these considerations. First, we agree that beliefs have influence on how

people teach and learn, despite all the difficulties involving studies in that field, since, according to Pajares (1992), many researchers still consider the study of beliefs in the process of teaching and learning a *messy field*. However, the author suggests that:

> [...] the construct is less messy, far cleaner, and conceptually clearer than it may appear. When they are clearly conceptualized, when their key assumptions are examined, when precise meanings are consistently understood and adhered to, and when specific belief constructs are properly assessed and investigated, beliefs can be the single most important construct in educational research. (Pajares, 1992:329)

We intend to contribute to the understanding of beliefs and their implications for language teaching and the learning process, contributing, therefore, to research work carried out in the educational field.

Second, some beliefs have to be changed, since, according to Barcelos, the importance of knowledge of change is closely related to the educational context itself. To educate is to bring about change or to create conditions so that they may take place, always starting somewhere which, in our case, is our beliefs about the world around us" (Barcelos, 2007:110).

Third, we agree with Negueruela-Azarola when he affirms that beliefs may be changed, once they may be understood as a *conceptualizing activity in a dialectal perspective*. In this sense, beliefs have a static character, since, historically, they carry a social meaning, but at the same time, they are dynamic, since they are subject to change (Negueruela-Azarola, 2001:360). Thus, that context has the potential for creating favorable conditions to bring about change, mainly because of the mediation process that takes place after each virtual interaction.

Finally, we propose to investigate the belief system emerging from within the Teletandem context, since it is a productive environment in which beliefs may be identified in interactants' discourse. For this study we will make use of Schoenfeld's (1998) concept of "professed beliefs", so that whenever we refer to 'beliefs' this should be understood to mean professed beliefs, with no guarantee that they reflect genuine beliefs.

The following questions have guided this research:

(a) how are beliefs about language teaching and the learning process reflected in discourse produced by Brazilian interactants during mediation sessions;

(b) what are the implications of this belief system for the process of teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language;

(c) how can Critical Language Awareness be identified among interactants.

Such issues have been the aim of our research, considering that we work with initial education of Portuguese as a Foreign Language teachers who are students attending the Language Courses of a higher education institution located in Southwestern São Paulo State, Brazil. In this context, the lack of a regular flow of foreigners on campus makes physical attendance at regular classes infeasible.

Teletandem has a double value. First, it allows foreign language beginners to meet native or fluent speakers of the language they are trying to learn. Second, it allows aspiring Portuguese teachers the feasibility of a Portuguese as a Foreign Language teaching experience within a virtual context, which might not be possible otherwise due to difficulties in forming groups of students for classes requiring physical attendance.

It is important that aspiring teachers of a language develop a reflective attitude toward language practices. So that they do not fall into teaching based only on structural issues and grammar exercises molded according to a more traditional approach, which does not emphasize the social uses of language within the various fields of human activity and does not broach discourse as a field for exercising power. It is essential that they know and appropriate new ways of interaction and new technological tools, which may be used for language teaching and learning, so that they may be capable of exploiting those resources and avoid becoming subject to outmoded practices and techniques that could be obstacles to the learning process.

Therefore, the study we intend to accomplish takes into account the beliefs related to the language teaching and learning process emerging

out of discourse produced in Teletandem mediation sessions and relates them to the concept of Critical Language Awareness, derived from the Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992b; Kress, 1989; Mey, 1985). According to such a view, the aim of education is the development of critical world awareness, including mainly the teaching and learning of both the native and foreign languages. For these studies, there is an intrinsic relation between discourse, knowledge, and the changes brought about in a post-modern society based on information technology and it is necessary to consider such issues and their implications.

A critical awareness of the belief system and of linguistic and social practices becomes a prerequisite for the effective exercise of citizenship. It is necessary to recognize the way in which dominant ideologies overreach discourse in different human activities, establishing a game of power and domination. That critical attitude should lay the foundations of pedagogical practices, mainly in the field of language teaching. The need felt by speakers to recognize the value and the power of communication, in order to develop a political attitude, is fundamental to the teaching and learning process. However, this reflection about beliefs within discourse needs theoretical research support mainly in the field of Education, so that one may verify the impact caused by that relation on the teaching and learning process.

In this way, it is possible to create an environment to consider the critical abilities of future teachers, as well as help them with reflections on the importance of such an awareness for the field of native language teaching in which they are about to work. Our purpose is to make our contribution to the education of autonomous, critical and reflective professionals by drawing their attention to language social practices and their implications in teaching.

1. Theoretical framework: A virtual language teaching and learning context

One of the changes brought about in language practices, which has a close connection with changes within the historical and social context, concerns the mediation of computers in the teaching-learning

process. The computer changed the way in which one reads, writes and interprets texts and is an example of how technology and culture interact significantly to interfere in linguistic uses that are imbued with ideological conflicts, and molded by economical, historical, and political forces (Marcuschi, 2001: 80).

Therefore, a new scenario emerges for education, in which educators have to re-think their methodology, approaches, strategies, resources, and assessment criteria. To ignore the technological invasion taking place in the classroom or try to stop such an advance is an effort that will bring about a more reactionary attitude on the part of the school. Simply swapping tools and keeping the same discourse will not bring about the necessary change. It is necessary to search for means that combine technology with the teaching-learning process, so that new contexts are devised making such a process easier, and achieving results that may cause an effective impact on education.

According to the inventor of the Internet, Berners-Lee (*apud* Crystal, 2006), the interconnected world computer network is rather a social than a technical creation. In spite of the relevance of all the technological support provided for Internet which allows interactions, what brought about its accelerated expansion and innumerable uses was precisely its social character, providing connection between participants, breaking down obstacles such as distance, ethnical or age group, economical or political barriers, and so on.

In the specific case of learning and teaching languages, the use of technology, combined with those powerful interconnection mechanisms, may succeed in abbreviating the time required to use the language one is learning. Many decades ago, one learned a foreign language to fulfill a practical use in the future, on a trip or in a situation of face-to-face contact with a native speaker of that language. Nowadays, one learns it to use it in the present, in the most varied circumstances.

Based on such changes, Project Teletandem Brazil appears as a new context for teaching and learning languages, supported by the mediation of a computer and based on the use of technological resources. It is a model that transfers to the virtual reality the principles of *tandem*, a kind of knowledge exchange for educational purposes, which came about in Germany at the end of the 1960s, and spread to many countries.

Language learning by means of *tandem* is based on the principles of cooperation and reciprocity between two partners who exchange knowledge, autonomy to control the process and separation between languages, that is, languages will not be mixed during a session (Telles, 2009).

In the Brazilian Teletandem version, learning takes place at a distance, in a virtual context mediated by the computer, in synchronous communication, by using resources provided by writing, reading, video conference and of instantaneous messaging applications, mainly Skype. At the beginning of the project, according to Vassallo (2010), the interaction presented some specific characteristics. First, it comprised various languages, by maintaining international contacts with universities in many countries. Second, it proposed partnerships directly between students, independent of agreements between professors. Third, it was based on cooperative work between partners and between groups previously divided into pairs. Fourth, on the Brazilian side, most of the Brazilian participants involved intend to become either maternal or foreign language teachers. Fifth, the focus was on conversation and on the free choice of activities on the part of the students. Further, according to Vassallo, one of the exchanged languages was always Portuguese, what brings into relief the relevance of the participants' native language on the Brazilian side, in this new context for language learning. In addition, most of the Brazilian participants prefer teaching their native language, because they feel safer as to the mastery of its structures and knowledge based on its uses in the most varied interaction situations. Thus, Portuguese has been the language most shared by project participants and, when it comes to future language teachers, it is essential to analyze the relationship such participants have developed with their native language.

Today, an institutional model of Teletandem has replaced the independent model described above. Agreements between institutions prevail, with the mediation of a professor. On average, there are from ten to twelve interaction sessions per semester, of one-hour duration, with thirty minutes dedicated to each language. Each interaction session is followed up by a mediation session, lasting about thirty minutes. In some cases, mainly at American universities, Teletandem sessions are incorporated into the student's curriculum, the process is submitted to

a kind of control, such as regular attendance and activities with graded assignments, and assessment procedures. Such an institutionalized version of Teletandem, in a sense calls into question the participants' levels of autonomy; however, the advantage in terms of learning has been considerable, since meetings are established in advance and aims are more precisely defined.

2. Methodology

In this section, we will discuss the methodological bases and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data we will to use to carry out the present research. Once again, we make clear that our aim, in this paper, is to raise some questions and not to present definitive answers concerning the belief systems, which emerge out of discourse produced by interactants, during mediation sessions after Teletandem interactions.

According to Telles (2002), research in the field of Education should be emancipating, for the purpose of providing context for the acquisition of means and the development of a reflexive practice and the working up of proposals and actions meant for the improvement of classroom work.

To carry out the investigation we used a research paradigm based on critical theories, which, according to Guba and Lincoln (2005), consider reality in social, historical, and political terms, proposing to examine carefully the ideologies and the reasons that are the origin of social practices, aiming at building awareness.

Along these methodological lines, we used the presuppositions of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is based on the material nature of linguistics   and considers language as a means to reinforce and to contest current social structures (Osório; Ito, 2008). CDA aims at the ideological deconstruction of discourse produced within certain contexts, considering the complex relations between texts, discursive practices, social practices, power games and socio-historical-cultural factors. We also adopted an ontological critical-realistic attitude, according to which "the world is an open system, constantly undergoing change and composed of different domains, as well as different strata"

(Bhaskar *apud* Ramalho & Resende, 2011:32). According to such a view, discourse affects social life and is produced by it. It is important to point out that we will not make a complete description of the data according this theoretical framework. The analysis will just consider the CDA perspectives and discuss the data by assuming the three-dimensional concept of discourse understood, at the same time, as a textual phenomenon, a discursive dimension and a social practice.

According to Fairclough (1992b), the methodological approach of CDA analysis is to consider the dialectical relationships between discourse and other instances, elements or moments in a theory-driven process of constructing researchable objects. Therefore, we intend to analyze the system of beliefs about the teaching and learning process that emerges in the virtual context of Teletandem by discussing the discursive production of the interactants during the mediation sessions.

Therefore, it is qualitative, interpretive research, according to the pattern explained by Lüdke and André (1986), who state that in such research emphasizes the process, concerned with the description from the participants' perspective, and with the natural environment providing the direct source of data. In this way, we try "to provide a scientific support for studies on the role played by discourse in relation to contextually established social problems" (Ramalho & Resende, 2011:75).

We start from the presupposition that such contextualized social issues bring about and, at the same time, are brought about within a belief system, understood as a network of meanings socially worked up which, consciously or unconsciously, emerge and are transmitted via discourse. Along these lines, we agree with Fairclough when he affirms that the discursive practice not only contributes to portray society, by means of social identities, social relationships, and belief systems, but also to change it (see Fairclough, 1992b:65).

The research was carried out within the context of Teletandem mediation sessions at the Language Center and Teacher Development Laboratory of the College of Letters and Science at UNESP-Assis, as well as within the context of guidance, consulting, and mediation meetings among those involved in the project.

Nine students of Language Courses attending Teletandem interaction sessions participated in the research jointly with students of various courses of an American university, during the first semester of 2013. The interaction sessions followed by the mediation sessions were set once a week, for an hour and a half in the Language Center and Teacher Development Laboratory of the College of Letters and Science at UNESP-Assis.

The *corpus* comprises recorded and transcribed mediation sessions; activities developed by participants during interactions such as note taking, screen sharing; activities carried out after interactions, such as text writing and mutual correction between partners. We also used questionnaires, interviews and reflexive activities worked up by the participants themselves, according to needs arising in the course of the research, aiming at attaining information pertinent to the broached subject and interest. Such pieces of information were posted on *Plataforma Teleduc*, a course management software, which served as support for interactions. We believe that such *corpus* enlargement resources are important both for stimulating the interpretation of samples and for, according to Fairclough (1992b:227), trying to find out whether the participants are aware of the discursive convention at issue.

3. Data analysis

The focus of this analysis will be the specific data collected from dialogues held during mediation sessions, which lasted about thirty minutes and broached mainly the language teaching and learning process, which took place during the Teletandem interaction sessions. The excerpts chosen to be part of the analysis were selected according to the number of beliefs they could illustrate. We also report on some written excerpts posted on *Plataforma Teleduc* and researcher's impressions during observation of the interaction sessions. At this point, it is necessary to make a distinction between the language teaching and learning processes that are taking place in the virtual context of Teletandem and the representations of the processes that appear in the student's speeches.

Right in the first mediation, the students were caught by surprise because their partners did not approach them to talk about soccer or carnival, as one may gather from the following excerpt [1]:

[1] My partner was a very lovely girl and I asked her how long she had been learning Portuguese and I was caught by surprise because she said that she was attending the second semester of Portuguese. So, perhaps, some students have not asked questions about carnival, soccer, that kind of thing because they have not had enough contact with the culture and the language. [Brazilian Interactant, Mediation 03/12/2013]

Most of them were attending Teletandem for the first time. It is interesting to observe a certain reverse prejudice. Instead of the traditional stereotype, reinforcing that Brazilians are fond of soccer and carnival, the preconceived image being reinforced that foreigners only approach Brazilians to talk about soccer and carnival. At that very moment, the intervention made by the mediator was necessary to explain who the interactants were on the American side. They were students of a well-known university, who were learning Portuguese as a third or fourth language and who had a considerable knowledge about Brazil.

On another occasion, interactants on the Brazilian side went so far as to say that they noticed that, in many respects , mainly concerning political and economic issues, the partners of the foreign university knew more about Brazil than Brazilians themselves. They went so far as to say that they did not know Brazil and were not aware of what being a Brazilian meant. One notices an issue connected with the construction of the participant's national identity that, as they came across speakers who seemed to have acquired an extensive knowledge of it, they immediately kept in check their experiences and knowledge about Brazil and about what being a Brazilian meant, according to what can be implied from excerpt [2].

[2] How are we going to leave our country if we do not know our own country?
[Brazilian Interactant, Mediation 04/09/2013]

Concerning the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language, Brazilian interactants have shown a marked tendency to classify as difficult the teaching of their native language to their partners, even taking into consideration that they are students of the foreign language and literature course. Such a realization may lead us to various reflections. First, Portuguese does not have a tradition one of being taught as a foreign language. Speakers of Portuguese are not familiar with the concept that speakers of other languages wish to learn Portuguese, since Portuguese-speaking countries never achieved a hegemonic position within the international scenario. According to Gnerre (1985:5), a language is worth what its speakers are worth, that is, its worth is a reflection of the power and the supremacy they enjoy within the sphere of their social and economic relations. In this way, the official language of less influential countries on such relations has limited visibility.

However, according to Ramos (2013), changes brought about in the international scenario have granted a prominent position to Brazilian Portuguese and the interest that speakers of other languages have shown in learning Portuguese has significantly increased in the last few of years. Within that contemporary scenario, according to Almeida Filho (2007:33), teaching, research and publishing activities in Portuguese for speakers of other languages are gradually increasing, gaining support and visibility. For this reason, the support of those interested in the various means of diffusion of the Portuguese language has become widespread within the academic sphere, by means of presentation of ideas, application of theories, formulation of applied projects connected with course planning, development of teaching materials, classroom diagnoses, etc. In the same way, development of teachers of Portuguese as a foreign language has pervaded the curricula of foreign language and literature courses, taking into account the possibility of insertion into the labor market, as well as into the theoretical-methodological implications of that work area still in progress. Nevertheless, such efforts are still in the beginning stages in comparison with hegemonic languages, such as English, for example.

This fact has other implications: beside the fact that there are few studies concerning the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language, very few teaching resources have been developed. Some students

go as far as to say that they find it much easier to teach the foreign language, which sometimes they do not master with fluency, than to teach Portuguese, their own native language, as a foreign language. According to what they have admitted, students do not know where to begin and find it difficult to systematize the linguistic phenomena of their own native language.

In this way, since the interactants of the American institution mainly presented doubts related to verb conjugation, Brazilian students also found that subject difficult to explain. Some of them did not even master all the conjugations and the explanations provided by them did not always correspond to what is traditionally systematized in grammars.

One of the Brazilian interactants wrote in the *Plataforma Teleduc* forum:

> [3] As a native speaker, I had no idea of how difficult it might be. [...] Thus, one is led to believe that he who lays great emphasis on acquiring knowledge of it [referring to Portuguese] does love it. [Brazilian Interactant, *Teleduc Forum]*

As we can see from this excerpt [3] and from other data mentioned above, Brazilian participants, students of the foreign language and literature course, really had no idea about the complexity of teaching their own language nor seemed to possess expertise or knowledge about language teaching, assigning such a task to "love". Specific specialist training in the teaching of foreign languages is necessary.

At this point, we come across another issue: the curricula of foreign language & literature courses, at least in Brazil, have not incorporated such a viewpoint. In the case at issue, there is no discipline within the curriculum that is specifically designed for the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language. In that way, the Teletandem virtual context, as an extracurricular activity at the disposal of the Language Course students, became one of the few chances such students have to come into contact with this new field that has opened to Portuguese on the international scene.

Therefore, one notices that Brazilian Teletandem interactants still show a low level of linguistic awareness, to the extent that they resort

to their discursive experience only to search for empirical explanations, about the linguistic phenomena they come across. They try to give only grammatical explanations, that are not always adequate nor in accordance with the language standard variety and show insufficient reflective activity concerning the practice with which they are involved as text writers and consumers. They have few chances to discuss power relations and their effects on the role played by discourse in the process leading to social and cultural changes (Fairclough, 1992b:239).

One has to emphasize the importance of the mediator within that virtual context of teaching-learning languages, in the sense that mediation, understood as a reflective activity on the process in progress during interactions, may function as a device fit for developing critical language awareness among interactants.

However, concerning an experience undergone in the process of teaching Portuguese as a foreign language, Teletandem virtual context represents a rare chance for future teachers, as already has been pointed out, and may be found in excerpt [4].

> [4] You were lucky, because I am a Language Course student and I am preparing myself to explain that [verbal tenses in Portuguese] to many people. Then I will start explaining it to you. [Brazilian Interactant, Interaction 04/18/2013]

On the other hand, it can represent a starting point to create Critical Language Awareness as described by Fairclough (1992b) as can be seen in excerpt [5].

> [5] The relationship with the Portuguese language was complicated because I already knew that Portuguese language was difficult I already had this awareness but I didn't know that it was so hard. [Brazilian Interactant, Mediation 04/25/2013].

Final comments

As explained at the beginning of this paper, our attempt was to raise considerations that emerged in the course of the research. Based on what has been previously exposed, we wish to raise some points that may be concluded from the data. First, we believe that a study

aiming at investigating the critical language awareness in students who will possibly become teachers, may be extremely significant when one adopts a critical attitude and when one realizes that such awareness development is the basis for a process of social change starting from education and, more specifically, from language teaching.

Second, we emphasize the importance of turning our attention to the belief system that emerges out of discourse produced within that specific context for teaching and learning languages, when aiming at educating critical and active citizens in the various fields of human activity and wishing to bring about social change.

It is also important to record the transition moment that distance learning education practices are going through, mediated by the computer. Many questions have been raised concerning the effectiveness of the new devices and the validity of those new contexts for teaching-learning languages. It is necessary to investigate the multiple factors which pose obstacles to such a mediation, so that one may verify the advantages and disadvantages of the new model, what are the main difficulties its users have to face, and what is its effective contribution to the multilinguism and multiculturalism of a society which calls itself a globalized one.

Concerning teacher education of Portuguese as a Foreign Language, Teletandem virtual context may be quite valuable, since it provides interactants with situations in which they see themselves questioned by a foreign beginner about issues in their own native language. Such situations, observed during sessions resulted in epilinguistic activities, for reflecting on language. However, mediation sessions, which take place after interactions, should be up to changing such epilinguistic activities, still requiring systematization, into linguistic analysis activities, which concern an aspiring teacher, so that he/she may develop critical awareness of his/her own language.

Finally, we would like to point out the prominent role played by language in discourse production and in social practices and, concurrently, to emphasize that the development of a professional who devotes himself/herself to try to understand such processes in order to teach them in a conscious way is vital when one has in mind a high quality education.

One needs also to point out that Teletandem is proposed as an approach capable of triggering the process of teaching-learning languages, breaking down time and space barriers, by means of the real language use. We close this article showing an excerpt, which demonstrates the importance of such a context for beginners.

> [6] Teletandem proved to me that I could do it. I managed to communicate in English; I managed to respond to embarrassing situations that often occur. It helped me develop self-confidence. For example, next Saturday I am going to take an oral English test and he [my partner] asked me "Are you nervous?". I said no, not anymore. I used to be, but now I have taken a lot of oral tests and I will manage to overcome it. [Brazilian Interactant, Mediation, 04/25/2013]

Our goal in the present article was not to provide answers, rather, to problematize the issue. To return to our research questions, we can consider that professed beliefs about language teaching and the learning process are reflected in discourse produced by Brazilian interactants during mediation sessions in many different ways, revealing their impressions about the question. The interactants' impressions that emerge through the discourse have implications for the role of the mediator within the process, since these beliefs and impressions can be discussed and even changed in the mediation sessions, especially in the case of teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language. Concerning the levels of Critical Language Awareness identified among interactants, one can say that the Teletandem context provides an environment for its construction. In the meantime, these questions call for more research in order to produce results that are more conclusive.

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