

**DIGITAL LITERACIES AS SOCIAL PRACTICES IN COLLABORATIVE
LEARNING: TELETANDEM AND MEANING-MAKING**

**LETRAMENTOS DIGITAIS COMO PRÁTICAS SOCIAIS NA
APRENDIZAGEM COLABORATIVA: O TELETANDEM E A CONSTRUÇÃO
DE SENTIDOS**

**LITERACIDADES DIGITALES COMO PRÁCTICAS SOCIALES EN EL
APRENDIZAJE COLABORATIVO: EL TELETANDEM Y LA
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE SENTIDOS**

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RESUMO

Letramentos digitais (LDs) englobam conjuntos de práticas de letramentos que se apoiam, entrelaçam e se adaptam continuamente por meio do uso de dispositivos digitais para fins específicos. Isso ocorre em contextos socioculturais com limitações geográficas e temporais, assim como naqueles moldados por interações eletronicamente mediadas. Frente a isto, este artigo visa, sob um viés crítico, discutir as influências dos Letramentos Digitais e do uso de Recursos Audiovisuais na mediação e prática do *Teletandem*. Desse modo, este estudo trata-se de uma Pesquisa Qualitativa, de procedimentos bibliográficos. Para embasar os nossos argumentos, fundamentamo-nos em: Almeida Filho (1993), Benedetti (2010), Souza (2015), Rammé (2014), Rojo (2010), Cope; Kalantzis; Pinheiro (2020), Silva (2022), Arroio e Giordan (2006), Lemke (2010), Buzato (2006, 2009), Kenski (2007), entre outros. Como resultado, verificou-se que os recursos Audiovisuais possibilitam o pleno desenvolvimento dos LDs dos interactantes e na construção de significados.

Palavras-chave: Letramentos digitais (LDs); *Teletandem*; Construção de significados.

ABSTRACT

Digital literacies (DLs) encompass sets of literacy practices that are continuously supported, interwoven and adapted through the use of digital devices for specific purposes. It occurs in sociocultural contexts with geographical and temporal limitations,

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as well as in those shaped by electronically mediated interactions. In view of this, this article aims, from a critical perspective, to discuss the influences of Digital Literacy and the use of Audiovisual Resources on Teletandem mediation and practice. Therefore, this study is a qualitative research with bibliographic procedures. To support our arguments, we base ourselves on: Almeida Filho (1993), Benedetti (2010), Souza (2015), Rammé (2014), Rojo (2010), Cope, Kalantzis e Pinheiro (2020), Silva (2022), Arroio and Giordan (2006), Lemke (2010), Buzato (2006, 2009), Kenski (2007), among others. As a result, it was found that audiovisual resources enable the full development of the interactants' LDs and the construction of meanings.

Keywords: Digital literacies (DLs); Teletandem; Meaning-making.

RESUMEN

Las literacidades digitales (LD) engloban conjuntos de prácticas de literacidad que se apoyan, entrelazan y adaptan continuamente mediante el uso de dispositivos digitales para fines específicos. Esto tiene lugar en contextos socioculturales con limitaciones geográficas y temporales, así como en aquellos conformados por interacciones mediadas electrónicamente. A la luz de esto, este artículo pretende, desde una perspectiva crítica, discutir las influencias de las Literacidades Digitales y el uso de Recursos Audiovisuales en la mediación y práctica de Teletandem. De esta forma, este estudio es una investigación cualitativa y bibliográfica. Basamos nuestros argumentos en: Almeida Filho (1993), Benedetti (2010), Souza (2015), Rammé (2014), Rojo (2010), Cope; Kalantzis; Pinheiro (2020), Silva (2022), Arroio y Giordan (2006), Lemke (2010), Buzato (2006, 2009), Kenski (2007), entre otros. Como resultado, se constató que los recursos audiovisuales posibilitan el pleno desarrollo de las LD de los interactuantes y la construcción de significados.

Palabras clave: Literacidad digital (LD); Teletándem; Construcción de significados.

INTRODUCTION

Digital Technologies, from now on DT, have become popular in educational settings, which is not surprising since our society has been marked by the diversity of services and benefits drawn from this new technological model. We are going to focus our discussion here on the use of DT for teaching and learning additional languages.

As presented in Almeida Filho (2015) and Souza (2015a), we will use, throughout this paper, the term additional language, rather than “foreign” language, when referring to non-native languages, because we consider that the term ‘foreign’ has negative connotations and refer to what is alien, different, opposite.

As we share Almeida Filho’s take on the matter, according to which learning a foreign language “is to grow in a matrix of interactive relations in the target language that gradually *deforeignizes* for the learners” (ALMEIDA FILHO, 1993, page 15) and,

since language, in order to be learned/acquired⁵, needs to be *deforeignized* in a continuous complex way, we think the term additional language is more appropriate than “foreign language”.

When it comes to the role of Digital Technologies in the mediation of collaborative learning, people can take advantage of the resources coming from these technological portraits, for which there is a need for the instrumental, linguistic and sociocultural types of appropriation concerning this end. Surrounded by several devices, when the learner can learn about them or, at least, use some of their many functions as a critical reader, she acquires knowledge related to Digital Literacies and, as a result, goes through the learning process with engagement and collaboration.

In this sense, we understand that learners, in a collaborative context of language teaching and learning, should be able to use audiovisual resources available on the internet to mediate *Teletandem* practices, which take place when two peers engage in mutual and collaborative learning. And, more specifically, when they belong to different cultures and languages, and are engaged with the purpose of teaching their own language and learning the language of the other, which implies cultural influence among the participants in this process.

Thus, we aim at discussing the influences of Digital Literacy and the use of Audiovisual Resources on the Teletandem mediation and practice. Therefore, this study is a qualitative research with bibliographic procedures. To support our arguments, we base ourselves on: Almeida Filho (1993), Benedetti (2010), Souza (2015), Rammé (2014), Rojo (2010), Cope, Kalantzis e Pinheiro (2020), Silva (2022), Arroio and Giordan (2006), Lemke (2010), Buzato (2006, 2009), Kenski (2007), among others.

On the next pages, it will be presented the characteristics of *Tandem* learning, its nuances and methodological affiliation. Then, we will underline the institutional project *Teletandem* UEPB⁶ as a bridge for the teaching of additional languages. After that, we will discuss its features and challenges in the scope of intercultural and linguistic teaching and learning of Portuguese and Spanish as additional languages in the Latin American integration background.

Next, we will ponder on the relevance of adding virtual audiovisual resources as teaching mechanisms for the development of linguistic-cultural competences when

⁵ Although the terms acquisition and learning will be used in this text interchangeably, we are aware of the discussions around this subject as well as the dichotomy established by Krashen (1982).

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teaching and learning languages by interacting peers. Then, we will present the influences of digital literacy in the contemporary educational context, its relationship with New Digital Technologies of Information and Communication (NDTIC), its multimodal, intersemiotic, critical and socio-cultural dimensions and its relation with audiovisual resources on the processes of teaching and learning languages mediated by DTIC. And finally, we will talk about some of the activities carried out within the *Teletandem* UEPB project involving audiovisual resources, digital literacy, DTIC and language teaching. We also encourage the need for research involving the topic under study.

***Teletandem* and its mechanisms in promoting an effective teaching and learning process**

From a consistent bibliographic review, Benedetti (2010) shows that although it is still little known in Brazil, the *Tandem* language learning started in Germany in the late 1960s, and it was spread in the following decades to other European countries as an alternative and complementary modality to the formal learning of additional languages (SOUZA, 2015b).

Initially, the word *Tandem* referred to a bicycle for two people, who sits one behind the other, with pedals for both to use. Over time, this term was also used to define a set of two people who have a common activity or who collaborate on something. In the field of language teaching and learning, "tandem learning consists of the exchange and sharing of knowledge between individuals from different cultures, with the purpose of learning languages in a collaborative way" (BENEDETTI, 2010, p.21). In other words, *Tandem* refers to the collaboration between two people in order to accomplish a pre-established goal. Concerning the teaching and learning of additional languages, it can be associated with the exchange of speakers of different languages/cultures when they are meant to interact, share values and build meanings.

This practice is based on the sociocultural conception of human development and, therefore, it understands learning as a process that is socially mediated, fostering partnerships between people who wish to learn an additional language. They agree to achieve this goal through practices of exchange between proficient speakers of, each of them, the language the other aims to learn. In light of such configurations, Benedetti (2010) points out that,

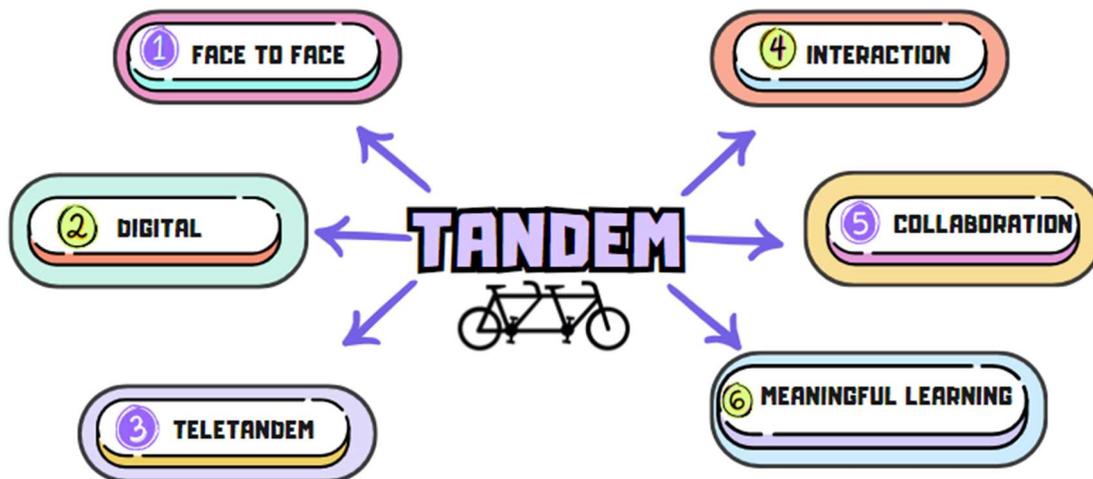
tandem learning means reciprocal provision of support and instruction between two learners, where each of them is a native (or proficient) speaker in the target language of the other person what happens in person or through another means of communication (BENEDETTI, 2010, p. 22).

The characteristics of *Tandem* learning are: i) it is open, for it does not follow a fixed syllabus; ii) intercultural, as it involves different languages and cultures; iii) interpersonal, practiced by pairs of learners; iv) socially symmetrical, as it involves the alternation of roles, for, at one moment, one is the learner of the other person's language and, in another, a teacher of his/her own language.

In other words, *Tandem* learning can be defined as a process in which two people with different mother tongues collaborate with each other, helping each other mutually working on the improvement (or development) of their language and cultural competences and, sometimes exchanging other related information, for example, their respective studies, tastes, or areas of interest or work.

Tandem work can be done from different perspectives, and they are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Tandem's Perspectives



Source: Created by the authors (2024).

When communication happens in *Tandem* telecollaborative digital settings, we need to consider some aspects related to it. Thus, we start by mentioning that communication is predominantly oral, but participants can draw on written materials,



whenever they like, and can also take notes (face to face interactions). Then, it is essential to highlight that its communication may happen through the use of electronic mail (*e-mail*); this idea it is also known as *e-tandem*, since digital resources mediates it. Taking into account that the participants in *e-tandem* are in different places around the world, it is difficult to organize their interactions following the same guidelines as in the face to face *tandem*. However, due to the ongoing development of Digital Technologies, it is easier to have and take part in interactions through *e-tandem*.

On the other hand, we have *Teletandem*. It differs from face-to-face *tandem* and *e-tandem*, because it allows full interaction (writing, audio, and video) in real time in digital settings among participants, supported by the vast amount of free communication programs/resources available on the internet (RAMMÉ, 2014).

Regardless of the perspective adopted, it consists of a possibility for authentic communication in the target language. In this context, the shared information about culture, identities, personal experiences of life, personality, values, among other features of a given country, comes from a real person (native-speaker), who tries in the best way to share and to receive new aspects of language and culture. It can be considered an extension or a complement of common classroom teaching, since it may happen face-to-face or online, through the use of digital technologies. Learning in *tandem* is a practice performed by means of authentic communication with an interlocutor who is a native speaker or has a good level of proficiency in the target language, serving as a model, a guider, or assistant of the learning process, while they have the intention of using the language/culture (express themselves) and, by doing so, they can build a meaningful learning environment.

Based on Rammé's voice (2014) regarding the topic at hand, it is essential to emphasize that,

In its current conception and in its many forms (pairs, in groups, in *e-tandem*, face-to-face *tandem*, *teletandem*, etc.), tandem has become, above all, a complementary activity to the traditional process of learning (mainly in the classroom), as it places additional language learners in contact with native speakers of the target language, providing authentic communicative environments where they can develop their sociocognitive, intercultural and linguistic abilities in a full and unrestricted manner (RAMMÉ, 2014, p. 5).

The fact that both partners can speak their peer's native language allows them to help each other through explanations, comparisons between cultures or linguistic



aspects. In addition to it, when establishing communication between people from different languages and cultural communities, intercultural learning is equally facilitated. By that, Rammé (2014) states that,

Tandem, as a tool for learning a foreign language, can be framed in the most current socio-interactional theories for teaching and learning. Vygotsky and Bakhtin, by placing culture and language within the social constitution of the subject and of knowledge, strongly influenced the teaching of foreign languages. For both authors, language is the product of social activities, resulting from interactions between interlocutors; therefore, the teaching of foreign languages cannot fail to consider language in context. Accordingly, *tandem* is based on the assumption that in the interactions between the *tandem participants* 'knowledge (of language, culture, the other) is socially co-constructed in the interaction among partners through language' (RAMMÉ, 2014, p. 6).

The development of alterity and intercultural competence⁷ shows itself as an important factor with technological mediation. Although, it has always been part of languages learning, it has now become increasingly significant, since it became part of our everyday lives and interactions.

The Project “*Teletandem* UEPB”: some procedural remarks

We can now reflect upon the inter-institutional project “*TELETANDEM* UEPB”, a collaborative activity among the State University of Paraíba (*campi* of Monteiro and Campina Grande), Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE - Caruaru), Federal Institute of Paraíba (IFPB - Monteiro), Federal University of Latin American Integration and the Institute of Languages of Salta⁸ (Argentina).

The aforementioned project has started in 2014, and it has been in progress since then; aiming at fostering linguistic and cultural exchange among students of Portuguese and Spanish as additional languages. It has been developed as an Extension Project that considers linguistics aspects as a fundamental element in the regional integration

⁷ In this paper, we understand intercultural competence as “the ability to perceive the diversity of others, using all available mechanisms. It also includes the ability to master their personal feelings, neutralize their beliefs and think in a way as to put themselves in the other person’s shoes” (Solomon, 2012, 108). We share the view of Byram (1997), which presents the model of intercultural communicative competence being composed by linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discursive competence and intercultural competence. For him, intercultural competence would include *savoir comprendre* (interpret), *savoir faire* (discovery/the ability of interaction), *savoir* (knowledge of oneself and others), *savoir s’engager* (critical cultural awareness) and *savoir être* (attitude).

⁸ Partnership mediated by Prof^a. Liliana Roxana Rubín.. Salta Language Institute No. 7216, maintained by the public management of non-formal education of the Ministry of Education.



process. Therefore, Spanish and Portuguese are designed as multidimensional and intercultural additional languages in order to promote integration that understands Latin America also as a cultural, historical and political construction, not only geographical (SOUZA, 2014).

Audiovisual Resources applied to the Teaching and Learning: Multiliteracies and Meaning-making

Virtual audiovisual resources are technological artifacts of undeniable importance for the teaching-learning process mediated through the New Digital Technology of Information and Communication (hence NDTIC), in the context of *Teletandem*, since they enable the linguistic interaction of the additional language interlocutors in a more dynamic and attractive way, and they also make it possible for the peers to share, in meaningful ways, the cultural elements of their countries with their partner.

According to Rojo (2010), linguistic education has to appreciate, in the context of social practices of reading and writing, among other literacies (critical, multiple, social, academic, and so on), the multisemiotic literacies, because people have to deal with the diversity of contemporary texts which involve multiple semiotic meaning-making, due to the current technologies. The author also defends that multisemiotic literacies correspond to one's ability to amplify "the notion of literacy for the field of image, music, and other semiosis other than writing" (Rojo, 2010, p. 437). This type of literacy requires the competence to read and understand texts composed of many languages, that is, in addition to appropriate the multiple languages offered by the text, the reader and textual producer need to know how to articulate them in order to give meaning to the text, either read or produced.

When referring to meaning-making process, influences of NDTIC and the vast amount of literacies, we need to have a special attention to a couple of aspects regarding the new modes of meaning construction. The idea of Multiliteracies deals with two "multi"; the "multi" diversity, whose main focus relies on the vast ways of social and cultural aspect; and the multimodal(lity), which focuses on the diversity of (new) modes in communication as well as the meaning-making. It also deals with issues of respect for individual differences by dealing with issues of ethnicity, race, etc. which, inevitably, contributes to linguistic variations. Issues of gender identity are also addressed here.

Multiliteracies are characterized by dynamism, hybridity, plurality, and multifaceted nature. The concept of Multiliteracies acknowledges that, in contemporary society, individuals need to be proficient in various forms of language (by having lots of literacies), such as visual, digital, and media, for example. Given this breadth, it is emphasized that, in multiliteracies, individuals are active agents and builders of products, not mere consumers, as advocated in the traditional pedagogy. When referring to the first "multi" in Multiliteracies, Cope, Kalantzis, and Pinheiro (2020, p. 19) emphasize that Social Diversity is linked to:

a variety of conventions of meaning in different cultural, social, or specific domain situations. Texts vary enormously depending on the social context - life experience, subject, disciplinary domain, field of work, specialized knowledge, cultural environment, gender.

The diversity in meaning construction addresses varied social and cultural scenarios where individuals should navigate their interactions. When applied to teaching and learning processes, Social Diversity should be channeled towards projects that acknowledge existing multicultural differences, highlighting professional, personal, and civic participation dimensions. Thus, guided by the principles of Multiliteracies, the multitude of social, and particularly cultural, realities should be subjects of contemplation (Cope; Kalantzis; Pinheiro, 2020).

Concerning the second element, the multimodal aspect stands out, driven by the emergence of new digital technologies. The construction of meanings which are now multimodals indicates the competences or practices of utilizing, comprehending, and processing information from various multisemiotic resources, such as: writing, visual, spatial, tactile, gestural, sonorous and oral (Cope; Kalantzis; Pinheiro, 2020). The multimodal aspect arises as a response to the increasing interconnection of diverse forms of language and expression in the hybrid, plural, and multifaceted digital scenarios.

Through this lens, multimodality, according to Silva's perspective (2022, p. 39), is characterized as being,

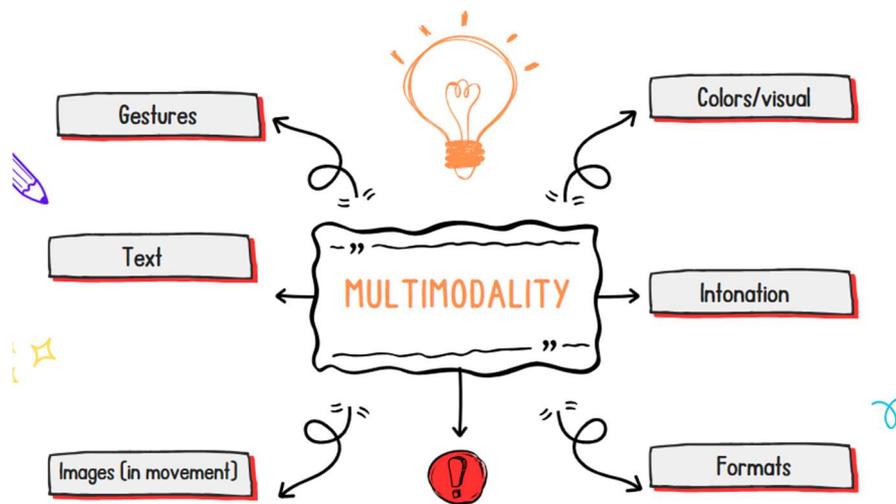
artifacts that carry communicative meanings, which are (re)constructed and shared based on situated social practices, grounded in various modes of using language and in the production of meaning, namely: speech, image, sound, gesture, typography, and moving image.

The interplay between the contextual and multimodal elements in digital environments opens up avenues for enhanced comprehension, collaboration, production, and the creation of meanings that extend beyond traditional written text formats. Thus, the production of meanings emerges from the interplay between contextual modes and available technologies. In this context, Multiliteracies are marked by interactive, collaborative expressions that challenge established power dynamics. They are also characterized as hybrid, boundary-crossing, and diverse in terms of languages, modes, media, and cultures.

Within this context, we can highlight the Audiovisual Resources available in our society with all the semiotic range that compose them, which demand multisemiotic literacy from their consumers and producers. Furthermore, we share the views of Coutinho (2006), when she states that the audiovisual or the audiovisual language comprises sound, visual elements as well as it involves cultural elements, and it also arises from reality and provides an understanding about the world.

The idea of Multimodality, in simple terms, can be associated with the combinations among different modes of communication, (see Figure 2, which highlights its main frames). It deals with representation and meaning-making. It is crucial to emphasize that, when referring to multimodalities, it deals primarily with the integrations of, at least, two different intersemiotic modes, for example, text and images, gestures and intonation, formats and text and son on.

Figure 2: Multimodality and its main frames



Source: Created by the authors (2024).

Based on this broad conception of audiovisual productions, our greatest interest lies in the variety of these resources available on the virtual environment, which can contribute as a resource for teaching and learning additional languages mediated through digital technologies, under linguistic, cultural and intercultural dimensions.

According to Souza (2014, p. 156), "audiovisual is the language of the mainstream media, and it has a strong presence in contemporary cultural production, which can be observed in a range that goes from advertisement to the most sophisticated contemporary film production". The author defends that there is a vast amount of genres that makes use of the audiovisual language nowadays, and the internet is revolutionary when it comes to its production and circulation.

In this way, regarding the educational process of language teaching by interaction among peers in the *Teletandem* context, we consider possible audiovisual resources: news, commercials, advertisements, vignettes, documentaries, programs, videos, games, videoconference, video lessons, cinema, narratives, tutorials, video clips, short films, recitals, among many others that use (combines) image and sound for their composition and presentation, simultaneously, and that can also be analyzed, studied, selected and / or produced by the students of languages in the context mentioned previously.

Kollas and Boff (2014), by taking into account Arroio and Giordan's (2006) thoughts, affirm that "audiovisual resources are cultural productions, because they are a codification of reality, whoever produces this kind of material is trying to reproduce a description of this reality and, for that, uses symbols of culture for the audience that they will be directed to" (KOLLAS; BOFF, 2014, w.p.). For this reason, we believe that the potential of Audiovisual Resources goes beyond the linguistic surface, cross-culturing dimensions, which provides to language learners possibilities of getting in touch with cultural aspects in the target language.

Based on an extensive body of literature on the potential of the audiovisual resources for language teaching, Garcia-Stefani (2015), when discussing cinema as mediator of the teaching and learning process of English and Spanish in the continuing education of teachers of languages, he emphasizes fifteen (15) advantages for the use of this type of technology. They are exposed right below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Advantages of using Audiovisual Resources



Source: Created by the authors (2024).

Souza (2014) assures us that the internet has enabled the user not only to consume the audiovisual material available, but also to authorize its authorship. He also warns us about the need for the user's position in view of the resources' diversity that the World Wide Web allows us to have access to, which requires from the viewer an understanding of "the various discourses present in the cultural products transmitted by the media" (SOUZA, p. 156).

Aligned with Souza's position (2014), in a study on multimidiatic literacies and its semiotic relations, Lemke (2010, p. 463) clarifies that "both authoring skills and critical and interpretive skills potentially turn out to multimedia not only the way students and teachers communicate their ideas, but also the ways they learn and teach".

Digital literacies and its relevance to (virtual) educational settings

To help the teaching-learning process to take place in a virtual environment, there is a need to consider the appropriation of the techniques, skills and languages related to this medium by the public that participates in it for the development of multiple forms of learning. Within this bias, we can think of Digital Literacies as the competence to



understand and produce texts in the digital universe. It also helps us to interact with the virtual world, as a primary factor for the teaching and learning process mediated by the NDTICs, since the appropriation of such literacy converges towards the participants' good performance during the complex process of acquisition, that is to say, exchange, interaction, and sharing of learning in the virtual universe. According to Xavier (2007), Digital Literacies encompasses not only the educational, but also the survival dimension. The author recognizes this by understanding the social dimension of this type of literacy. Whereas, according to Buzato (2009), this type of literacy can be understood as a digital inclusion issue, since it is not limited to the handling of equipment, but revolves around the level of use, transformation, and application of information and communication technologies in favor of social and personal interests.

Silva (2022, p. 34), when defining Digital Literacies as social practices, defines it as,

situated social practices in digital environments, which are broad, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, and hybrid. They (re)configure themselves as new technologies are integrated into various contexts and are guided by interaction through diverse digital channels. This allows for the consumption and production of digital content, as well as the development of critical meanings.

By defending the same line of thought, Buzato (2006, p. 16) points out that Digital Literacies (DLs) are,

sets of literacies (social practices) that support, intertwine, and mutually appropriate continuously through digital devices for specific purposes, both in sociocultural contexts that are geographically and temporally limited, and in those constructed through electronically mediated interaction.

Aligned with what was cited above, Azevedo and Gasque (2012) signal digital literacy in favor of human development. According to the authors, this literacy “follows the evolution of the technological, economical, social, cultural and political contexts of a given society” (AZEVEDO; GASQUE, 2012, s.p.). Therefore, this comes from the presumptions, yearnings, and goals of people who make up the current society.

Another point evidenced by the authors is that the synesthetic experiences are presented as a relevant characteristic of digital literacy. For them,

in the collaborative environment of hypertext, textual arrangements, images, sounds, and animations allow the subject to experience situations that stimulate thought, feelings, longings, dreams... In the new spaces, subjectively perceived, dialogues occur that can overcome prejudices and differences, and instigate curiosity and the investigative spirit (Azevedo; Gasque, 2012, w.p.).

In this sense, we can infer that for the practices of teaching and learning languages with the use of audiovisual resources in the virtual world to be performed with quality, learners should be involved in activities that take diverse functions in the field of digital literacy. According to researchers, such as Telles and Maroti (2008), when they are unable to cope with digital literacy practices, learners in *Teletandem* practices are discouraged. They suffer from the incompatibility of the choice of the equipment used between the doubles, and can give up.

Redesigning Concepts and Roles in the Context of DTICs and Digital Literacies as Social Practices

NDTICs are currently highly appreciated paths in the universe of the teaching and learning process. This is due to the potential they have for the construction of learning beyond school walls, since these tools have been presented in people's daily life (Demo, 2011) and are essential elements for the pedagogical field (Kenski, 2007).

These technologies, when "predominantly developed in collaborative environments, allow the subject to move from a thinking individual to integrate a cognitive ecology, which includes human minds and technical networks of storage, transformation and sharing of representations" (Azevedo, Gasque, 2012, w.p.).

From this perspective, we can reflect upon the collaborative and integrated potential allowed by the NDTICs, since it opens borders and possibilities for people to develop skills beyond individuality, even if it is separated by spatial distance, by cultural, ideological relations, among many other categories that differentiate human beings.

From this discussion, it comes the relationship of NDTICs with digital literacy, for in order to enjoy the benefits proposed by them, it is essential to acquire the characteristics of the latter, which can be summarized by Lins (2015),

Digital literacy has a socio-cultural character and involves the critical-reflexive handling of diverse languages, supported by digital information and communication technologies, in an interactive, collaborative and co-authoring dimension, with the purpose of

mediating citizens in what affects their needs to accomplish activities in virtual teaching and learning environments (pp. 36-37).

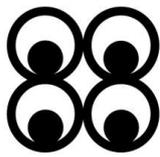
In line with digital literacy, we put forward a definition presented by Buzato (2009) that is "complex and heterogeneous networks that connect literacies (social practices), texts, subjects, means and abilities that interact, intertwine, challenge and modify mutual and continuous, through the virtue or influence of ICTs "(BUZATO, 2009, p.21).

When dealing with the need to change the subject's posture - which can no longer be uncritical, on the contrary, that needs to act socially, as a citizen, who asks, proposes and produces - Xavier (2007) presents the competences that require digital literacy. According to the author,

Digital literacy requires that the subject assumes a new way of performing reading and writing activities, which require different pedagogical approaches that go beyond the physical limits of educational institutions, in several aspects, especially with regard to: self-speed act of learning, managing and sharing information; online verification of the authenticity of the information presented on the Internet, with the condition of verifying or correcting the data displayed on a virtual network site; amplification of the dimensioning of the words, images and sounds meanings through which the information to be processed in the learner's mind arrives; the participation of other interlocutors in the "collective composition" and sometimes simultaneous texts on the internet (XAVIER, 2007, page 138).

Within this context, we can also reflect on the teacher's role as a mediator of teaching and learning processes in the virtual environment, since it plays a fundamental role in the development of competences by the students. Researchers such as Kenski (2007) point out the teachers' difficulties in mediating the teaching and learning processes through TDICs. He says that the most emphatic difficulty shown by teachers is the complexity of developing meaningful activities, in relation to the characteristics of the public and the content in question, with the apparatus of digital technologies. Nevertheless, based on Marzari and Leffa (2013), when the teacher is digital literate, he or she "(re)assignify the technological resources that are at his/her disposal during his/her didactic-pedagogical action, but mainly appropriates them, using them in a coherent, reflecting and creative way" (Marzari, Leffa, 2013, p. 4).

In this relationship among NDTICs, digital literacy, the teacher and learner's role, we can clarify these roles in the audiovisual dimension and the *Teletandem* context. This makes us think of the interacting language learner, in the context of which we are



dealing, the need to act as a mediating-mediator, because of the exchange of roles when teaching and learning languages, which implies their accuracy of appropriating dual digital literacy complexity: acting and mediating. This universe requires criticism for the process of choices and production, and, therefore, it requires critical digital literacy skills, about which we will deal in the following section.

Critical Digital Literacies and its influence on *Teletandem's* Project

In view of the various intersemiotic possibilities of texts / hypertexts and their viability in the virtual environment, especially with regard to the nuances brought by audiovisual resources (reception, manipulation, selection, transformation and production) as viable ways of teaching languages through NDTICs, particularly in the *Teletandem* dimensions, we see the need for a brief discussion of digital literacy from a critical perspective.

From this idea, Lemke (2010) presents us the possibility of getting lost in the cyberspace⁹. For this author, "Literacy promotes both power and vulnerability" (LEMKE, 2010, p.475), as well as a question about literacy and wise choices. So the virtual world allows us to have contact with a multitude of information, semiotic, audiovisual elements etc., and for us to know how to use them in our behalf, we need to have knowledge to make the necessary choices.

Addressing contemporary linguistic education, Rojo (2010) emphasizes as essential, among other literacies (Multiliteracies, semiotic literacies), the critical literacies and protagonists, putting forward the need for ethics and of awareness regarding the position of people in face with a large number of texts around society.

In the same direction, Buzato (2009), when approaching the relations among inclusion, technology and digital literacy, defends its articulation with critical literacy, since it understands the importance of criticism in the digital field to dissipate the asymmetric power relations present in society. She also maintains the idea of the transformation of the social subject with the support of literacy from a critical perspective.

⁹ The term specifies not only the material infrastructure of digital communication, but also the oceanic universe of information it shelters, as well as the human beings who navigate and nurture this universe (Lévy, 1999, p. 17) (our translations)

Summing up the discussion regarding critical digital literacy, Saito and Souza (2011) pluralize the term and define it as follows,

Critical Digital Literacies (...) are literacies that occur in several digital media and that are concerned with the critical position of the user in relation to the texts that research, read, produce, comment on digital environmental products; its awareness of the tools and various semiosis for constructing sense, always situated and intentional; their comprehension and adequacy to the discursive practices of the digital medium, which are manifested through several emerging genres (*e-mail, blog, comments, scrap*, etc.); reflection on their actions and interactions, as well as their ethical commitment to digital practices; its seizure of power: 1) by establishing a full identity of beliefs, ideology, determined in relation to otherness; 2) when exercising criticism and citizenship in a digital environment (SAITO, SOUZA, 2011, page 136).

In this way, we understand that, in face of a whirlwind of information related to the audiovisual field on the internet, the learners and mediators, that is, the participants of *Teletandem* practices, can perform significant teaching and learning activities in this universe, once they are provided with critical skills in the field of digital literacy.

Some Final and Inconclusive Remarks

Throughout this text, we focused on the relations between a promising proposal of the teaching and learning of languages mediated by the use of DTICs, the *Teletandem*; the insertion of audiovisual resources available in the virtual settings, acting as didactic resources. We also examined the need for the interacting pairs of this proposal to acquire the skills required by literacy to perform activities of reception, manipulation, selection, transformation, and production of audiovisual elements at a proficient level.

In the meantime, it is interesting to highlight some ideas about the discussions presented above. Initially, it is of significant relevance to present the *Teletandem* as a way of enhancing the audiovisual elements through the DTICs, considering that, within the *Tandem* proposals, *Teletandem* is made of a wide combination of such elements because it is an executable proposal to be achieved with the internet attribute and some free communication programs. It also provides the possibility of working together on basic, simultaneous and complementary reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, combined with audio and video, inherent in audiovisual characteristics.



Regarding *Teletandem*'s UEPB project, we can see that the audiovisual sector has already added its practical dimensions, with positive impacts, both on audiovisual production and on the selection / manipulation of these elements, which indicates the presence of skills of digital literacy in that environment.

As for the audiovisual production and the development of digital literacy authorship, we can mention videos created by the interacting agents, both in native and in the target languages, which were posted in a secret group on *Facebook* for the purpose of training pairs. Regarding the manipulation / selection and potentialities of the audiovisuals and the development of intersemiotic, sociocultural and critical digital literacy skills, as well as the potential of the DTICs, we can present the following excerpt, coming from the considerations of an Argentinian interagent taking part in the *Teletandem*'s UEPB project:

the potential of DTICs allows us to be connected in real time, making video calls, listening to each other and making others listen to us. The Internet tools also allow us to make use of audiovisual material (in my case, I find great potential in videos, spoken poems, movies, among others). These tools help in the learning process and allow us to get to know each other in a more dynamic way. For example, with Janice we exchanged national films ... She suggested a Brazilian film and I, an Argentinian one. Through these film productions, we can learn from the culture of the neighbor country, we learn how to master the idiomatic expressions and see beautiful landscapes, captured by the camera (Report of Daphne)¹⁰.

As we could see throughout this discussion, language teaching and learning mediated by the DTICs, in a collaborative (*Teletandem*) context, can be enhanced by the various audiovisual resources available in the virtual environment and produced by the interlocutors themselves, as long as they dominate literacy digital skills in its varied nuances, among them, the semiotic, sociocultural, critical and technical ones. The *Teletandem* UEPB project gives us examples of this positivity.

¹⁰ Our translation to: "El potencial de las TDICs nos permite estar conectados en tiempo real, realizar video llamadas, escuchar al otro y hacer que nos escuchen. Las herramientas de Internet nos permiten además hacer uso de material audiovisual (en mi caso encuentro un gran potencial en los videos, los poemas hablados, las películas, entre otros). Estas herramientas ayudan en el proceso de aprendizaje y nos permiten conocer al otro de una manera más dinámica. Por ejemplo, con Janice intercambiamos películas nacionales... Ella me sugirió una película brasilera y yo, una argentina. A través de esas producciones cinematográficas uno puede ir aprendiendo de la cultura del país vecino, puede apropiarse de las expresiones idiomáticas y observar paisajes hermosos, captados por la cámara. (Relato de Dafne)".

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