Genre dynamics in teletandem chats: a longitudinal study of english <> portuguese partnerships at UNESP-SJRP

Dinâmica de gêneros em chats de teletandem: um estudo longitudinal de parcerias inglês <> português na UNESP-SJRP

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of chat in Teletandem (TTD) activities (Telles; Vassallo, 2006) on the UNESP-SJRP campus from 2006 to 2020, focusing on possible genres materialized in chats, in English <> Portuguese partnerships. Two main questions guided the study: firstly, to identify the genres materialized in chats; and secondly, to examine how the use of chat has evolved along with synchronous communication tools. The research adopted a qualitative and longitudinal approach (Wagner et. al, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007) and investigated whether textual genres (Bazerman, 1994, 2006; Miller 2012a, 2012b, 2016, 2017; Miller; Shepherd, 2009) emerged in chat interactions. Through this analysis, the use of chats over the period was verified. The data was collected from publications related to TTD, including master's dissertations and doctoral theses, and from MulTeC (Lopes, 2019; Aranha; Lopes, 2019). Once collected, the data was integrated into the technical, ontological and epistemological dimensions (Ferro, 2021). The analysis was conducted based on predefined thematic axes, considering the particularities of the textual genres identified and based on the quantitative results obtained by analyzing the data in the Voyant Tools® tool. The final analysis revealed evidence of the materialization of the Initial Teletandem Oral Session (iSOT) genre (Rampazzo, 2017) in the initial period, which did not carry over into the second period due to advances in synchronous communication tools. However, this possible genre persisted in another form within the tool, indicating potential survival in the new environment. In addition, there was a change in the use of chat from being the main locus of interaction to a supporting role for oral interaction, in line with the evolution of synchronous communication tools over time. Despite these findings, limitations were found, including insufficient data from the initial period. Future avenues of research could explore additional genres within the TTD genre system, investigate the possible migration of genres and analyze the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic consequences of the materialization of genres in chat and vice versa. These new investigations may offer valuable insights for further research into TTD and related linguistic issues.

Keywords: Teletandem; Virtual Exchange; Chat; Genre analysis; Language learning.

Resumo

Este trabalho explora a utilização do chat nas atividades de Teletandem (TTD) (Telles; Vassallo, 2006) no campus da UNESP-SJRP de 2006 a 2020, com foco em possíveis gêneros materializados em chats, em parcerias inglês <> português. Dois principais questionamentos orientaram o estudo: primeiramente, identificar os gêneros materializados nos chats; e, em segundo lugar, examinar como a utilização do chat evoluiu junto com as ferramentas de comunicação síncrona. A pesquisa adotou uma abordagem qualitativa e longitudinal (Wagner et. al, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007) e investigou se gêneros textuais (Bazerman, 1994, 2006; Miller 2012a, 2012b, 2016, 2017; Miller; Shepherd, 2009) emergiram nas interações por chat. Os dados foram coletados a partir de publicações relacionadas ao TTD, incluindo dissertações de mestrado e teses de doutorado, e partir do MulTeC (Lopes, 2019; Aranha; Lopes, 2019). Depois de coletados, os dados foram integrados nas dimensões técnica, ontológica e epistemológica (Ferro, 2021). A análise foi conduzida a partir de eixos temáticos predefinidos, considerando as particularidades dos gêneros textuais identificados e com base nos resultados quantitativos conseguidos pela análise dos dados na ferramenta Voyant Tools®. A análise final revelou indícios da materialização do gênero Sessão Oral de Teletandem Inicial (SOTi) (Rampazzo, 2017). No entanto, esse possível gênero persistiu em outra forma dentro da ferramenta, indicando potencial sobrevivência no novo ambiente. Além disso, observou-se uma mudança na utilização do chat, passando de ser o principal locus de interação para um papel de apoio para interação oral, alinhando-se com a evolução das ferramentas de comunicação síncrona ao longo do tempo. Apesar desses achados, foram encontradas limitações, incluindo dados insuficientes do período inicial. Futuros caminhos de pesquisa podem explorar gêneros adicionais dentro do sistema de gêneros do TTD, investigar a possível migração de gêneros e analisar as consequências sintáticas, semânticas e pragmáticas da materialização de gêneros no chat e vice-versa. Essas novas investigações podem oferecer insights valiosos para investigações adicionais em TTD e assuntos linguísticos relacionados.

Palavras-chave: *Teletandem; Intercâmbios virtuais; Chat; Análise de gênero; Aprendizagem de línguas.*

1. Opening remarks

The evolution of modern communication technologies has profoundly impacted societal organization, cognitive processes, and social interactions. Scholars like Braga (2013) trace this evolution from primal embodied language to digital technologies, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between communication tools and changes in communication itself. Castells (2010) highlights the pivotal role of the alphabet and subsequent developments in enabling cumulative communication.

These advancements, from cave drawings to contemporary digital platforms, have broadened societal communication horizons while imposing limitations on mediums. The Gutenberg press and the internet have further reshaped human behavior, fostering global engagement and cultural exchange. Lévy (1999) and Castells (2010) argue that digital technologies extend beyond linguistic alterations, instigating profound cultural and social implications, leading

to the emergence of "cyberculture". This cyberculture, facilitated by interconnected computer networks, enables horizontal communication irrespective of constraints. Navigating this cyberspace has led to the evolution of novel social interactions, constituting a new societal pattern as posited by Castells (2010) and a shift in our "ecology of signs" according to Lévy (1999).

Within the context of digital communication environments, this study investigates the emergence and evolution of specific genres within the Teletandem (TTD) framework (Telles, Vassallo, 2006) — a telecollaboration environment developed at UNESP in São José do Rio Preto (SJRP), in Brazil. Rooted in principles of language learning, reciprocity, and autonomy, TTD serves as a cost-effective platform connecting learners separated by distance with native speakers for synchronous interactions (Brammerts, 1996).

This exploration primarily focuses on the communicative actions within TTD's chat interface between 2006 and 2015. Its objective is to identify and analyze the emergence of genres within this space and to observe how the usage patterns of the chat feature in TTD correlate with the evolution of synchronous communication tools.

In essence, this study aims to chart the usage patterns of the chat feature within TTD practices, correlating these with the evolution of synchronous communication tools. The analysis of linguistic manifestations in the chat interface intends to unveil any specific genres emerging during this period and relate them to participants' rhetorical actions.

The subsequent sections of this paper will delve into the theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, data analysis, and findings, providing insights into the dynamic nature of communication within digital environments and the emergence of genres within this landscape.

2.   Theoretical background

This section is structured to provide a comprehensive exploration of the evolutionary dynamics between Teletandem (TTD) and technological advancements, with a particular focus on the role of chat as a synchronous communication tool. The first subsection examines the historical trajectory of TTD, highlighting its transformation from non-integrated to integrated institutional practices in response to contextual and technological shifts. Following that, the second

subsection delves into the evolution of chat within the TTD framework, analysing its hybrid communication practices and the implications of technological affordances for genre emergence and adaptation. The third subsection broadens the discussion to encompass hybrid communication practices in the digital sphere, addressing the blending of oral and written modalities. Finally, the fourth subsection focuses on strategies in digital communication, exploring linguistic adaptations and multimodal aspects that shape interactions in online environments.

2.1. Evolutionary trajectories: unveiling the dynamic interplay of Teletandem and Technological Advancements

The continuous evolution of Teletandem (TTD) (Telles; Vassallo, 2006) over the past fifteen years has witnessed notable transformations from its inception. Initially, TTD emerged as non-integrated institutional activities (niiTTD) (Aranha, Cavalari, 2014; Cavalar; Aranha, 2016) at UNESP-SJRP, relying on voluntary participation and basic technological support. However, challenges such as dropouts, scheduling issues, and technological constraints prompted a shift toward integrated institutional TTD (iiTTD) in partnership with the University of Georgia (Aranha, Cavalari, 2014; Cavalar; Aranha, 2016). This transition marked a pivotal shift, integrating TTD sessions into regular class hours, introducing structured language learning experiences, and aligning activities with course syllabi.

This evolution from niiTT to iiTTD underscores the adaptability of TTD practices to contextual and technological influences, offering a more cohesive and pedagogically enriched approach to language learning through telecollaboration.

Moving into the discourse of genres within the social and digital context, Miller's (2023; 2017, 2016, 2012a, 2012b; Miller; Shepherd, 2009) exploration into the New Rhetoric perspective accentuates genres as responsive social actions to situational demands. She emphasizes their dynamic nature, underlining the interaction between stabilizing and disruptive forces in the evolution of online genres. Miller (1994) attributes the emergence of blogs at the turn of the 21st century to *kairós*, an opportune moment where discourse responds to cultural and technological demands.

The shift from technical information sharing to personal reflections in blogs marked a societal transition, leading to increased adoption. This evolution further diversified blogs' functions, integrating them with social media and emphasizing their adaptability to societal

demands and technological advancements. Miller and Shepherd (2009) accentuate the symbiotic relationship between technology, societal demands, and the evolving blogosphere, considering blogs as a versatile medium accommodating diverse rhetorical action driven by various community needs.

The complex relationship between communication mediums and genres is evident in how they influence each other's evolution. Technological advancements and societal needs to prompt the emergence of new genres, challenging the boundaries between core and subgenres. Araújo's (2006) work emphasizes both synchronic and diachronic aspects, highlighting how genres adapt and evolve within digital platforms like chats. The concept of affordances in the digital medium influences genre emergence, and Araújo (2006) draws parallels between species adaptation and genre evolution, considering hybridization as a crucial aspect of genre evolution within changing communication needs.

Costa (2010) further delves into how different supports enable diverse interactions, shaping genres differently across various mediums. The discussion adopts evolutionary models from biological and cultural evolution theories, drawing comparisons between the adaptation and speciation processes in genres within digital spaces.

Continuing the exploration of genres within the TTD environment, researchers have uncovered a network of interrelated genres operating within TTD. This intricate set of genres encompasses tutorials, diaries, questionnaires, textual productions, and Synchronous Online Tandem (TOS) sessions. Aranha's (2016) pioneering investigation revealed recurrent rhetorical situations within TOS sessions, emphasizing shared features and structural regularities among participants. Rampazzo's (2017) expansion on this perspective identified additional rhetorical movements within TOS, highlighting the influence of contextual nuances on these sessions across diverse learning environments.

2.2.   Chat evolution and hybrid communication practices in Teletandem

The exploration of chat, a form of synchronous written communication, has been an intriguing endeavor within the framework of TTD. Araújo's (2006) insights into the emergence and characteristics of chats as part of the digital domain, along with their multimodal nature

combining images, sounds, and writing, have highlighted their prevalence and diverse social functions on the internet. These characteristics encompass various genres materialized within the hybridized zone known as the internet.

Araújo's (2006, Araújo et. al, 2017) categorization of chats, particularly those akin to the personal chats conducted via MSN, brings attention to the dynamic and multimodal nature of these interactions. Despite differing purposes between personal chats and those within TTD encounters, the similarities in participant contact modes and the potential for authentic communication denote a significant parallel.

The inherent hypertextuality prevalent in all chat scenarios reflects the migration of oral genres from outside to within the internet, showcasing that while communicative purposes vary, these situations exist within the online sphere. Hypertext, a semiotic element enabling non-linear reading through nodes, presents two perspectives: one considers all texts as inherently hypertextual due to different reading possibilities and intertextuality, while the other defines hypertextuality as a new form of writing specific to the digital domain.

The interplay between communicative purposes and hypertextuality within chat scenarios underscores the evolution and complexity of these genres. The evolution of communicative purposes within chat usage, leading to the emergence of diverse genres, showcases the dynamic nature of these interactions within the digital sphere.

The amalgamation of speech and writing in virtual environments, according to Marcuschi (2007), involves strategic usage, negotiation, situationality, and dynamism. This transition encompasses both transcription and retextualization processes, where the former involves converting spoken words into written form, while the latter involves a conscious adaptation of content using various textual strategies.

Cavalari's (2012) identification of a third mode of communication, embodying characteristics of both speech and writing but transcending the traditional distinction between the two, particularly in TTD chats, emphasizes the impact of technologies on textual production strategies and associated social practices. This mode, influenced by the hardware used for internet access, introduces new options for communication, altering practices associated with both spoken and written language.

This transformative impact of technology challenges traditional distinctions between orality and literacy, emphasizing the heterogeneity of writing and the emergence of novel textual production strategies unique to the digital environment.

2.3.   Hybrid communication practices in the digital sphere

In exploring digital communication through chat, Cavalari (2012) notes the presence of linguistic characteristics that stem from the recognition of "spoken text in every written text", acknowledging the heterogeneity of writing. Within the digital environment, a distinct mode of communication emerges, differing from traditional speech and writing, creating a unique space that navigates between the modalities.

When genres from non-digital spaces migrate into the digital realm, there's an inherent tension between spoken and written modalities. Even if a genre primarily aligns with one modality outside the internet, its integration into the online space prompts a blending of language use influenced by the digital environment. Cavalari (2009) suggests that the mixture of speech and writing in digital texts results from the hybridization of spoken chat genres originating outside the internet and written chat genres crafted within the digital space, specifically for chatting online.

This hybridization concept is echoed in Xavier and Santos' (2005) exploration of discussion forums. Traditionally considered a form of discourse reliant on the oral modality yet leaning towards the written mode of expression, the electronic evolution of forums presents a broader spatial realm, allowing participation from a diverse audience. The electronic platform empowers users to engage in varied and unexpected discursive actions while preserving the core functions of discussion, reflection, and collective knowledge construction. The authors emphasize that e-forums, with their anonymity and lack of censorship, foster greater freedom of expression and reinforce democratic principles in their virtual domain.

The integration of spoken and written elements within digital communication highlights the dynamic nature of genre adaptation in the online landscape. This adaptation not only involves the migration of genres from non-digital spaces but also encompasses their transformation, hybridization, and evolution in response to the digital environment's affordances and user behavior.

In essence, the digital domain serves as a melting pot for linguistic forms, blending traditional spoken and written genres to create new, hybridized forms that cater to the communicative needs and behaviors of users in online spaces.

2.4.   Strategies in digital communication: adaptations and multimodal aspects

The transition of communication into digital spaces, especially in e-forums and chats, introduces distinct linguistic nuances and adaptations. Xavier and Santos (2005) elaborate on how anonymity and uncensorability in e-forums lead to linguistic relaxation, reflected in colloquial language use, syntax, a lack of careful content treatment, and weak arguments. Participants often type hastily, as evidenced by typing errors and the absence of revision, akin to a face-to-face conversation where contributions are immediate and continuous. This haste underscores the importance of speech-like interaction within the constrained time frame of online discussions.

To bridge the gap between oral and written modes in digital communication, the exploration of "internet language" or "internetês" becomes essential. Leetspeak, as described by Rajagopalan (2013), is seen not merely as a crude abbreviation of standard language but as a reflection of the speed and spontaneity intrinsic to digital communication. Froud (2021) refers to leetspeak as an "anti-language," which serves to create an "us" versus "them" mentality, important for marginalized individuals to form their identities and communities (Froud, 2021). This aligns with Rajagopalan's (2013) view that leetspeak encapsulates the spontaneity, ease, and rapidity inherent in digital communication. He compares this evolution to the emergence of "telegraphese" during the telegraph era, suggesting that leetspeak is a product of the necessity for swift communication within new media, altering language conventions used in traditional writing for adaptation in digital spaces.

Unlike a mere truncation of language, Froud (2021) emphasizes that leetspeak functions as a tool for discussing taboo topics and fostering cultural identity, particularly among marginalized groups (Froud, 2021). This perspective resonates with Rajagopalan's assertion that leetspeak is potentially a new language still under construction by millions of digital users, reflecting the ongoing evolution of language in response to the demands of contemporary communication (Rajagopalan, 2013).

Komesu and Tenani (2009) expand on this by highlighting practices like abbreviations, repetition of letters, elimination of accents, and punctuation alterations as components of "phoneticized writing". They view digital writing not as an entirely new modality but as an amalgamation of social practices of oral and written forms, engaging with the dialogue between the spoken/written and heard/spoken. Abbreviations form a prevalent aspect of internet language, as highlighted by Komesu and Tenani (2009). They expand on this to include the addition or repetition of letters, the elimination of accents, and changes in punctuation as practices characterizing phoneticized writing. The authors perceive internet writing not as a distinct language modality but as an enunciation mode bridging social practices of oral and written forms. The graphical elements on screens, though not lexical components, serve as phonetic representations mirroring speech, aiming to replicate face-to-face interactions. This relationship between speech and writing relies on users' understanding of letter-sound correspondence rather than strict orthographic rules, necessitating adjustments in writing resources to transcribe spoken language into a typically written digital environment.

The graphical elements on screens, while not lexical components of language, serve as phonetic representations akin to speech, aiming to replicate face-to-face interaction situations. This necessitates adjustments in writing resources to capture the essence of spoken language in digital textual forms.

The incorporation of symbols such as emoticons and emojis, as Paiva (2016) asserts, further expands the multimodal nature of digital language. Emojis, in particular, encapsulate human gestures as images, embodying the increasing multimodality prevalent in contemporary language. Paiva (2016) also mentions that these digital adaptations and symbols follow a certain "grammar" or usage order, indicating an evolving structure in digital language. The use of symbols such as emoticons and emojis contributes to interaction development by aiding in expressing emotions, gestures, and conversational attitudes. Paiva (2016) notes that while interactions involve multiple modalities like words, intonation, facial expressions, and gestures, technology has driven language usage to become more informal in digital spaces. This evolution introduces redefined words, new coinages, and various symbols to enrich verbal communication with additional elements.

Emojis, being images of human gestures, alongside the repetition of letters and punctuation marks, contribute to the multimodality of digital language, representing distinct aspects of digital culture. Their interpretations vary across contexts and cultures, becoming integral parts of communication despite limitations on some devices. The usage of emojis has developed a certain "grammar," replacing punctuation in some messaging platforms and following a particular sequence to convey emotions and actions.

Within TTD chats, researchers like Telles and Vassallo (2006) observe that while interaction via instant messenger (IM) can simulate oral modality, distinctions remain as the former involves written text while the latter is spoken. Cavalari (2009, 2012) delves into specific characteristics of TTD chats, noting the influence of technical aspects on data transmission speed, leading to concise phrases and sentence segmentation. The use of abbreviations and the repetition of letters or punctuation marks serve the purpose of creating intimacy and replicating prosodic elements in digital discourse.

Araújo (2006, 2012) asserts that any communicative situation online will inevitably blend oral and written modalities, compensating for the absence of extralinguistic cues found in face-to-face communication. This fusion between spoken and written elements shapes the rhetorical actions of participants, portraying a continual effort to bridge the gap between speech and writing in digital environments.

The adaptation of traditional chat traits from non-digital to digital settings involves an intricate fusion of oral and written modalities, necessitating adjustments to suit the unique affordances of digital mediums for effective communication.

This active participation in its evolution retains elements akin to natural languages, distinguishing it as a language constantly evolving from the grassroots level to accommodate new communication needs and expedite synchronous written communication in digital environments.

The pursuit of intimacy between interlocutors through adaptations in language, such as abbreviation, repetition of letters, and the use of emoticons, becomes evident in digital discourse. These adaptations aim to bridge the gap between synchronous written communication and oral interaction, shaping the rhetorical actions of participants.

Araújo (2006, 2012) highlights the blending of oral and written modalities in internet-based communication, compensating for the absence of extralinguistic cues present in face-to-face interactions. The adaptation of traditional chat genres to suit digital spaces involves maintaining

recurring formal traits while integrating the affordances of the medium to achieve the communicative purposes of online chatting.

Thus, the amalgamation of oral and written elements in synchronous digital communication necessitates language adaptation, combining established traits of non-digital chat genres with the possibilities afforded by digital mediums for effective communication.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology employed in the study, addressing key observations before delving into the methodological aspects.

The focus is to examining regularities in the corpus, analyzing materializations in IM chats from 2006 to 2015, considering the *kairós* of each period. The hypothesis suggested that texts within chats might exhibit recurrent formal and rhetorical substance traits, signifying recurrent rhetorical action — a genre. This approach aimed to discern participants' rhetorical actions and outline chat usage diachronically. The discourse-situation relations during the 2016-2020 period involved analyzing the shift in *kairós* from the first and second periods to the third one, facilitating assertions about participants' social actions based on *kaióos* continuity or discontinuity.

The research's corpus for the initial phase drew from TTD practices at UNESP - SJRP between 2006 and 2011. Manual collection involved reading and identifying chat excerpts from 37 MSc and PhD studies listed on the official project page. Exclusions based on post-2011 data and criteria like non-usage of chat excerpts or absence of English <> Portuguese pairs resulted in 5 selected studies. Noteworthy was the reutilization of data by different researchers, exemplified by three studies (Mesquita, 2008; Cavalari, 2009; Silva, 2010) using the same dataset, necessitating chat textual production reconstruction. Despite not all corpora contributing to the research's sample, all 21 studies with data collected between 2006 and 2011 in UNESP-SJRP partnerships using instant messengers (IM) were employed for contextual insights.

The second phase encapsulated TTD activities from 2012 to 2015, coinciding with the emergence of MulTeC (Lopes, 2019; Aranha; Lopes, 2019). The corpus was built from a structured database, providing a well-organized and expanded dataset. The MulTeC, initiated to save researchers time, encompassed six sets of data, including sessions, questionnaires, diaries, chats,

text production, and consent forms. Selection involved refining data for quality and consent, resulting in a multimodal corpus available for global telecollaboration research.

The third phase navigated TTD activities from 2016 to 2020, marked by technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially aiming for a 10-year-overview, the inclusion of the last four years became imperative for a comprehensive understanding. Learning scenarios provided insights into IM usage, compensating for the absence of chat data in MulTeC. The contextual information, especially from the unique online execution during 2020, contributes to inferring the *kairós* of this period in relation to the chat study, acknowledging the evolving telecollaborative environment.

The analysis procedure integrates a comprehensive approach focusing on recurrent formal traits, rhetorical substance, and rhetorical action, influenced by the Theory of Genre Analysis in New Rhetoric (Miller, 2012) and emphasizing diachronic observations within the TTD context.

Given the limitations and challenges in data collection during the initial phase, text reconstruction efforts were undertaken, primarily relying on data reuse and rebuilding text excerpts to maximize the available textual productions for analysis. This methodological approach sought to ensure a substantial dataset representing each period of TTD activities.

The subsequent analysis phase aims to discern recurrent formal and rhetorical traits within the corpus, indicative of potentially recurring genres emerging from chat interactions during TTD practices. The identification of these genres signifies discerning participants' rhetorical actions and the evolution of chat usage over time.

Through this methodological lens, the research strives to elucidate the rhetorical actions and communicative purposes underpinning TTD participants' chat usage, aligning with the chosen theoretical background and addressing the research questions which have been refined through the study's progression.

The initial phase of TTD interactions, primarily conducted via MSN Live Messenger, involved Brazilian and American students engaging in chat-only interactions. Despite technical challenges leading to incomplete recordings and a limited number of sessions, this phase highlighted the researchers' struggle with data collection within this domain, paving the way for further similar research .

The data analysis strategies derive inspiration from various scholars' works, emphasizing the interconnection of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in defining genres within their usage

environments (Bazerman, 2006; Miller, 1994; Swales, 1990). The focus on identifying recurring formal traits, substance, and rhetorical actions aims to unveil the evolution and typified actions of participants in the TTD environment through chat materializations.

The utilization of Voyant Tools® for identifying recurring traits aligns with the comprehensive analysis of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics within chat excerpts, enabling discussions on typified rhetorical actions. This methodology permits a detailed exploration of how chat usage evolved across different TTD periods.

4. Discussion and data analysis

The overarching aim of this work revolves around mapping the usage of chats within the TTD environment, emphasizing the textual materialization by participants across various TTD periods. The discussion is rooted in New Rhetoric genre analysis (Miller, 2014, Bazerman, 2006), highlighting the interconnected nature of formal traits, rhetorical substance, and pragmatic actions within the identified genres.

The meticulous analysis of recurring formal traits and rhetorical substances aims to unveil the typified actions of TTD participants, enabling the identification of materialized genres within chats. By tracing these genres' evolution across different periods, the research aims to evaluate the nuanced usage of chats within the TTD context. This exploration of the initial phase of TTD at UNESP-SJRP provides a rich understanding of the challenges and developmental strides within the technological landscape (Telles, 2009, Silva, 2012).

In the first period (2006 – 2011), the emergence of TTD at UNESP-SJRP coincided with a transformative technological era worldwide. Technological milestones, including the advent of social media platforms like X (former Twitter), iPhone's launch, and the rise of Google Chrome, characterized this period. However, within TTD, the initial phase was marked by experimental endeavors and technological novelties.

Most participants hailed from the Language program and underwent orientation sessions to familiarize themselves with tandem learning and project guidelines. Supervised by mediators, discussions among them centered on challenges and reflection on their mediation experiences, while Brazilian participants provided reflective diaries, serving as crucial data sources.

Despite the innovative nature of TTD, challenges abounded. Establishing and sustaining partnerships proved difficult, compounded by technological limitations and disparate physical session locations. Moreover, Brazil witnessed a surge in household Internet access during this period, although digital literacy remained limited.

During this time, MSN (later Windows Live Messenger) was the primary medium for TTD sessions. Researchers encountered issues with different IMs, such as compatibility problems, unreliable recording software, and varying participant technology, leading to a mix of application usage.

Partnerships were often conducted from cybercafés or internet cafés, where technology availability was uncertain. Even with new machines installed at the Teletandem Laboratory, challenges persisted in partnership establishment and internet access, affecting simultaneous resource usage and resulting in predominantly chat-based communication.

The predominant reliance on chat-based communication within sessions underscores the technological limitations and partnership inconsistencies faced during this period. Despite the availability of multimodal resources, technological challenges, slow internet speeds, and decentralized locations, communication is largely limited to chat exchanges.

Thus, the *kairós* of this initial phase was marked by a slow exploration of technological innovations in Brazil. Teletandem, yet to gain widespread popularity, faced infrastructure challenges and inconsistent partnerships, largely relying on volunteer students from the Languages program due to their proximity to project facilitators.

This historical context profoundly shaped the nature of chat interactions, reflecting the challenges and discoveries encountered during this pivotal phase of TTD at UNESP-SJRP. The initial period's contextual intricacies, technological limitations, and their influence on chat-based communication highlight the dynamic interplay between technological evolution and TTD's developmental stages.

The analysis of chat materialization from 2006 and 2007 reveals intriguing insights into the evolving patterns within Teletandem sessions. Despite disparities in interaction numbers between 2006 (12 interactions) and 2007 (1 interaction), the chat materialization comprised a significant volume of text, exhibiting recurrent units in both Portuguese and English.

The most recurring units in 2006 included common conversational markers like "I," "ok," "you," and "ah," whereas 2007 showcased words like "happy," "new," and "year" in addition to

Portuguese terms like "acho" and "vc." By examining the context around these recurring words, a rhetorical substance emerges. For instance, the frequent use of "I" in discussions aimed at understanding word meanings and expressions displays a pedagogical focus on learning foreign language vocabulary.

The compilation suggests that the development of the initial Teletandem Oral Session (iTOS) (Rampazzo, 2017) genre primarily occurred in the first interaction, emphasizing communication synchronization through chat. However, sessions without webcam use might have displayed lower dynamism, as per Telles (2009).

Despite the smaller number of excerpts from 2007, similar linguistic and rhetorical patterns persisted, showcasing a continuation of chat-based communication within the Teletandem framework.

The subsequent phase, the second period (2012 – 2015), ushered in a systematic integration of activities within language learning classes, marking a significant shift in the approach. This phase witnessed a more structured integration of activities within language classes, leading to a database and ultimately the creation of MulTeC (Lopes, 2019, Aranha; Lopes, 2019), facilitating a more comprehensive analysis due to the enriched metadata.

The period involved 150 partnerships and engaged 300 Brazilian and American learners, equally serving Language and Translation course students at UNESP-SJRP and the University of Georgia (UGA), indicative of improved partnership maintenance and data collection. Classes in Brazil and the United States of America underwent tutorials and guidance, enabling structured sessions, reflective diaries, questionnaires, and regular mediation sessions, fostering improved engagement and data acquisition (Ferro 2021).

The evolution from initial experimental stages to structured integration in the second period underscores the maturation and refinement of Teletandem practices, leading to more extensive data collection and enhanced pedagogical support.

The examination of recurrent units in chat materializations from different years not only sheds light on evolving linguistic patterns but also highlights the evolving pedagogical focus within Teletandem interactions. This transition to a more structured approach in the subsequent period signifies the maturation and optimization of the Teletandem framework for more effective language learning experiences.

The exploration into the third period of Teletandem (2016 – 2020) unveils significant changes, highlighted by increased outreach, partnerships with foreign universities, and a growing interest in TTD among students from various courses at UNESP-SJRP.

The period witnessed an increase in student engagement, with more individuals from various courses expressing interest in TTD. The utilization of social media platforms like Facebook for enrollment showcased the burgeoning recognition and demand for TTD within the campus community. Despite persistent technological challenges, including lack of familiarity with the TTD process itself, sessions remained unchanged in their broader context (Ferro, 2021). Efforts to mitigate issues, such as the acquisition of new computers and software licenses, indicate an ongoing struggle to adapt to evolving technological demands.

The growing internet usage and tool familiarity among Teletandem Community (TC) (Rampazzo; Aranha, 2019; Silva, 2012) members might imply increased digital literacy, fostering greater peer autonomy in navigating technological hurdles. Strategies like creating instructional videos demonstrate a concerted effort to enhance TC members' proficiency. The transition to remote formats during the pandemic in 2020 brought about changes in communication dynamics, shifting towards instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp for improved and immediate contact between participants, professors, and mediators.

This period highlights the intricate interplay between technological complexity, community development, and evolving rhetorical actions, encapsulated in various genres of communication within the TTD environment. The adaptation to new situational demands through diverse genres and IM platforms underscores the dynamic nature of TTD interactions.

The observations from this period open avenues for deeper exploration, especially concerning the evolving genres within the TTD environment. The data collected during these years paves the way for expanded research possibilities, offering insights into the ever-evolving landscape of TTD practices and interactions (Ferro, 2021).

The analysis witnesses the progression of TTD through its various phases, each marked by distinct advancements, challenges, and adaptations. The emphasis on digital literacy, technological adaptation, and the responsiveness of participants to evolving communication tools adds depth to the understanding of how TTD has evolved over time. The analysis and examination of the synchronous communication tools reveal significant insights into the dynamic nature of genre evolution and adaptation within this context.

The findings suggest a shift in the usage of chat from being the primary locus of a genre during the initial phase, where oral synchronous communication was not feasible, to a supportive role for oral interaction. This transition reflects not just technological advancements, but also how participants adapted their communicative strategies within the TTD environment.

4.1. Did the genre die?

Throughout this study, the propositions and characterizations of genres as social actions have been discussed, drawing on Susan Miller's perspective from New Rhetoric, especially highlighted in Miller (2012a). One of these propositions posits that genres are not immutable but evolve, potentially generating new genres that might, in turn, create further new genres, remain unchanged, or even cease to exist in a new environment. I suggested that the evolution proposed by Miller (2012a, 2012b, 2016, 2017) and by Miller and Shepherd (2009) should be seen as an evolution through speciation. This evolutionary process considers the possibility of populations of different species interbreeding in hybridization zones. Similarly, the internet allows various genres from external sources to intermix in unprecedented ways, some of which may only exist in digital environments.

Upon analyzing the materializations in the TTD chat environment from the selected data for this research, it can be inferred that in the first period, there might have been the materialization of a genre within this synchronous communication tool. The results suggest these could be materializations of iTOS, occurring in chats during this period due to the inability to produce them in the video conference. This inference is drawn because during the first period, rhetorical movements consistent with the findings of Aranha (2016) and Rampazzo (2017) within the first fifteen minutes of iTOS were identified.

While these movements in the chat materializations of the first period might have occurred well after the initial fifteen minutes of interaction, their presence supports the argument that the iTOS is a genre. However, there is still insufficient evidence to affirm that all other TOS also constitute genres and, likewise, whether these genres migrated from outside the TTD environment to within it.

Considering a diachronic analysis is necessary to verify the speciation of a genre, even if the materializations of the first period could be considered a genre, there seems to be no evolution

of it into the second analyzed TTD period, when synchronous communication occurred orally through the IM's video conferencing tool. This is because in the second period, recurring formal features mainly comprised words related to the TOS discussions and/or link sharing, aiming to aid partners in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. These outcomes support the claims of Miller (2012a) and Miller and Shepherd (2009) regarding the confusion between the genre and the medium, which typically occurs when new media are beginning to be used. Although it was not possible to examine chat materializations of the third period, considering the continuation of general features from the second *kairós* to the third, materializations in the third period might be akin to the second, suggesting no genre materialization in the third period either. Even though 2020 was an atypical year bringing changes worldwide, synchronous communications via video conference increased, implying that written synchronous communication tools might have retained their supportive function for oral interaction.

Therefore, while one cannot assert the evolution of a genre within the chats based on the data analyzed in this study, there to be a shift in the materialization of a genre from the written chat resource to the video conference, aligning with the change in the synchronization of communication from one resource to another (Ferro, 2021). Hence, it can be affirmed that the genre survives within the TTD genre system, potentially manifesting in another IM resource. Further research is necessary to investigate, for instance, the movement of this genre between chat and video conferencing and vice versa. Even when the TOS is conducted through video conferencing, if there are technological issues, the genre realized through it slides back to the chat, maintaining synchronization albeit in a written form. In this return, however, the TOS would be supported by two resources simultaneously, potentially characterizing a new hybridization zone where new changes in the genre could occur.

What can be asserted through this study, however, is that chats are tools that support various communicative purposes, demanding linguistic adaptations native to the affordances of digital media, particularly the internet.

Final remarks

This study delved into the utilization of chat in TTD activities at the UNESP-SJRP campus from 2006 to 2020, with a specific focus on identifying potential genres materialized within English

<> Portuguese partnerships. Initially, the analysis uncovered indications of the iTOS genre materializing in the first period, aligning with prior research findings. However, this genre did not transition to the second period due to advancements in synchronous communication tools. Nonetheless, it persisted in another form within the TTD environment, suggesting its potential survival in the new technological landscape.

Moreover, a notable shift was observed in the usage of the chat, where it transitioned from being the primary locus of interaction to a supportive role for oral communication. This evolution coincided with advancements in synchronous communication tools over time. Chat emerged as a crucial support for oral interaction, particularly during periods when video conferencing was not fully operational. However, with the simultaneous usage of all available resources, video conferencing took center stage in facilitating synchronous interaction, while chat assumed a supplementary role.

These findings underscore the multifaceted role of chats in facilitating synchronous communication within TTD activities. Despite technological advancements leading to changes in communication dynamics, the chat remained a vital resource for maintaining communicational synchrony, particularly during periods when other mediums were not fully functional. However, the study's limitations, such as insufficient data from the initial period points towards areas for future research and exploration.

Future research endeavors could include investigating the potential migration of genres within TTD activities, exploring the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic implications of genre interactions within chat and other mediums. By addressing these avenues, scholars can further deepen our understanding of TTD practices and their evolving nature in response to technological advancements and socio-cultural shifts.

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