REVISITING THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY TO FOSTER ITS APPLICABILITY TO TELECOLLABORATION

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- ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to discuss the concept of community in multimodal contexts of telecollaborative projects, specifically the one named teletandem (TELLES, 2006). Discourse communities (DC) are groupings of individuals who get together in order to achieve their communicative purposes through genres (SWALES, 1990). Although the concept has been extensively discussed in academic settings, there seems to be a lack of studies involving the theme and its importance for telecollaboration. One attempt in doing so is Silva's (2012) account of the teletandem community (TC), in which she investigates students who participate in the project Teletandem Brasil Foreign Languages for All (*Teletandem Brasil: Língua Estrangeira para Todos*). Our starting point is her criteria for defining TC and our analysis derives from our intense and attentive observation of teletandem practice at teletandem laboratory at UNESP – São José do Rio Preto. The results indicate that members of communities that are occasionally gathered in telecollaboration contexts tend to be governed by local and external rules, form complex organizations and share genres to achieve their goals.

- KEYWORDS: Telecollaboration. Discourse Community. Teletandem Community. Genres.

Introduction

The advance of digital technology tools for information and communication has enabled the contact among people from different languages and cultures who would probably not get the chance to be in touch with one another given the geographical distance. Such development has allowed the use of synchronous communication tools for pedagogical purposes as well, culminating in the creation of telecollaborative projects, defined by O'Dowd (2013) as projects that promote intercultural interaction among language students who are located in different places.

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Among the telecollaborative initiatives for foreign language learning around the world, in Brazil, the project *Teletandem Brasil: Foreign Languages for All* (TELLES, 2006), carried out since 2006 at São Paulo State University (UNESP), promotes the contact between Brazilian university students learning a foreign language and university students abroad who are studying Portuguese. These students meet weekly via synchronous communicative tools to help each other learn their native language (or language of proficiency).

The development of this project has led to the formation of groups of people engaged in the teletandem practice in São José do Rio Preto campus, where the integrated modality takes place. This modality includes the participants themselves, who want to develop their language skills; their professors, who might be interested in incorporating teletandem practice into their language classes; and researchers, who may find a rich field for research, which may be investigated under multiple theoretical perspectives (ARANHA; CAVALARI, 2014).

Given the fact that there are many individuals involved in teletandem practice who seem to work towards common goals (practicing languages, improving pedagogical opportunities, exchanging cultures and researching), they are likely to form a discourse community on Swales's (2016) terms, since they use genres to accomplish their communicative purposes. Silva (2012) has already investigated participants in teletandem in order to verify whether they would form a community or not. However, the author only considered the participation of students and did not take into account the role of professors and researchers in the context. On that account, Rampazzo (2017) has already argued for a revision of Silva's (2012) findings so that the concept of teletandem community proposed by Silva would still be valid to describe what happens in this context nowadays among the people involved in the practice.

Our aim here is to discuss the concept of discourse community in multimodal, multicultural and telecollaborative contexts, specifically the one named teletandem. We believe that the relevance of such inquiry lies on the fact that the notion of belonging or not (LEVY, 1999) to a community may help determine success or failure of an individual in the achievement of their goals (ARANHA; TELLES, 2011) and also result in the acculturation of older members' behavior. Moreover, there seems to be lack of studies that relate the concept of communities and telecollaboration.

We first present a theoretical review of the concept of discourse community on Swales terms (1990, 1998, 2016) and the criteria for teletandem community proposed by Silva (2012), who incorporated discussions from Swales (1990), Wenger (1998) and Levy (1999). We then introduce the methods used in this study and give more details on the context under investigation. This is followed by our analysis and, lastly, the discussion.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of discourse community (DC) dates from Swales (1990). At first, it appeared associated to two other concepts: genre and language-learning task. While most studies based on a socio-rhetorical perspective of genres have not focused on the latter, discourse community cannot be defined without being related to the former, because it develops and uses genres for their own purposes (SWALES, 1990).

Swales (1990) presents genres as communicative events used by a group of individuals – the discourse community –, who come together in order to achieve public and shared communicative purposes. His definition establishes that genres result from the needs of a community, that is, its members create standard discursive structures as a response to the demands of task completion and to the need to fulfil communicative purposes.

Regarding the definition of genre, Miller (1984) emphasizes genres shape social action, and help building the substance of our cultural life, a characteristic also pointed out by Swales (1990), who argues that genres offer possibilities and constraints in their structure, content and style. In 2004, Swales adds genres shape how people interact and provide rules that make one reflect on what is socially and rhetorically appropriate in certain social situations.

Based on the above, we may say that genres fulfill the needs of a discourse community and organize its actions. Still on this inextricable connection, Aranha (1996, p.21, our translation) states that

> […] a genre is formed within a discourse community and the community is responsible for it. We could suggest there is a self-feeding process: the discourse community generates certain genres and the existence of specific genres turns social groups into discourse communities because of the communicative purposes their members share, which are achieved by the use of genres that are relevant to the community.[1]

In this way, we can argue that genres do not exist if there is not a community to make use of them and vice versa: if genres are not found in a community, it cannot be validated as such.

Concerning the discourse community (DC) characterization, Swales (1990) presents some criteria that would validate a group as a DC. However, as Hemais and Biasi-Rodrigues (2005) affirm, Swales's 1990 definition is not enough to analyse the process of group formation once it is useful only to validate well-established communities. Swales himself (1993) also admits the concept, as initially proposed, could not be

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[1]   In the original: "[…] *o gênero se estabelece dentro de uma comunidade discursiva e ela se torna responsável por ele. Poderíamos sugerir que existe um processo de autoalimentação: a comunidade discursiva desenvolve determinados gêneros e a existência de gêneros específicos configura grupos sociais como comunidades discursivas por compartilharem propósitos comunicativos efetivados através dos gêneros pertinentes a ela.*" (ARANHA, 1996, p. 21).

easily found in the real world. In 1998, he agrees with criticisms which suggested the concept was utopic and idealistic. Moreover, in 2016, the author states that the first definition was too static for it did not address how people would either join or leave communities. He mentions:

> […] the concept of discourse community as originally conceived was overly static. While this perhaps did not matter so much in 1990, in today's more unsettled and uncertain world, it looms larger as a problem; in particular, the concept did not firmly or directly address how people either join or leave DCs (SWALES, 2016, p. 11).

Because of the many arguments against the static initial description of the concept, Swales (1998) proposes new criteria to verify if a grouping of individuals could be described as a DC. The criteria should be exhaustive enough to distinguish groupings which hold the community status from those that do not. The author presents a textography of the three floors of a building in University of Michigan, when he comes up with the concepts of *place discourse community* and *focal discourse community*. In 1998, he focused on the former concept, but returns to discuss focal discourse community in an article recently published (SWALES, 2016).

The *place discourse community* is defined as a concept neither too vague nor too restricted. In other words, it is a definition that intends not to be unstable and confusing to be used to describe any grouping of people, nor overly perfectionist to restrict the groups that could be classified as a DC. Swales proposes the concept to describe a group of people who regularly work together and explains that its members are aware of their roles, their goals, and develop oral and written genres in order to achieve their communicative purposes. The author also states the genres have rhetoric and discursive characteristics of their own, which can be recognized by older members and work as a system to validate community actions from the outside. Another aspect of a place discourse community is the creation of a specific lexicon and a value system of what could be considered good (or bad) work. Furthermore, a place discourse community is conscious of its history and tries to communicate its tradition to new members so that they know how to appropriately participate in its discursive practices.

After almost twenty years from the author's last discussion on the topic (SWALES, 1998), in 2016 he explores three types of discourse communities and then reflects on the original criteria from the 90's, updating them and adding two others. The first type is the local discourse community, which bears a lot of similarities with the concept of place discourse community from 1998. Swales (2016) states the members of such community either work at the same place or have the same occupation in the same area; have developed a terminology not used or understood by the general public; and have its new members go through a kind of trial period, when they try to assimilate older members' behaviors.

The second type is the focal discourse community, already mentioned in 1998, which is treated as an association not restricted to a region as its members may come from different nationalities, ages, occupations, economic circumstances and educational backgrounds. The focal discourse community, says the author, may be informal or formal, but develops a set of rules. Focal discourse communities may come together either because of their focus on recreational preferences or because of professional reasons.

The third type, the "folocal" discourse community, means a hybrid community, having characteristics of both previous types. Swales (2016) proposes the members of the folocal DC have double allegiance and are confronted by internal and external pressures. In other words, these members have double commitments because they are dedicated to both local and external matters; they need to observe both local and focal demands.

Considering the existence of different types of discourse communities and the problems that the original definition posed, Swales presents in 2016 a reconsideration of the criteria for defining and recognizing discourse communities. He argues that: (1) a DC has a set of goals, which may be discoverable, publicly formulated, and recognized by its members; (2) a DC has mechanisms of intercommunication and has new digital technologies as an ally in this matter; (3) a DC uses its participatory mechanisms not only to provide feedback, but also to manage operations, promote recruitment, change, and growth; (4) a DC uses a selection of genres that are evolving as they are performed and re-performed; (5) a DC has developed specific terminology, which helps promoting efficiency; (6) there is an explicit or implicit hierarchy within a DC which manages the process of entry and progress, so some members have a degree of discoursal expertise; (7) a DC develops a sense of "silential relations", which means there are things in a community that do not need to be said or explained in detail; (8) a DC has a sense of its history and a value system for what is to be considered good or bad work.

The discourse community discussion proposed by Swales along the years has focused on the academic level and the research genres that are used in this context. As telecollaborative contexts are concerned, there are still few works that reflect on the concept or use it to explain relationships among their members. Darhower (2007) conducts a study on a telecollaboration project called "Bilingual Chat Community", in which English and Spanish speakers interact via chat. He argues telecollaborations are by nature virtual learning communities and tries to identify the linguistic and social behaviors that define the process of forming a community and becoming full participants/members of it. Working with the definition of community of practice (LAVE; WENGER, 1991), the author defends that leaners would ideally develop the ability to communicate in the language of the community and act according to its rules.

In this respect, we could argue that learning how a community works and how its members get things done is essential for novices to be successful in their endeavor of

becoming full members of a community. With reference to success, Aranha and Telles (2011), who present one of the first studies related to genres in teletandem, believe that sharing communicative purposes is vitally important for the non-integrated partnerships to be successful, that is, for them to last longer. The authors state the variety of texts produced in teletandem environment might be genres and if these are not shared by the participants, an interruption of the partnership might occur. On that account, we could suggest their arguments indicate a possible formation of a community in teletandem context since one of the criteria proposed by Swales (1990, 1998, 2016) to validate a community is the fact that participants share the same or similar purposes.

Silva (2012) investigates whether the grouping of students who took part in the project Teletandem Brasil had the characteristics of a community – the teletandem community, based on the concepts of discourse community (SWALES, 1990), community of practice (CP) (WENGER, 1998) and virtual community (VC) (LEVY, 1999). According to the author, no definition by itself seemed to work to describe students' association in teletandem. The author explains that in all three definitions, the members of the communities: (i) share common purposes; (ii) have intercommunication mechanisms; (iii) are not restricted to geographical barriers; (iv) share relations of exchange, reciprocity and feel they belong to the group; and (v) share a set of rules. The three concepts differ in that the DC is situated in the discourse level and its members share genres in order to achieve their goals, whereas the CP is situated in the practice level and its members work together in order to improve their practice. Moreover, members of a CP tend to contact each other directly and members of the VC always contact each other virtually. Both in CP and DC, members may navigate in physical and virtual contexts.

Based on the similarities and differences among the three concepts of community, Silva (2012) creates six criteria to identify the teletandem community (TC):

> 1. A teletandem community is formed because of similar interests, common goals, and because the members share the same knowledge and practice;
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> 2. The interactions among its members occur frequently and are based on a process of cooperation or exchange (reciprocity) (feedback), working for building knowledge and generating a feeling of belonging;
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> 3. The members of a teletandem community do not have a physical territory, therefore, are "non-present";
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> 4. A teletandem community has its own mechanisms of virtual communication;
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> 5. Teletandem communities collectively develop a set of rules that govern their interactions ("netiquette");

6. The members of a teletandem community share specialized lexicon and a bilingual communication (SILVA, 2012, p. 72, our translation).[2]

After establishing the criteria, Silva (2012) selected 86 teletandem participants, both Brazilians and foreigners, held semi-structured interviews and had them answer a questionnaire[3]. Her goal was to verify if the criteria proposed were valid to describe teletandem learning contexts.

Regarding the first criterion, about sharing goals, knowledge and practice, Silva (2012) reveals the majority of participants said their main goal in teletandem was learning and improving their ability in a second language. The second most common answer was getting to know another culture. The author believes then the first criterion of the TC is valid, as the students' answers demonstrate its members have shared goals.

The second item in her definition of TC is also valid. According to participants' answers, they do exchange linguistic and cultural information and feel part of the context. Students also said they interacted on a regular basis and at the time previously scheduled either by the partner, in the non-integrated modality, or by the professors, if the practice is integrated to the language class.

Both criteria 3 and 4 of the definition of TC are corroborated by the replies to the questionnaire. They established that the members of the community do not have a physical territory and get in contact with each other virtually.

The fifth criterion states the members create a set of rules that regulate interactions. The participants stated they did create rules and believed there were demands they had to meet. Students said they would agree on how to make corrections, on the deadlines to exchange texts, on obeying tandem principles (BRAMMERTS, 1996). The author concluded this criterion is also valid.

Finally, Silva (2012) argues the last criterion is also legitimate, in view of the fact that participants stated communication was bilingual, because of the separation of languages principle, and that they would use emoticons, considered by the author as specialized lexicon.

In conclusion, the members of teletandem community work together to reach common goals. In order to do so, they use two languages and follow rules previously established.

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[2] In the original: "*1. Uma comunidade de teletandem se estabelece a partir de afinidades de interesses, objetivos em comum, compartilhamento de um mesmo conhecimento e de prática; 2. As interações entre seus membros são realizadas com frequência, tendo como base um processo de cooperação ou de troca (reciprocidade) (feedback) e a construção do conhecimento, provocando um sentimento de pertencimento; 3. Os membros de uma comunidade de teletandem são "não-presentes", desterritorizados; 4. Uma comunidade de teletandem cultiva formas próprias de comunicação virtuais; 5. As comunidades de teletandem desenvolvem um conjunto de regras, coletivamente, que regem suas interações ("netiqueta"); 6. Os membros de uma comunidade de teletandem compartilham um léxico específico e uma comunicação bilíngue.*" (SILVA, 2012, p. 72).

[3] The author held three interviews. Despite having sent the questionnaire to all participants from the three campuses, only 67 answered.

Methods

The investigation presented here is a qualitative study. Because of its open and flexible nature, this paradigm allows adjustments as the study is in process. In that regard, Mason (2002) brings into consideration whether it is possible to design qualitative research, given its fluid and flexible characteristics. The author points out that qualitative studies reject a fixed, *a priori* research plan. That is because design decisions are made throughout the research process as qualitative researches have an exploratory, data-driven and context sensitive nature. Moreover, Dörnyei (2007) points out that qualitative studies try to capture, in more detail, the context in which data occur and support intense and long-lasting researcher's contact with the investigation material.

Regarding the analysis, the results are defined by the researchers' subjective examination, which qualifies the present study as interpretative. According to Moita-Lopes (1994), in interpretative studies, the analysis is indirectly conducted, that is, it is carried out based on the interpretation of the diverse meanings that constitute a fact. The author also explains that the access to the meanings occurs through the use of instruments that present descriptions of the social context.

With respect to this study, our interpretation of the facts was based on our observation of teletandem practice within diverse groups at UNESP – São José do Rio Preto campus. We examined the relations among the participants engaged in teletandem (students, mediators and professors), considering theoretical works on telecollaborative environments for language learning. We then described the characteristics of such context, confronting them to the theory of genres of socio-rhetorical basis. In other words, we checked which aspects of the grouping that occur in teletandem could be explained by the theory and whether the grouping could be defined in terms of a discourse community.

Teletandem context at UNESP

As exposed above, teletandem is a telecollaborative project that has been carried out at UNESP, campuses of São José do Rio Preto and Assis since 2006, and Araraquara since 2012.
The purposes of the project were twofold: pedagogical, with the aim of improving university students' linguist and cultural competences; academic[4], aiming to offer a prolific context for studying language learning from different approaches in Applied Linguistics.

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[4]   Most of the studies on teletandem are available at: http://www.teletandembrasil.org/publications.html. Access on: Aug. 13 2019.

Teletandem means that native (or proficient) speakers of different languages pair up and meet weekly with the objective of learning the language of the other in a telecollaborative environment mediated by VOIP technology, such as *Skype*. At UNESP campus of São José do Rio Preto, each meeting (named TOS - Teletandem Oral Session) lasts approximately 50 minutes and participants are supposed to dedicate half of it for the practice of each language. Being part of the project also means that students will participate in mediation sessions, defined by Funo (2015) as face-to-face or virtual meetings, in groups or individually – participant(s) and mediator – whose aim is to encourage autonomy and promote reflection. At São José do Rio Preto campus, mediation sessions occur in groups after the oral sessions as well as through the learning diaries in which the professors comment on.

Such division of the session in two languages agrees with teletandem principles. Based on tandem (BRAMMERTS, 1996), teletandem principles are (i) separation of languages, (ii) autonomy and (iii) reciprocity (VASSALLO; TELLES, 2006). Whereas the first establishes participants should have the same amount of time to practice the language of one another, the principle of autonomy establishes that students should be autonomous enough to make their own decisions regarding the learning process they engage in. According to the principle of reciprocity, participants should be equally involved in the learning process of their partner and take turns into the roles of tutors of their own language and learners of the other´s language. These principles unite telecollaborative actions into the term teletandem.

Teletandem practice may be organized in different modalities. On that account, Aranha and Cavalari (2014) and Cavalari and Aranha (2016) describe the institutional integrated and non-integrated modalities and Zakir (2015) and Cavalari (2018) present a quick description of institutional semi-integrated teletandem.

In institutional non-integrated teletandem, volunteer students have the support of the institution, but are the ones responsible for all the logistics concerning the partnership, such as scheduling the encounters, determining the length of the partnership, monitoring the use of both languages, evaluating their performance and solving any conflicts. Aranha and Cavalari (2014) name institutional integrated teletandem (iiTTD) the modality in which (1) participants are enrolled in language classrooms in both institutions; (2) participation in iiTTD is mandatory, (3) part of the tasks are proposed by their language professors; and (4) students are graded on the tasks performed collaboratively. In this modality, each Brazilian student is paired with a student from a university abroad and all enrolled participants have their teletandem oral sessions at the same time, during their language classes and in an appropriate environment. Professors need to agree on a schedule that includes the length and the dates when the oral sessions will happen. They also need to decide on the tasks to be fulfilled by students. Moreover, in iiTTD, as exposed in Aranha, Luvizari-Murad and Moreno (2015), in Luvizari-Murad (2016) and in Aranha and Lopes (2019), data collection is carried out in a systemic way in groups whose participants have consented to share their data for research purposes.

The modality of institutional semi-integrated teletandem (isiTTD) is carried out at UNESP campus of São José do Rio Preto when the classes schedules in both involved institutions of a partnership do not match and, as a result, it is not possible to integrate teletandem practice into the language classes at the Brazilian university. In this situation, teletandem practice is a requirement for students enrolled in Portuguese classes in the university abroad and the Brazilian participants are volunteers. Despite being another modality, it holds a lot of resemblance with the integrated one, as the oral sessions are also held at the same time and place with all participants and there are tasks to be carried out. The group of volunteers count on a mediator, usually a graduate student, who will guide them through the practice, explain the tasks and provide them with any support they might need.

Concerning the tasks, Cavalari and Aranha (2016) are the first authors to describe the ones that might occur in teletandem-integrated practice. The authors call them integrating tasks and present the characteristics of some. Their description explains each task without pointing out any hierarchy among them, stating that teletandem practice feeds the integrating tasks and are fed by them. On that account, Aranha and Leone (2016, 2017) propose that teletandem practice entails pedagogical scenarios, a notion defined by Foucher (2010) to describe which tasks are didactically programmed for a certain learning environment. A pedagogical scenario involves the objectives, previous and target competences, resources and instruments, the tasks and probable interactants. In teletandem, the concept has been used to describe the macro and microtasks intended for a partnership (ARANHA; LEONE, 2016).

The pedagogical scenarios in teletandem are characterized by two macrotasks: teletandem oral sessions (TOS) and mediation sessions. Even though the scenarios vary depending on what the professors agree to do, these two macrotasks are likely to be part of any teletandem partnership. The authors explain they use the terms tasks, macrotasks and microtasks to illustrate teletandem practice as a complex environment. Based on Mangenot and Soubrié (2010), they use *macrotasks* to describe the ones with a larger scale and scope and *microtasks* to describe the ones that contribute to overall task implementation. The authors provide a figure to illustrate one possible pedagogical scenario:

Figure 1 – The organization of a pedagogical scenario based on Teletandem.
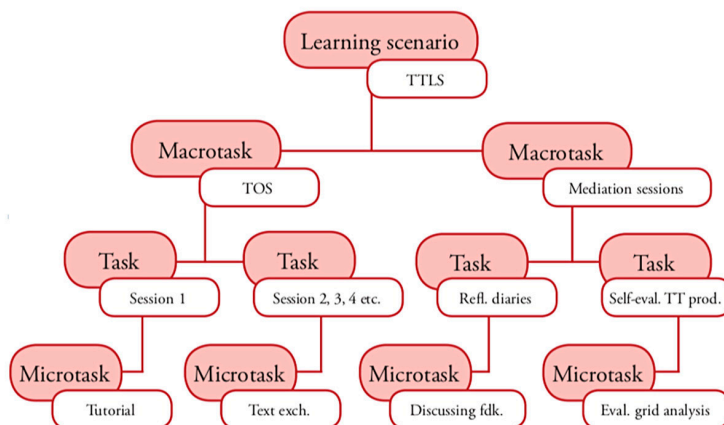
In the figure, we find that each macrotask originates tasks which have microtasks associated to them. The TOS macrotask, then, comprises each oral session that occurs during a partnership, i.e., the synchronous, virtual encounter between partners. Associated to these sessions, Aranha and Leone (2017) include various microtasks, such as the tutorial, a meeting in which the language professor and/or researchers in teletandem introduce the telecollaborative learning environment, its principles and the other microtasks associated with teletandem practice. Some information about these procedures can be found in a website[5] by means of video tips. Another microtask related to TOS is the text exchange that may occur in a partnership. Following the class schedule, students should write a text in the target language on a topic provided by their professor and send it to their partners, who should revise it, e-mail it back with improvement suggestions and discuss the outcomes during the following oral session.

In the mediation session macrotask, we find other microtasks related to it. One of them is the learning diary, which students need to write after each TOS to reflect on their experience in the teletandem practice and think of the strategies that may be used to help their development as autonomous learners. Their professors – for iiTTD – or mediators – in case of the semi-integrated modality – read the diaries and elicit discussion topics to be explored in language classes (iiTTD). Cavalari and Aranha (2019, p. 562) argue that "a combination of one-to-one dialog through diaries and class discussion may enrich both EFL lessons and the telecollaborative experience in iiTTD". The content of diaries should also feed mediation oral sessions, a meeting in which students and mediators reflect on the problems experienced in practice and discuss learning strategies that may be used. Another task connected to mediation sessions is the self-evaluation

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5   Available at: https://teletandemriopreto.wixsite.com/ibilce/informacoes-aos-participantes. Access on: Aug. 5 2019.

procedures that are held through the filling of questionnaires, generally an initial and a final one. In the initial questionnaire, students answer about their expectations with teletandem practice, self-assess their language level and establish learning goals. In the final one, they write about the whole experience and evaluate the achievement of their goals. They also re-assess their language level. Nowadays, these questionnaires are available to participants in the form of a link that redirects to a file in *Google Forms.*

This is the current organization of teletandem practice at UNESP-São José do Rio Preto and the tasks presented are the ones that may occur in a teletandem partnership depending on the characteristics of the pedagogical scenario. We advocate that these macrotasks, which incorporate tasks, generate genres that might be studied in the very context of teletandem. As Miller points out (1984, p.151), "a rhetorical sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish". This action "must involve situation and motive'. In case of teletandem, tasks are performed by language actions in a specific learning situation whose motive is to learn and exchange language and culture.

Teletandem community: a revision of the concept

We believe that the criteria for defining the teletandem community need to be revised so that the concept is still valid to describe the grouping of people involved in the teletandem context that now encompasses a system of interrelated genres (BAZERMAN, 2006a). These genres might occur in diverse pedagogical scenarios (as described previously), both in the integrated and semi-integrated modalities. Rampazzo (2017) considers the concept should incorporate both genres used and the other individuals engaged in the practice – professors, mediators, grad researchers.

We now present the expansion of some of the items proposed by Silva in 2012, the adjustment of others, and the inclusion of two other criteria to describe the teletandem community.

According to Silva, the first criterion was related to the reasons why members would get together in the teletandem community: "A teletandem community is formed because of similar interests, common goals, and because the members share the same knowledge and practice" (SILVA, 2012, p. 72, our translation). Her criterion, however, did not include the genres nor the multiplicity of purposes that may exist among the members of a TC. As presented in the theoretical framework section, the students do seem to share common goals, as Silva's results showed. Indeed, Aranha and Bragagnollo (2015) also state students share a similar aim - the pedagogical purpose of learning a language - which is evident by the language discussions that occur during oral sessions (FRANCO, 2016; FRESCHI, 2017; RAMPAZZO, 2017).

Silva's description of this criterion reveals that she considers only students as members of the teletandem community, ignoring that the professors and the researchers

are also involved in teletandem practice and that these members certainly have goals different from the students'.

Whereas students want to develop their linguistic and cultural competences, researchers may be interested in data collection or analysis of classroom environment, or any other. The objective of collecting data may not be of interest to students, although they give their consent to researchers use data they generate on teletandem. Still on the multiplicity of purposes, while professors and researchers may value the development of certain tasks, the ones participating in the semi-integrated modality, who are not graded on their involvement, may even ignore them for understanding they are not relevant for their own learning.

According to genre theory of socio-rhetorical basis, the existence of common goals in a community leads to the use and development of genres, which are shared by its members (SWALES, 1990, 1998, 2016). Silva (2012) does not include this aspect in her definition because when she presented her study, investigations about the existence of genres in teletandem community had not been conducted. Currently, Aranha (2014), Rampazzo and Aranha (2018), and Rampazzo and Aranha (2019, forthcoming), for example, suggest that the teletandem oral session is a genre. Rampazzo and Aranha (2018) investigated the first 15 minutes of the initial teletandem oral session (iTOS) and verified a rhetorical pattern for it. On that account, Aranha (2014) also suggests that the different activities that occur in teletandem might form a system of inter-related genres. According to Bazerman (2006b, p. 23), "genres are familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar", and teletandem various activities are likely to be those places.

We identify the need to expand the criterion so that it includes the multiplicity of purposes among teletandem community members and the development and use of genres to serve community purposes. The first criterion is then changed to: "The teletandem community is formed because of similar interests, common goals, and because its members share common goals and practice. They develop genres in order to fulfil their purposes, which may not be the same for every member".

The second criterion in Silva (2012, p. 72, our translation) is "the interactions among its members occur frequently and are based on a process of cooperation or exchange (reciprocity) (feedback), working for building knowledge and generating a feeling of belonging". This criterion was not revised because interactions[6] among the members still occur regularly. During the period established for a partnership, students talk to their partners every week both during TOS and via e-mail exchanges; professors are in touch with students, commenting on their diaries, meeting them for the mediation sessions, and, in the integrated modality, for language classes; and professors in each institution frequently talk to each other to make sure the procedures are having the expected outcome and, occasionally, to make adjustments.

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[6] By interactions we mean all types of communication involved in the practice.

This aspect of frequent interaction corresponds to Swales's (1998) definition of place discourse community, for he states the members of such communities work together regularly as seems to be the case for teletandem. Moreover, members do provide feedback to their peers: the students to their partners during oral sessions; the professors to the students; the professors among themselves when discussing the partnership; and researchers when studying the works of one another or when they share their works in academic events.

Silva's (2012, p. 72, our translation) third criterion is probably the one mostly changed. It states that "the members of a teletandem community do not have a physical territory, therefore, are 'non-present'". Regarding the roles of other individuals in the community, besides the students, Luvizari-Murad (2016) highlights how teletandem works based on the Activity Theory (ENGESTRÖM, 1987) and on who the ones involved in any partnership are. She argues that the institutional integrated modality corresponds to a variety of activity systems inter-related and organized in a macro-context and a micro-context. The macro-context, according to the author, is composed of the activity system formed by a community of researchers that includes the professor-coordinators, post-graduate students, guidelines for teletandem practice and tools. The micro-context, on the other hand, is equivalent to the activity system of each pair of students and the tasks they perform. She mentions that in institutional integrated teletandem there are

> multiple voices, in view of the fact that it includes all different participants cited as well as their stories, cultures, position in work division, besides the institutional culture of the environment for the activity performance and the theoretical culture created by the community of researchers and practitioners in TTD that precede the current historical moment. (LUVIZARI-MURAD, 2016, p. 16, our translation)[7].

Luvizari-Murad (2016) highlights the engaged participation of students, who are in contact with their partners, and the participation of professors and researchers in the teletandem activity.

On that account, considering the role played by professors and researchers in teletandem, both in integrated and semi-integrated modalities, we argue that they must not be excluded from the teletandem community. In that case, we could say that there are different degrees of participation in the community: there are the students, the professors responsible for the language classes or mediators; and the researchers, who may be in different levels of academic studies as well, from undergrads to post-doctorates.

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[7] In the original: "*múltiplas vozes, uma vez que possui todos os diferentes sujeitos citados como suas histórias, culturas e posições na divisão do trabalho, além da cultura institucional do ambiente de realização da atividade e a cultura teórica criada por toda a comunidade de pesquisadores e praticantes de TTD que antecederam o presente momento histórico*". (LUVIZARI-MURAD, 2016, p. 16).

As the students are not the only members in the teletandem community, we cannot say all members in the TC are "non-present" as interaction will not necessarily be virtual, as it is between partners – Brazilian and foreign. Interactions among members may occur as follows: student – student (virtual); students – professors/mediators (virtual or face-to-face); professor – professor (usually virtual); researcher(s) – researcher(s) (virtual or face-to-face); researchers – students – professors (virtual or face-to-face). The teletandem community members, then, navigate through multimodal environments, which may or may not be virtual. It is important to point out, however, that independently of how the interaction happens, its members work together regularly, which corroborates the definition of place discourse community (SWALES, 1998) and local discourse community (SWALES, 2016). The third criterion for defining the TC now includes that "The teletandem community has members of different degrees: students, professors and mediators, and researchers. Some of these members may be non-present'".

The fourth item in Silva's (2012, p. 72, our translation) definition remains the same: "the teletandem community has its own mechanisms of virtual communication". This was not changed because the members of the teletandem community do use online communication resources to get their work done, such as *Skype*, *Zoom*[8], *Google Docs*, *Google Drive, e-mails*[9]. Other resources are also used, such as *PowerPoint documents* and *videos* for the tutorial presentation. This also confirms the second criterion of discourse community proposed by Swales (2016), i.e., a DC has intercommunication mechanisms and currently makes use of digital technologies to promote contact.

Silva's fifth criterion stated there is a "netiquette" among members of the teletandem community. She mentions that "teletandem communities collectively develop a set of rules that govern interactions ('netiquette')" (SILVA, 2012, p. 72, our translation). This criterion was expanded in order to include the set of rules that regulate face-to-face interactions as well and the silential relations that may exist among the members of the TC.

The partners develop a set of rules that govern the virtual communication between them, but, apart from that, they also have to establish agreements regarding the use of the languages in each half of the SOT, if and how they will correct each other and how they will manage the encounters in order to meet the teletandem principles. In addition to observing the principles, students also need to be attentive to the schedule and deadlines proposed by the professors, to fill questionnaires and to engage in the tutorials and mediation sessions. Professors, mediators, and students also establish a set of rules that govern their interactions: (i) via e-mail (sending and replying to information), (ii) via Google Drive (allowing access to files, commenting on diaries), (iii) face-to-face, in mediation sessions and classes. Professors and mediators need to make sure they provide all the information in time and students need to respond to it.

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[8]   Available at: http://zoom.us. Access on: Aug. 5. 2019.

[9]   See Cavalari (2018) for more information on the use of technological tools in teletandem.

Furthermore, we believe members in TC establish silent, tacit relations, according to Swales's (2016) definition that suggests there is a sense of things that do not need to be said or explained in detail. The members in TC seem to know what is appropriate or inappropriate to say among partners and professors. On that account, Souza (2016) points out students tend to avoid correcting their partners very frequently because they try to create a friendly atmosphere as a means of saving their faces. Rampazzo (2017) also states students tend to be friendly and polite to their partners in their first encounter as a way of ensuring a good relationship. Professors, on the other hand, also need to be aware of what can be said to their peers regarding the partnership, and how to address everyday issues. Approaching procedures are not told or taught to members, therefore, we can argue there are silential relations in the teletandem community, in view of the fact that there seem to be an understanding that some things do not need to be said or stressed in this telecollaborative learning environment. The fifth criterion is, therefore, expanded to "The teletandem community collectively develops a set of rules that govern their interactions, either online ('netiquette') or among members that meet face-to-face. The teletandem community also establishes silent, tacit relations of what is (in)appropriate to say to the partners".

Silva's (2012, p. 72, our translation) last item for describing the teletandem community, "the members of a teletandem community share specialized lexicon and bilingual communication", was also revised to include what is understood by "specialized lexicon". In her analysis, Silva (2012) considers the use of emoticon in chats during the oral sessions as specialized lexicon. Swales (2016) defends the specialized terminology used by discourse communities aims to make communication more effective and to make it more restrict to its members. In this regard, emoticons, communication tools typical of virtual environments[10], could be comprehended as specialized lexicon in any virtual written communication, but not only them, since there are other terms in the TC that could be considered specialized terminology.

Rampazzo (2017) argues that the names given to the genres – teletandem oral session, for instance – used in teletandem community could also be viewed as specialized terminology because they are specific to this context. In effect, even the project name, teletandem, may not mean much to those who are not part of the community. Additionally, the terms tutorial, learning diary, and mediation session, for instance, may have another meaning in different contexts. Moreover, there is also the use of abbreviations in the teletandem community, such as TTD, for teletandem, iiTTD, for institutional integrated teletandem, TOS, for teletandem oral session, and so on.

Regarding communication, it is bilingual because of one of teletandem principles, the separation of languages. Communication is bilingual among students, who need to alternate the use of languages during the oral sessions, and it may be bilingual among students and professors as well. The sixth criterion is then adapted to "The members

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[10] Considering the technological development, the chat is no longer used as the primary tool for synchronous communication.

of the teletandem community share specialized lexicon and bilingual communication. The specialized terminology includes not only what is typical of virtual communication, but also the nomenclature given to genres and modalities and the name of the project".

Silva only accounts for six criteria to describe the teletandem community. However, we believe there should be the inclusion of two more in order to get a more thorough characterization of the TC. The seventh criterion would encompass the place participants take. We propose the inclusion of "There is hierarchy among the members of the teletandem community, who are aware of their history and try to communicate their traditions to new members via tutorials and mediation sessions". This is based on Swales (2016), who argues that there is an implicit or explicit hierarchy among the members of a discourse community. We believe there is a hierarchical relation in teletandem community. As indicated previously, there are three degrees of participation in TC: the students, the professors and the researchers. Among each degree, there are different levels of expertise, either because of the amount of time spent with practice – there are students participating in teletandem for the first time and those who have participated before –, or because of the amount of time observing and studying the context – a new researcher in teletandem probably would not have the same level of expertise as one that has been carrying out studies on the context for years. In this respect, we could say that the more studies and practice in the context, the higher the level of expertise of a member might be.

Associated to this hierarchy, the members with higher level of expertise in TC are concerned about sharing their history and practice to new members. Whereas students may not be aware of the history of the project in detail, they get to learn a little in the tutorials, during which the teletandem environment is presented, and in mediation sessions, when they have the opportunity to discuss learning issues and exchange experience. The researchers, on the other hand, are more conscious of the project background and development as well as the professors – at least in Brazil – who are engaged in practice for longer and prepare the tutorial materials.

Finally, the eighth and last added criterion declares that "In the teletandem community, there is partial and continuous replacement of its members. This may happen every semester for the students and every new selection process of graduate courses for the researchers". Every semester, professors arrange partnerships based on the academic calendar of the institutions in Brazil and abroad. The number of oral sessions that may occur each time varies, but generally, there are 5 to 8 sessions for each group established in each semester. During this period, there is the participation of students enrolled in language classes – for the integrated modality – and of volunteer students from different undergraduate courses – for the semi-integrated modality. Although some of these students may have participated in teletandem before, regardless of the modality, normally, many are involved in teletandem practice for the first time. As a result, there is partial substitution of members in TC every semester, which also leads to the need of having tutorial meetings every semester. The chances of remaining in the community are higher for professors and researches in teletandem, as they tend

to stay engaged in the practice for longer. However, there may be fluctuation in the researchers group as new graduate students join the research team and others defend their thesis and dissertations.

Lastly, for this section, we present the eight criteria organized in a list:

1. The teletandem community is formed because of similar interests, common goals, and because its members share common knowledge and practice. They develop genres in order to fulfil their purposes, which may not be the same for every member.
2. The interactions among its members occur frequently and are based on a process of cooperation or exchange (reciprocity) (feedback), working for building knowledge and generating a feeling of belonging.
3. The teletandem community has members of different degrees: students, professors and mediators, and researchers. Some of these members may be "non-present".
4. The teletandem community has its own mechanisms of virtual communication.
5. The teletandem community collectively develops a set of rules that govern their interactions, either online ("netiquette") or among members that meet face-to-face. The teletandem community also establishes silent, tacit relations of what is (in)appropriate to say to the partners
6. The members of the teletandem community share specialized lexicon and bilingual communication. The specialized terminology includes not only what is typical of virtual communication, but also the nomenclature given to genres and modalities and the name of the project.
7. There is hierarchy among the members of the teletandem community, who are aware of their history and try to communicate their traditions to new members via tutorials and mediation sessions.
8. In the teletandem community, there is partial and continuous replacement of its members.

Final Remarks

This paper aimed to present a discussion on the concept of discourse community in a multimodal, multicultural, and telecollaborative context named teletandem. Silva (2012) had previously proposed a definition for a teletandem community (TC) based on the intertwining of three concepts: discourse community (SWALES, 1900), community of practice (WENGER, 1998) and virtual community (LÈVY, 1999). In view of the fact that telecollaborative practices develop and change over time, there seemed to be a need for updating the criteria so that they are still valid to describe the grouping of people involved in teletandem.

Besides observing the characteristics of TC that are typical of online communities and of communities of practice, the discourse community definition discussed by Swales (2016) is effective to discuss the concept of the teletandem community; however, the redefinition of the criteria suggested here is still a combination of the three concepts as presented in Silva (2012) due to the practical and virtual nature of telecollaboration itself.

Our investigation of teletandem community characteristics indicates people involved in the practice – either as a professor, a researcher or a student – are members of a "folocal" discourse community in Swales's (2016) terms. That is because members need to observe both the aspects that govern local relations – members that meet in person, in the local lab context – and the ones that rule virtual communication – members that meet virtually or exchange information in a virtual way. Members of the TC need to be aware of the genres that occur in their local arrangements and in the virtual context. In other words, they need to adjust their behavior, discourse and communication according to what is expected from them in recurrent social situations and the purposes they aim at fulfilling. Also, the relations among members differ because they are organized by distinctive participants with specific roles.

Moreover, the very nature of the Teletandem project itself also points to an organization of a folocal community once telecollaboration is situated in a globalized world with the objective of preparing learners to operate in multilingual and multicultural contexts, as argued by Helm and Guth (2010). The external forces, then, have as much influence as the local ones.

In addition, besides sharing a set of rules and being both regionally and virtually/globally located, members of the teletandem community (and probably other telecollaborative projects) develop specialized terminologies. They also form a complex, multi-faceted group of individuals as there are members from different degrees (professors, researchers and students), there is an hierarchy from one degree to another and within degrees (more or less experienced members) and partial replacement of members.

Telecollaborative practices are constantly being adjusted, not only because they are sustained by ever-changing digital technology tools, but also because they may assume particular organizational dynamics. For that reason, we believe the communities occasionally formed in such projects need to be continually studied.

▪ *RESUMO: O objetivo deste artigo é discutir o conceito de comunidade em contextos multimodais de projetos telecolaborativos. Comunidades discursivas (CD) são agrupamentos de indivíduos que se unem para atingir seus propósitos comunicativos por meio de gêneros (SWALES, 1990). Embora o conceito tenha sido extensivamente discutido em contextos acadêmicos, parece haver uma lacuna de estudos que envolvam o tema e sua importância*

para a telecolaboração. Uma tentativa nesse sentido é o trabalho de Silva (2012) sobre a comunidade teletandem (CT), no qual a autora investiga os estudantes que participam do projeto Teletandem Brasil: Línguas Estrangeiras para Todos. Partimos dos critérios elaborados por Silva para a definição da comunidade em questão e nossa análise deriva de nossa observação intensa da prática de teletandem. Os resultados indicam que os membros de comunidades que eventualmente são formados em contextos telecolaborativos tendem a ser regulados por regras locais e externas, engendrarem organizações complexas e compartilharem gêneros para alcançarem seus objetivos.

▪ *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Telecolaboração. Comunidade Discursiva. Comunidade Teletandem. Gêneros.*

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