



Implementing Teletandem at UFC: perspectives from postdoctoral supervision and training

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a reflective experience report on the implementation of the Teletandem (TTD) program at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC), developed within the context of a postdoctoral research project conducted in the Graduate Program in Translation Studies (POET). The study describes the institutional and pedagogical stages involved in establishing the program, including the development of institutional partnerships, the design and implementation of a mediator training course, the organization of orientation and mediation sessions, and the management of virtual exchange activities. The report also discusses challenges encountered during the implementation process, such as participant recruitment limitations, institutional coordination demands, and methodological adjustments resulting from the initial rejection of the research proposal by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP). The analysis highlights the strategies adopted to address these challenges and examines the formative impact of the program on participants and institutional internationalization initiatives. By systematizing these experiences, the study contributes to discussions on virtual exchange, teacher education, and the implementation of Teletandem programs in higher education contexts.

KEYWORDS: Teletandem; Experience Report; Teaching Practice; UFC; URCA.



Implementando o Teletandem na UFC: perspectivas de pós-doutorandos

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta um relato reflexivo sobre o processo de implementação do programa Teletandem (TTD) na Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC), desenvolvido no contexto de um estágio pós-doutoral vinculado ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Tradução (POET). O estudo descreve as etapas institucionais e pedagógicas envolvidas na criação do programa, incluindo o estabelecimento de contatos institucionais, a elaboração e oferta de um curso de formação de mediadores, a organização de sessões de orientação e mediação e a busca por parcerias acadêmicas nacionais e internacionais. O relato também aborda os desafios enfrentados durante o processo, como a limitação do número de participantes, dificuldades na institucionalização das parcerias e a necessidade de adequações metodológicas decorrentes do indeferimento inicial do projeto pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa (CEP). A análise evidencia as estratégias adotadas para contornar tais obstáculos, bem como os impactos formativos gerados para os participantes e para o processo de internacionalização institucional. Ao sistematizar essas experiências, o estudo contribui para a discussão sobre intercâmbio virtual, formação docente e implementação de programas de Teletandem em universidades brasileiras.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Teletandem; Relato de Experiência; Prática docente; UFC; URCA.

1. Introduction

This study adopts an experience-report methodology grounded in reflective practice and institutional documentation analysis. Experience reports constitute an important methodological approach in educational research, allowing researchers to document implementation processes, identify challenges, and generate practical insights that may inform future initiatives. It focus on the personal experience of the researchers in implementing the Teletandem (TTD) program at Federal University of Ceará¹ (UFC). The experience is shared between two professors involved in the implementation of the method and will be presented in the perspective of both supervisor and supervised of a postdoctoral training period at UFC's POET (Postgraduate Programme in Translation Studies²).

In order to better express the experience of this postdoctoral training period, the discussion will be divided into topics to explain: a) what is TTD and its importance as a virtual exchange program; b) why Regional University of Cariri (URCA)³ was the first university in Ceara to implement the program; c) the contextualization of UFC's TTD program, since its first contacts up to the development of partnerships; d) at last, but not least, the personal experience of the researchers in implementing this project and the difficulties encountered by them, as well as the solutions they found to such problems.

Teletandem, or TTD, can be described as a virtual, synchronous, and multimodal language learning context that connects pairs of individuals from different nationalities, proficient in different languages, to collaboratively learn each other's language (Telles, 2009). It follows three

¹ Universidade Federal do Ceará.

² Programa de Pós-graduação em Tradução.

³ Universidade Regional do Cariri.



main principles: separate language use, autonomy, and reciprocity. Additionally, the program is student-centered, with an emergent curriculum. Essential components of the TTD program include the orientation process and learning mediation.

Orientation sessions can occur in-person or virtually and always precede the start of TTD interactions. These sessions introduce technical knowledge, such as tools supporting interactions between pairs, theoretical knowledge like the guiding principles for interactions, and practical information, such as the schedule for new participants.

Mediation sessions are defined as (a) in-person or virtual meetings, (b) group or individual sessions, (c) pre-scheduled or spontaneous, and (d) aimed at assisting participants in reaching their learning goals while providing support to their partners to achieve theirs as well.

The TTD program originated at Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP) - Assis, formalized with support from FAPESP in 2006 under the thematic project Teletandem Brazil: Foreign Languages for All. It evolved through three phases: a) Development of the theoretical framework and experimentation; b) Corpus organization and publication of articles analyzing data from the project. c) Training of teacher-mediators, including public school educators. TTD, therefore, emerged as both a language learning and teacher training project. Research on TTD involves collaboration among students, teacher-mediators, and technical staff. Thesis and dissertations published on TTD predominantly use qualitative research approaches, such as ethnographic studies and case studies, often drawing on Vygotskian perspectives on knowledge construction, emphasizing concepts like the zone of proximal development and mediation. These insights have contributed to the ongoing improvement and expansion of the project.

Professor Suzi Marques Spatti Cavalari, from UNESP's São José do Rio Preto campus, in her paper "Integrating telecollaborative language learning into Higher Education: a study on teletandem practice", discusses the implementation and results of the TTD program across three UNESP campuses. She highlights the following in her initial statement:

Over the years, several studies (Santos, 2008; Telles, 2009; Benedetti et al., 2010; Luz, 2012; GARCIA, 2013; Aranha and Cavalari, 2014; Teles, 2015; Salomão, 2011; 2015; Funo et al., 2015; Carvalho et al., 2015; Zakir, 2015; Cavalari and Aranha, 2016; Toledo, 2017; Freschi, 2017; Campos, 2018) investigated different pedagogical, linguistic and cultural aspects of teletandem learning. They offer convincing evidence that teletandem activities may contribute to intercultural language learning and have become highly valued by practitioners at the three UNESP institutes in which it is implemented: Assis, São José do Rio Preto (SJRP) and Araraquara. These investigations, focusing on each institutional setting, also revealed that, even though the theoretical tenets have remained the same, teletandem implementation has been adjusted to the specificities of each institute and to the particularities of the partnerships established with different foreign universities (Cavalari, 2018, p. 418).

Thus, the diverse studies examining the impact of TTD across the UNESP campuses of São José do Rio Preto, Assis, and Araraquara, covering linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical aspects, have produced consistently positive data about the program's effectiveness in these institutions. It is also important to note that TTD has been shown to be adapted depending on each institution's needs.



Currently, the project is present in several Brazilian universities, including UNESP, Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL) (PR), Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná (UENP) (PR), Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP) (MG), Universidade Estadual da Paraíba (UEPB) (PB), and URCA (CE), as well as many international partnerships such as Georgetown University, Tulane University, Queen Mary University, and Universidad Autónoma de México. The first University in the Ceara State to have a TTD project was URCA.

As discussed by Professors Rozana Lopes Messias, Ludmila Belotti Andreu Funo and Guilherme Mariano Martins da Silva, in their chapter “Teletandem e Internacionalização na Universidade Regional Do Cariri (Urca)”, published in 2020, at URCA, the TTD program was introduced during the I Seminar on Mobility and Internationalization of URCA: Internationalization of Cariri. The Seminar was held in November 2018. The TTD program at URCA (TTD-URCA) established its team during the seminar, forming strategies to support foreign language proficiency development at the institution (Messias; Funo; Silva, 2020, p. 10-11).

With the establishment and validation of the URCA Teletandem program (TTD-URCA), and the partnership with Georgetown University, two classes were opened in 2019, involving 26 Brazilian students and 26 foreign students (Lopes; Funo; Silva, 2020). Since then, as expressed in Professors Guilherme Mariano Martins da Silva and Ludmila Belotti Andreu Funo paper in collaboration with student Darley Pereira da Silva, URCA has maintained partnerships with Georgetown, Tulane, and Johns Hopkins University, focusing on language learning, cultural exchange, and the use of literary texts in TTD activities, a pilot project at URCA (Lopes; Funo; Silva, 2024) and also at UNESP (Ramos; Carvalho, 2020).

Having that in mind, it is possible to say that TTD has proven to be an important tool for language acquisition and intercultural exchange, with a low-cost implementation and innovative methodology focusing on reciprocity and autonomy in language learning. As said by professors Karin Adriane Henschel Pobbe Ramos and Kelly Cristiane Henschel Pobbe de Carvalho, in their paper about role of mediators in TTD: “Teletandem has been demonstrated to be an initiative that contributes to institutional visibility and allows the sharing of cultural experiences and scientific knowledge” (Ramos; Carvalho, 2018, p. 40). TTD, then, remains a valuable initiative for both private and public universities in Brazil and abroad, promoting not only language skills but also intercultural awareness through collaborative learning.

At UFC, the implementation of the TTD program (TTD-UFC) emerged from a demand within the graduate program in Physiotherapy. The professor in charge believed the students in the program needed greater opportunities to develop English language skills as a second language. For the professor, English was essential for the students at this stage of their training and, even more so, for their future careers. Recognizing this need, the professor reached out to TTD specialists at URCA and English language teaching experts from the POET program. Following an initial meeting to assess the needs and institutional contexts, a partnership was formalized through the establishment of a postdoctoral research project between representatives from URCA and POET.

As part of the postdoctoral project, designed to meet UFC’s specific needs, the following objectives were set: a) Develop academic research analyzing the use of translation strategies



in TTD interactions through corpus linguistics; b) Create and offer a mediator training course in TTD; c) Provide guidance and mediation for partnerships established between UFC and foreign universities.

With these three objectives in mind, the goal was to address both TTD research, its formative potential, and the promotion of academic exchanges. In this regard, the initial target audience of the program was graduate students from Physiotherapy and Translation, who would be trained as mediators. This initial training aimed to prepare qualified individuals capable of guiding and mediating the second phase of the postdoctoral project: undergraduate and graduate students at UFC who needed to engage in virtual exchanges to develop their linguistic and cultural competencies. These virtual exchanges would be created through TTD partnerships obtained through the Physiotherapy professor.

The decision to focus on TTD as the method for this initiative was strategic, given its cost-effective, flexible, and student-centered approach to language learning. Through synchronous, virtual, and collaborative exchanges, TTD facilitates not just language acquisition, but also promotes intercultural understanding, autonomy, and reciprocity among participants. These elements are critical in a globalized education context, where virtual exchanges have become an increasingly viable and impactful alternative to traditional study abroad programs.

The establishment of this program at UFC, therefore, was intended to represent a significant step forward in internationalizing the curriculum⁴ and providing graduate and undergraduate students with opportunities to engage with peers from foreign institutions. By structuring the program to include both training for mediators and direct virtual exchanges, this initiative aimed at a holistic approach to language learning, ensuring that students are equipped with both the linguistic and cultural tools necessary to succeed in a globalized academic environment.

Furthermore, we intend to divide this experience into the three areas approached in the postdoctoral period: the research, the course and the partnerships. In the research area we will discuss the methodology adopted and the difficulties and opportunities found in studying translation techniques in TTD interactions. In the course area we will present the planning, structuring and implementation of the mediator's formative course. And in the final part, the partnerships, we will explain how the process of creating a TTD course was devised and which variants affected the original planning.

2. The research

The first element in the postdoctoral training process was creating an individual research program for supervised professional development. Since the training was executed in a postgraduate program in Translation, it was an obvious choice that the research project would focus on the relationship between translation and TTD.

⁴ This is a key point for UFC's institutional development plan (UFC, p. 41 and 76).

Having in mind the vast amount of data that would be generated internally with the mediation course and the partnerships, the project initially aimed to analyze the students' perspectives about translation and which strategies they adopted in their interactions.

In order to accomplish this, four forms were created: 1) initial assessment; 2) beliefs about pedagogical translation; 3) pedagogical translation strategies; 4) final assessment. The first and fourth forms aimed to create a holistic understanding of the tandem groups, while the second and third aimed to provide a more detailed view of the position of pedagogical translation within the interactions, regarding both beliefs and actual strategies adopted.

These forms were developed with Free and Informed Consent terms and submitted to the Plataforma Brasil and UFC Ethics Committee. However, the initial application lacked the specifications of a budget, leading to its rejection by the committee. Given that the committee's response itself had already consumed a significant portion of the research schedule, a new submission would have completely precluded any analysis of the collected data.

With this in mind, the supervisor and researcher decided to shift the focus of the research analysis towards a review of scientific productions on TTD that addressed issues related to pedagogical translation processes. They chose particularly those studies focusing on the use of pedagogical translation strategies during interactions. Consequently, the present article is based exclusively on institutional records, program documentation, and reflective observations derived from the implementation process.

Heretofore the researcher is still finishing two papers regarding the chosen subject. The first one will address beliefs about pedagogical translation in TTD practices, and the second will focus on translation strategies in TTD interactions. Both were the result of bibliographic research done through Google Scholar.

3. The bibliographical research at Google Scholar

The topic of translation and TTD together in the search engines resulted in 548 listed options for the input "translation" + "teletandem". However, when quotations were excluded, the result dropped to 452 mentions. It is important to note that this vast number occurred because most institutions apply TTD techniques in translation graduation courses, therefore, translation seemed to be too broad a term and we changed the focus to "translation strategies" + "teletandem", which resulted in only 3 finds. At the same time the search "pedagogical translation" + "teletandem" resulted in 3 different files.

From the vast majority of 452 results, we selected the paper *Learning foreign languages in TTD: Resources and strategies*, by professor Telles. The choice was guided by the researcher's expertise in the TTD topic as well as the fact that the paper explicitly dealt with translation occurrences in TTD interactions. The paper became a necessary bibliographic reference, since its perspective showed how the use of translation apps and translation as a whole was a common occurrence in the interactions. According to the professor:



The use of translation as a recurrent activity is, most probably, due to students' limitations of vocabulary and their need to immediately access an equivalent translation to the word they needed, so that they could sustain spontaneous conversation. Translation apps, such as Google Translator and WebReference are commonly used by the students and we frequently leave them open on the computer screen, along with Skype (Telles, 2015, p. 624).

It is important to note that, although the use of translation in TTD interactions is frequent, it is often framed in the literature as a compensatory strategy—primarily associated with lexical gaps or insufficient proficiency during conversation. We partially disagree with this interpretation. While translation can indeed function as a support mechanism in moments of communicative difficulty, we argue that its use is not restricted to situations of linguistic deficiency. Even proficient speakers may resort to translation techniques or translation applications to enhance interactional dynamics, negotiate meaning more precisely, or accelerate the flow of conversation. In such cases, translation operates not as a sign of limitation, but as a strategic and resourceful practice aimed at refining expression, adjusting semantic nuances, or exploring alternative forms of articulation.

The search for “translation strategies” + “teletandem,” which yielded three results, proved ultimately unproductive for the purposes of this study. Two of the findings focused primarily on machine translation and processes of self-regulation, without directly addressing human translation strategies within TTD interactions. The third result consisted of a Russian-language list that did not correspond to a peer-reviewed article or scientific essay. Consequently, none of these results substantially contributed to the specific analytical focus of this research.

On the other hand, the search based on “pedagogical translation” + “teletandem,” resulted in 2 documents of some usefulness. A master's dissertation by Heloisa Postai Sacco called “Um estudo sobre tipos de tradução no ensino e na aprendizagem de língua inglesa”, although does not properly focus on TTD interactions, presents interesting findings regarding how students and teachers perceive pedagogical translation.

Similarly, Carolina Moya Fiorelli, master's dissertation, “Crenças de uma professora de inglês para fins específico: um estudo sobre a tradução em sala de aula”, also focused solely on pedagogical translation, but also highlighted how this topic was understood by teachers.

The researcher also concluded that translation is a communicative activity as well (Fiorelli, p. 65). It can also help teachers promote critical thinking. Fiorelli agrees with Branco when she says that pedagogical translation aims toward “to reinforce and assess learning through texts, contrastive analysis, and reflection” (Branco, 2009, p. 186, translated by the authors). She finishes saying that the pedagogical translation must be adapted to the students' needs and always permeated by critical thinking.

It is important to note that Fiorelli also describes a process of critical awareness regarding her own previous assumptions about translation as a pedagogical tool. Her reflections, together with Sacco's dissertation, reveal that pedagogical translation continues to be misunderstood within foreign language teaching. The persistence of longstanding prejudice — often inherited from the strong rejection of translation during the rise of the Communicative Approach — still influences

teaching practices. Beyond this deeply rooted bias, both researchers point out that teachers and mediators may employ direct or literal translation practices without fully considering the pedagogical objectives, contextual demands, or specific learning needs of their students.

Pedagogical translation, however, must be grounded in everyday classroom practice and adapted to students' sociolinguistic and educational contexts. One of the reasons translation was so negatively evaluated during the consolidation of communicative methodologies was precisely its decontextualized and mechanical application. It was often outdated in its procedures and poorly integrated into broader pedagogical goals. Contemporary perspectives differ significantly. Today, there is a broader understanding that any methodological choice — including translation — must be learner-centred, context-sensitive, and aligned with communicative and cognitive objectives. In this sense, pedagogical translation can be re-signified as a strategic and reflective practice rather than a regressive one.

Nevertheless, the search combining “Teletandem” and “Translation” produced largely non-specific results. Most publications addressed either TTD or translation independently, without establishing a substantial analytical dialogue between the two fields. Moreover, certain relevant works — such as “O princípio da separação de línguas no teletandem: o que as teorias propõem e como ele funciona na prática”, by Fabiana Picoli and Ana Cristina Biondo Salomão — were only located after conducting the search using the equivalent terms in Portuguese. This suggests not only a scarcity of directly articulated research in English, but also the importance of multilingual search strategies when investigating topics situated within specific academic communities.

This paper by the Araraquara researchers is an excellent finding regarding the topic pedagogical translation in TTD contexts. It deals with the changing perception that one of TTD pillars must be reviewed: the language separation. This has been discussed for some time, as we saw first-hand during recent academic seminars (Gutenlox and IVEC, for example), but here it is clearly explained how bilingualism and pedagogical translation are important tools in TTD interactions:

However, when analysing phenomena arising from bilingualism (code-switching), we realize that alternating between one language and another is a relevant resource within the bilingual repertoire itself. Thus, we understand that the principle of language separation could be referred to as the principle of equality (of opportunities), so that it incorporates the existing bilingualism in this context in an inclusive manner, that is, by recognizing the creative and interconnected use of both languages according to the speakers' needs, objectives, and intentions (Piccoli; Salomão, 2020, p. 1620, translated by the authors).⁵

Therefore, it is of utmost importance that new papers focus specifically on the relationship between TTD and pedagogical translation, since there is a void in papers regarding a topic that

⁵ “Contudo, ao analisarmos os fenômenos decorrentes do bilinguismo (alternância de códigos), percebemos que alternar entre uma língua e outra é um recurso pertinente do próprio repertório bilíngue. Entendemos, assim, que o princípio da separação de línguas poderia ser denominado de princípio da igualdade (de oportunidades) para que incorpore o bilinguismo existente nesse contexto de forma includente, ou seja, reconhecendo o uso criativo e atrelado das duas línguas de acordo com as necessidades, objetivos e intenções dos falantes” (Piccoli; Salomão, 2020, p. 1620).

actually partakes the routine of TTD mediators. This also helps to validate the efforts of the post-doctorate training program created by POET in partnership with PPGL in its effort of publishing these papers.

4. The course

The course “Formação de Mediadores em Teletandem” at the UFC was designed to equip participants with the skills necessary to mediate interactions within the TTD context, emphasizing transcultural competencies, digital and literary literacy, and evaluation strategies. The course covered a broad range of topics, including the basic principles of TTD, the use of new technologies in language teaching, and the development of digital and multimodal literacy. Participants also engaged with theoretical frameworks on socio-interactionist mediation and literary literacy, offering a well-rounded approach to TTD practices.

It was divided into synchronous sessions through Google Meet and YouTube channels, and asynchronous activities in Google Classroom. This aimed to give the students flexibility to plan their course without compromising their graduate research or undergraduate lessons. Since the target audience was preferably graduate researchers, the flexibility seemed the best choice. It also allowed the researcher to dose the information and control the course schedule better, since the presence of the classes in YouTube allowed the students to review or view the content when needed. The course curriculum included modules addressing the principles of Teletandem interaction, the pedagogical role of mediation, the use of digital tools for synchronous communication, and the development of intercultural awareness. Participants were required to complete formative assignments, including written reflections, participation in simulated mediation scenarios, and the analysis of communication challenges commonly encountered in virtual exchanges.

The lectures were divided between the researcher and guest lecturers, which were specialists in the TTD field or Literary analysis. The literary aspect was essential, due to the establishment of a Literary TTD partnership (Portuguese-Portuguese), between URCA and Universidade Estadual do Paraná (UNESPAR). Therefore, the mediators in training would, at first, be a part of this partnership, for their education.

However, two things happened that changed the planning. First the number of students enrolled in the course from UFC was minimal. Only two students actually participated from UFC. The others were students from URCA and UNESPAR, and even they were not that many as well. From a total of 24 enrolled students, only 12 actively participated in the course.

The second thing was that URCA's partnerships happened to be simultaneous to the course, so instead of creating the Literary Teletandem group with UNESPAR, the researcher preferred to ask URCA's representatives to enrol the course students in their TTD partnerships. So, the course students were offered enrolment in the partnerships with Tulane University, Georgetown University and Duoc UC.

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So, the course structure included both theoretical and practical components. Participants gained critical insights from scholarly texts on TTD and then applied these insights in mediated interactions, reinforcing the connection between theory and practice. Key readings included works by notable scholars in the field of translation, such as Sinara Branco, Howard Douglas Brown, as well as professor João Telles, who provided a comprehensive understanding of TTD as a pedagogical and intercultural tool.

The practical aspects of the course allowed participants to experience real-world interactions in the TTD environment, cultivating important mediator skills. The program emphasized the importance of transculturality (Welsch, 1999) in language learning, preparing participants to navigate and mediate cultural differences during language exchanges. In addition, the course covered ethical considerations, such as data anonymization and the use of Free and Informed Consent in research.

Mediation sessions were conducted periodically as structured group meetings designed to support participants' linguistic and intercultural development. These sessions were scheduled in advance and facilitated by trained mediators who guided discussions on communication strategies, language difficulties, and cultural misunderstandings that emerged during TTD interactions.

During mediation meetings, participants were encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, identify communication challenges, and collaboratively propose solutions. These sessions functioned as reflective spaces that allowed mediators to monitor participant progress and adjust pedagogical strategies when necessary.

Assessment in the course consisted of self-assessment, participation in mediations, reports on presentations, and reports of TTD interactions. This multifaceted evaluation ensured that participants not only understood theoretical concepts but were also able to implement these ideas in practice. According to Douglas Altamiro Consolo:

Assessment is a key component of learning because it helps students learn. When students are able to see how they are doing in a class, for example, they are able to determine whether or not they understand lessons and course materials. Assessment can also help motivate students (Consolo, 2022, p. 2).

Therefore, multiplism was adopted as means to an end. To guarantee that students had the best tools for developing their goals and to perceive this development as a continuous process, the peer-to-peer assessment, the report and the teacher-mediator evaluation were applied.

In conclusion, this course represented a robust training opportunity for mediators in TTD, blending theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience and encouraging the development of professional skills in digital literacy, transcultural communication, and pedagogical mediation.

We hope that the materials derived from the course will further enhance mediation skills at UFC, as the lectures were recorded and uploaded to institutional YouTube channels.



However, it is important to highlight some technical challenges encountered during the course's implementation.

The first issue was a shortage of staff. Initially, the transmission was supposed to be handled by scholarship students from POET or URCA, but none were available to assist. This left the researcher managing both the presentation and the transmission simultaneously, which negatively impacted the quality of the presentation and the final product. The second issue involved access to the YouTube channel. The plan was to use POET's channel, but the researcher did not have access to that account. As a result, the recordings had to be uploaded to URCA's channel at the last minute.

From the second lecture onward, the researcher decided to record the sessions using OBS Studio instead of live streaming and then upload the videos after the class was finished. This solution did not affect student access, as the group was small — only 12 students — and it allowed the researcher to focus solely on the presentation without the added stress of managing the YouTube stream and chat in real-time. Overall, these adjustments helped improve the quality of the remaining lectures, ensuring that students received a more focused and polished presentation.

5. The partnerships

The establishment of institutional partnerships was carried out through a series of formal and informal contacts between faculty members engaged in virtual exchange initiatives. Initial communication occurred through institutional email exchanges, followed by online meetings in which logistical aspects of the program were discussed. These discussions addressed issues such as participant selection criteria, scheduling compatibility between institutions, language pairing arrangements, and the integration of TTD sessions into existing academic calendars.

Partnership development also required ongoing negotiation to ensure alignment between institutional expectations and pedagogical objectives. This process involved revising timelines, coordinating student enrolment procedures, and defining responsibilities related to mediation and session monitoring.

That said, the development of partnerships proved to be the most challenging aspect of organizing the TTD-UFC program. Several factors contributed to these difficulties: a) personal issues affecting both the postdoctoral trainee and supervisor's activities, b) misaligned academic calendars between institutions, c) divergent institutional goals, and d) over-reliance on personal connections.

The first issue is significant, as science is still conducted by humans, and personal circumstances inevitably impact professional activities. In this case, illness — whether affecting the researchers themselves or their family members — significantly delayed the implementation timeline. Similarly, lectures in the mediator training course were postponed, which, in turn, delayed the formal discussions surrounding partnerships until September.

This delay compounded the second challenge: conflicting academic schedules between the Brazilian and American institutions, in this case, Harvard University. The American

university's academic calendar had already been set, with existing TTD collaborations in progress (UNESP). The team's mismanagement of time exacerbated this issue, resulting in the postponement of the partnership to January—midway through the Brazilian university's summer break. Therefore, such partnership became impossible to organize into the course's schedule.

In addition to scheduling conflicts, the institutions faced diverging objectives. At UFC, the primary goal was to enhance English proficiency among postgraduate Physiotherapy students, necessitating extracurricular activities outside regular university hours. In contrast, the American institution required TTD sessions to be integrated into the professors' regular curriculum, conducted during class time. This divergence created a structural challenge: while TTD at UFC would rely on after-hours commitment from both students and mediators, the American institution could only accommodate it as part of the students' formal coursework.

The final, and perhaps most critical, issue was the dependency on personal connections between professors to establish TTD partnerships. This lack of formal institutionalization is a persistent problem in the TTD program at both URCA and UFC. The reliance on individual networks poses a significant barrier to the sustainability and expansion of the initiative, highlighting the need for more robust institutional support and formalized agreements to ensure long-term success.

Having that said, during the course students still had access to URCA's partnerships with foreign universities, such as Duoc UC, Tulane University and Georgetown University. At the time, Duoc and UNESP were offering a TTD course focused on culture, being available to interactions between English-English and English-Spanish language exchange, whereas Tulane and Georgetown held courses of Portuguese-English exchange. This was excellent because allowed both transcultural training and literary perspectives in TTD interactions.

Besides the existing partnerships, there was an attempt made by us towards creating south-south partnerships, specifically focusing in countries such as Guiana, China, New Zealand and Nigeria, as well as lusophone countries such as Angola and Moçambique, but unfortunately there were few responses and none positive. This highlights the structural issue of personal connections and the absence of institutional partnerships that could fulfil this need.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we hoped to present the detailed experience of conducting a mediator's training program at POET-UFC and the failed attempt to create a recurrent TTD program within the institution during 2024 and 2025, as part of a post-doctoral training experience lived by one of the authors.

The course was successful in establishing a theoretical foundation about TTD practices, having many specialists from UNESP acting as lecturers. The course also was well rounded in the assessment of its students, using multiple means of evaluation and feedback in order to provide a better experience.



Although the course failed in creating a TTD culture and consistent recurrent partnerships, it offered an initial partnership spearheaded between UNESP and DUOC universities, which provided hands-on training experience for the students in TTD and at the same time transcultural expertise.

We authors hope to reignite the TTD program at URCA and at UFC in the future, creating south-south partnerships, aimed at reciprocal goals between institutions. In order to do that, it is important that UFC's and URCA's international relations officers work closely with the Language departments so that formal institutional partnerships may be attained.

The experience described in this study demonstrates that the successful implementation of TTD programs requires sustained institutional collaboration, structured mediator training, and flexible pedagogical planning. The lessons documented here may support future initiatives seeking to integrate virtual exchange practices into higher education curricula and contribute to the internationalization of academic programs.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Guilherme Mariano Martins da Silva: Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Data curation; Formal analysis; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Diana Costa Fortier Silva: Supervision; Methodology; Data curation; Writing – review & editing.

José Carlos Tatmatsu Rocha: Conceptualization; Methodology; Resources.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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