

ONLINE PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING: A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE

APRENDIZAGEM DE LÍNGUAS BASEADA EM PROJETOS NA MODALIDADE A DISTÂNCIA: UMA EXPERIÊNCIA COLABORATIVA

APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS BASADA EN PROYECTOS EN LÍNEA: UNA EXPERIENCIA COLABORATIVA



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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to share a collaborative experience between two teachers in the conception and implementation of a Project-Based Language Learning proposal. The initiative was developed in a distance learning format and involved students of English and Portuguese as foreign languages from three universities, one Brazilian and two American, culminating in the production of a bilingual e-book on social justice. The process was documented through oral narratives recorded by the teachers after synchronous meetings, reflecting on their experiences. The path taken for the proposal's development and the resources used are presented. In order to contribute to pedagogical initiatives that integrate technology and active methodologies, the successes achieved and challenges faced throughout the process are discussed. Collaboration among teachers is highlighted as a possibility to deal with the excessive time and dedication required in the conception and implementation of high-quality projects.

KEYWORDS: Project-based Language Learning. Active Methodologies. Technologies. Teaching Experiences.

RESUMO: Este trabalho visa compartilhar uma experiência colaborativa entre duas professoras na concepção e execução de uma proposta de Aprendizagem de Línguas Baseada em Projetos. A iniciativa foi desenvolvida na modalidade a distância e envolveu estudantes de inglês e português como línguas estrangeiras de três universidades, uma brasileira e duas estadunidenses, resultando na produção de um e-book bilingue sobre justiça social. O processo foi documentado por meio de narrativas orais gravadas pelas professoras após os encontros síncronos, refletindo sobre suas experiências. São apresentados o percurso seguido para a elaboração da proposta, bem como os recursos utilizados. Com o intuito de contribuir com as iniciativas pedagógicas que integram tecnologia e metodologias ativas são discutidos os sucessos obtidos e desafios enfrentados ao longo do processo. A colaboração entre professores é apontada como possibilidade para lidar com a carga excessiva de tempo e dedicação exigidos na concepção e implementação de projetos de alta qualidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Aprendizagem de Línguas Baseada em Projetos. Metodologias Ativas. Tecnologias. Experiências de Ensino.

RESUMEN: Este trabajo tiene como objetivo compartir una experiencia colaborativa entre dos profesoras en la concepción y ejecución de una propuesta de Aprendizaje de Lenguas Basada en Proyectos. La iniciativa fue desarrollada en modalidad a distancia e involucró a estudiantes de inglés y portugués como lenguas extranjeras de tres universidades, una brasileña y dos estadounidenses, culminando en la producción de un e-book bilingüe sobre justicia social. El proceso fue documentado mediante narrativas orales grabadas por las profesoras, reflexionando sobre sus experiencias. Se presentan el camino seguido para la elaboración de la propuesta, así como los recursos utilizados. Con el objetivo de contribuir a las iniciativas pedagógicas que integran tecnología y metodologías activas, se discuten los éxitos obtenidos y los desafíos enfrentados a lo largo del proceso. La colaboración entre profesores se señala como una posibilidad para abordar la carga excesiva de tiempo y dedicación requeridos en proyectos de alta calidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Aprendizaje de Idiomas Basado en Proyectos. Metodologías Activas. Tecnologías. Experiencias de Enseñanza.

Introduction

Striving to meet the demands of a connected contemporary society, active learning methodologies encourage the practical application of knowledge, foster creativity, collaboration, and proactivity (Morán, 2015). Integrating these methodologies with technology enhances the learning experience by allowing for the "integration of all spaces and times" and the consequent expansion of the classroom, symbiotically interlinking the physical and digital worlds (Morán, 2015, p. 16). To achieve these goals, teachers need to transcend traditional teaching approaches to effectively grant students a leading role.

With the aim of contributing to pedagogical initiatives that integrate technology and active methodologies, this work presents a collaborative experience between two teachers in the design and implementation of a Project-Based Learning proposal for language teaching conducted remotely. The initiative involved students of English and Portuguese as foreign languages from three universities - one Brazilian and two American, resulting in the production of a bilingual e-book on social justice.

The ultimate goal is to share the journey experienced by the teachers, including the resources used and, based on their experiences reported in narratives, analyze the successes achieved and the challenges faced throughout the process, in order to provide teachers and researchers interested in the topic with insights and guidance for future actions.

A brief review of Project-Based Learning and Project-Based Language Learning is presented to contextualize this discussion, followed by a description of the context and participants. Finally, some implications of the study for language teaching and learning are pointed out.

Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is not a recent concept in the field of education. According to Alda (2018) and Handrianto and Radman (2018), this pedagogical proposal was developed by William Kilpatrick in 1918, based on experiential, hands-on learning advocated by Dewey, and has traditionally been used in technical fields. Handrianto and Radman (2018, p. 11, our translation) explain that teaching methodologies based on projects are founded on "constructivist theory, especially social constructivism, which encourages collaboration among students and learning within the community".

It is important to distinguish between 'a project' and the teaching methodology 'Project-Based Learning' (hereinafter referred to as PBL). Larmer and Mergendoller (2015, p. 1 apud Alda, 2018, p. 125, our translation) illustrate this difference by describing PBL as "the main course, not the dessert." Larmer (2018) uses the example of a 'dessert project' to describe situations where content is primarily taught in a traditional manner, and at the end of a teaching unit, a project is assigned to students, such as models or posters. Unlike 'dessert projects', where students often work independently, frequently at home, without an authentic purpose, PBL is a student-centered pedagogy that empowers students to make decisions and play an active role in knowledge construction. Learning occurs in practice, under the supervision of a teacher, primarily during class time, involving authenticity, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking.

Larmer (2018) acknowledges that 'dessert projects' have their validity, a view also shared by Alda (2018). However, as the researcher warns, "In the development of projects as simple products, the student engages only with a part of the investigation: the questioning, planning, and research come from the teacher, and from there, the students create the products" (Alda, 2018, p. 126, our translation). On the other hand, in a project based on PBL, "the student becomes involved in the process from the beginning, actively participating in the stages of questioning, planning, research, creation, refinement, and presentation (Thomas, 2000)" (Alda, 2018, p. 126).

By seeking to minimize the artificiality of the classroom and bringing the school closer to the real world, PBL can produce excellent results if well-conducted. Otherwise, there is a risk that many activities and tasks may be incorrectly classified as projects, or that projects may fail due to mismanagement by unprepared teachers. This can lead to frustration, wasted time, and discrediting the potential of Project-Based Learning (PBL).

PBL works – *Buck Institute for Education*², although focused on the U.S. educational scene, offers a range of resources to help teachers understand and design projects. Among these, a summary, based on the work of Larmer and Mergendoller (2015), outlines the seven essential elements for a project to be considered high quality, meaning it has a good chance of success³:

² Available at: <https://www.pblworks.org/>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

³ Available at: <https://www.pblworks.org/blog/gold-standard-pbl-essential-project-design-elements>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

- **Challenging Problem or Question:** A problem to investigate and solve, or a question to explore and answer is at the heart of the project. Students are not just acquiring knowledge to memorize; they learn because they have a real need to understand something in order to use that knowledge to solve a problem or answer a question that genuinely intrigues them.
- **Sustained Inquiry:** Investigating information is a more active and deeper process than just looking up information in a book or website. The inquiry process takes time, which is why a project spans more than just a few days. Good projects incorporate various ways of collecting and processing information, including, in addition to traditional methodologies, real-world processes such as field interviews with experts, service providers, and users to ascertain, for example, the real need and/or target audience for a product to be developed.
- **Authenticity:** Authenticity refers to how much the learning relates to the real world. A project can gain authenticity in several ways: the context can be genuine, situated outside the traditional boundaries of the classroom; it may incorporate real-world processes, tools, and tasks; or it may have a tangible impact on the lives of members of the school and/or community. Moreover, authenticity can manifest in the form of a product that effectively meets the needs of a specific group.
- **Student Voice and Choice:** Giving students a "voice" means allowing them the opportunity to express their own opinions in their way, rather than in the way they think the teacher wants. When students realize that their voices will be heard, a sense of authorship develops. Students can take control of various aspects of the project, discussing and deciding on the tools they will use, the roles they will assume, and the products they will create. More experienced students may even choose the theme and nature of the project.
- **Reflection:** Learning occurs through reflection on experience. Thus, throughout the development of the project, students and teachers should reflect on what they are learning, how they are learning, and why they are learning. This reflective exercise can occur informally, through classroom conversations, or more formally as an integral part of the project tasks, involving presentations, journals, and scheduled formative assessments.
- **Critique and Revision:** Quality work is achieved through constructive feedback, where students evaluate the outcomes of their own learning. This process can be conducted in

various ways: peer assessment and discussion, rubrics, checklists, and protocols. It can also occur outside the classroom, through authentic feedback from experts, for example.

- **Public Product:** There are three reasons for creating a public and tangible product. The first is related to the motivation involved in producing something that will be meaningful to a real audience, not just to classmates and the teacher. The second pertains to the social dimension of learning, which becomes more significant as, by creating and sharing a product with an audience, students open up their own learning for discussion, impacting the classroom and school culture and fostering the creation of a learning community, where students and teachers discuss what is being learned, how, what performance standards are acceptable, and how students' performances can be improved. Finally, it serves as an effective way of communicating with parents, the local community, and the world about what PBL is and what it can do for students.

Regarding pedagogical practices, Larmer (2018) explains that one of the biggest challenges for teachers transitioning from traditional practices to Project-Based Learning (PBL) is relinquishing control over the classroom and instruction. However, this does not mean that the teacher stops teaching; rather, they move away from the central position, and "many traditional practices remain but are reinterpreted within the context of a project."

Due to its characteristics, PBL is particularly interesting for language teaching and learning, as outlined below.

Project-Based Language Learning

Considering the application of PBL to language instruction, since 2015, the *National Foreign Language Resource Center* (NFLRC) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa has been creating and providing a variety of resources for teachers interested in incorporating what they call *Project-Based Language Learning*)⁴, into their classrooms, defined as:

A transformative learning experience designed to engage language students with real-world problems and meaningful use of the target language through the creation of products that have an authentic purpose and are shared with an audience beyond the instructional setting.

⁴Available at: <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/pbll/>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

The project design proposed by the NFLRC is based on materials such as ‘*Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements*’⁵ and ‘*High Quality Project Based Learning (HQPBL)*’⁶, both used by regular schools in the United States to offer a common pedagogical model for project design across various subjects, creating opportunities for collaborative work between language teachers and teachers of other disciplines.

The focus on language is what differentiates Project-Based Language Learning (hereafter referred to as PBLL). According to Montgomery (2018), to incorporate the language element into PBL, it is necessary to emphasize three components, namely:

- Communication (proficiency): Creating meaningful and interpretive communication opportunities in the target language, where students seek and acquire the information they need through ongoing investigation in the target language.
- Culture and Comparisons (pragmatics and interculturality): These elements concern the ability to think about interculturality and to develop the pragmatic skills necessary to successfully navigate interactions in the target language.
- Content and Communities (21st-century skills and competencies⁷): These elements are already part of quality projects but need to be emphasized in the context of language teaching because it is cultural authenticity that gives students the opportunity to begin developing intercultural skills.

Montgomery (2018) argues that Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) is a very powerful approach to language teaching because it integrates all these aspects related to linguistic proficiency in a clear and practical way. For example, she mentions that it is very difficult to develop high levels of linguistic proficiency when students do not have a broad knowledge of content from other disciplines and, therefore, cannot discuss world issues comprehensively, i.e., when they lack critical thinking skills. Additionally, opportunities for collaboration are necessary to use the language effectively. According to her, PBLL helps teachers organize teaching by bringing together all these elements that are crucial for the

⁵Available at: <https://www.pblworks.org/blog/gold-standard-pbl-essential-project-design-elements>. Accessed in: December 07, 2023.

⁶ Available at: <https://hqpbl.org/>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

⁷ On skills and competences for the 21st century see TRILLING; FADEL (2009).

development of linguistic proficiency: intercultural competence, content knowledge, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Project planning for language teaching and following high-quality project requirements can be very challenging, especially when carried out individually. To assist teachers in this process, the aforementioned NFLRC developed a blueprint with guiding questions, namely: problem formulation, anticipation of linguistic and logistical needs, identification of community partners and ways to reach them, selection of authentic materials, definition of learning outcomes, and development of instructional tasks and assessment processes that promote these outcomes. On the NFLRC website, two versions are available. A 'lite' version (PBL Project Design Overview) is recommended as ideal for teachers who want to outline the general idea for a project, and a detailed version (*PBL Project Blueprint*)⁸, for those ready to undertake a comprehensive and detailed planning of a project. This was the model used by the teachers, which will be outlined below, after the description of the context and participants.

Context and Participants

The project was developed within the framework of a Program for Teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language at the Federal University of São João del Rei (UFSJ), in partnership with the Universities of Georgia (UGA) and Texas (UT). As part of the Program, exchange students take five Portuguese learning courses during the first semester, with varied focuses (oral comprehension and production, culture of Minas Gerais and cultural identity, grammatical elements of language use, media, society and culture, and social projects), in addition to a course in their academic areas. In the second semester, they undertake internships in their areas of interest in various parts of Brazil.

In the 2021 edition, the year this research was conducted, the 'social projects' unit was replaced by the 'PBL' (*Project-Based Language Learning*) unit in accordance with the Program's guidelines, which encouraged the adoption of this approach to meet its objectives: the development of diverse, global, and connected professionals. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, classes were held remotely via the Zoom platform from September to December, aligning with the academic calendar of UFSJ.

⁸ Available at: <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/pbl/>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

Two professors worked together to organize the course: the professor responsible for the discipline (hereafter referred to as P1), who managed and implemented the project with the students, and the collaborating professor (hereafter referred to as PC), who participated in the project's design and attended the classes, documenting the process through oral narratives recorded after the classes as part of her postdoctoral research.

Project Description

The inspiration for the project came from a previous endeavor involving teaching Portuguese to American students at an elementary school in Hawaii⁹. As this was a novel initiative in the Program, and additionally in a remote format, it was deemed more prudent to start from a successful idea that had been implemented before.

The project was titled '*The ABCs of Social Justice*' and aimed to create a bilingual e-book about social justice movements seeking to change the realities of their communities in the USA and Brazil¹⁰.

Management was conducted through weekly meetings with students, lasting 1 hour and 15 minutes, via the Zoom platform. Over the course of one academic semester (09/22/2021 to 12/01/2021), 10 synchronous meetings were held. Asynchronous activities and tasks were organized and executed through Google Classroom, and the book was created using the Book Creator app. During the project's development, P1 and PC met weekly for approximately 1 hour via Zoom to discuss class planning and the steps necessary to execute the final product.

In the 2021 edition, nine American students were enrolled in the Program. Nine students from the UFSJ's English Language and Literature course were invited to participate in the project to facilitate intercultural exchanges. These students were selected by PC, who used as criteria students interested in teaching Portuguese as a foreign language and who had advanced English proficiency, given the project's bilingual nature.

An activity was conducted during the second synchronous meeting to form the pairs, consisting of one Brazilian and one American student. On this occasion, the learners interacted in separate breakout rooms, sharing their tastes, interests, and ideas. The students were then

⁹ Available at: <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/pebbles/prototype/doc/49/>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/pebbles/prototype/doc/234/>. Accessed in: 07 Dec. 2023.

grouped based on their affinities. Once formed, each pair worked together throughout the entire semester, both synchronously and asynchronously.

The book was structured around keywords or concepts, using each letter of the alphabet to narrate the story of a person, movement, or institution that impacts the local or global community. Through a draw, the 26 letters of the alphabet were distributed among the pairs, with 8 pairs responsible for 3 letters and 1 pair for 2 letters.

The students were tasked with selecting Brazilian and American individuals, movements, and/or institutions representing their local communities or countries. Each pair was required to include at least one oral interview as part of the information-gathering process, giving students the opportunity to interact in the target language with a community member outside the school environment. Thus, a Brazilian could interview an American, and vice versa. The partner responsible for conducting the interview should be present to provide linguistic support if necessary. The interviews had to be recorded, with the interviewee's written consent, for which informed consent forms were made available.

Regarding the content, each pair had to write, for each letter, a text in both Portuguese and English (the same text in both languages), ranging from 50 to 100 words, and each of these texts had to be accompanied by an audiovisual element (audio, video, etc.), in addition to the social media and websites of the movement. The pair also had to decide on the illustrations and/or photos to be included in the texts they authored.

The book creation process involved several stages: research, interviews, writing of the texts, visual organization, layout, review, and editing, culminating in its pre-launch on 12/01/2021 through a Zoom conference, with the participation of all students, Brazilian and American, as well as teachers and coordinators of the Program. Subsequently, the 2022 edition students reviewed and edited the book, enhancing its visual quality and readability¹¹.

¹¹ The book is available at:
<https://read.bookcreator.com/aU1cVVXsxfM0R3m70JcNDTyc8UM2/kfv9CYUBQZyx5hjvzoLKxA>.

Distance ALBP: Successes and Challenges

Undoubtedly, a major potential of technology is its ability to transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. The realization of a project involving students and teachers from different cities, states, and time zones across Brazil and the United States was made possible only through technological mediation.

The Zoom video conferencing platform offers a variety of features that can energize a class, such as the ability to group students into simultaneous breakout rooms, chat, screen sharing, polling, reactions, and many more. However, the dynamism does not reside in the features themselves, but in the teachers' ability to use them effectively and integrate them meaningfully into the teaching process, in order to promote active student participation.

The virtual environment demands mastery of digital tools, presenting a challenge even for teachers with technological skills, as was the case with Professor 1 (P1, our translation). The achievement of the objectives of one of the classes, for example, was compromised due to technical issues, impacting student behavior, as evidenced in her report:

(...) I was switching the pairs, and we spent about 20 minutes. It was an activity planned for 10 minutes, but the technical aspect of switching the pairs, sending out the questions and all, was more challenging than I anticipated. So, (...) I just let it go. And also because it bore good fruit. So, I let them stay a little longer, so we spent about 20 minutes on this. Uh, I think about 20 to 30 minutes on this activity; I couldn't really keep good track. I was trying to enter 1 minute for each of the questions and switch the pairs, but I couldn't manage to switch the pairs well because of the technical issues themselves.

This difficulty was also perceived by Professor Collaborator (PC, our translation), while observing:

(...) I noticed she was very concerned about, organizing the class while managing the technological aspect, right, of Breakout rooms, which she wanted to showcase. (...) I think she used many different tools in this class. (...) So I felt she got a bit lost, I found her a bit anxious about these tools, right? (...) Because then what it caused, when she, as she got a bit lost with what she had to do, the students end up being a bit lost too. Since these are virtual classes, what do the students do? They pick up their phones, some stood up, others turned off their cameras (...).

Despite the detailed planning and prior knowledge of the tool, in this case, the use of breakout rooms, the execution of the activity proved more challenging than initially anticipated.

In any environment, whether virtual or in-person, this experience highlights the impact of the situated teaching context on teaching practices. In school dynamics, immediate contextual conditions override the intentions and projections of teachers, who must make their decisions in the here and now.

Regarding skills with technological resources, monitoring tasks and activities was carried out through Google Classroom, a platform with which P1 faced challenges, according to her assessment:

(...) The pressure came more from the emails that were sent from Google Classroom, which I think helped a lot (...), but I didn't know how to use the tool very well. Even the Kanban¹² board I made, I didn't know. I think I could have used it better.

As mentioned, P1 is quite familiar with technologies. Her difficulty did not lie in using the tools themselves but in guiding students to understand them as not only a project management instrument but essentially as a means of monitoring the learning process.

Regarding the interaction between individuals, teachers, and students, and among the students themselves, distance education presents characteristic challenges, notably due to the absence of body language as a means of communication and the propensity for distractions. Even if the teacher is aware of these challenges and recognizes the diversity of students' learning styles, as was the case with P1, disinterest is a concerning factor in the teacher-student relationship, as she reported:

(...) I felt that [student's name] was very distracted because he was certainly chatting with someone else, maybe about some gossip; he must be one of those more dynamic students who, during computer-based classes, has several tabs open at once. It doesn't mean that he wasn't paying attention, but I think it's somewhat disrespectful to make it so obvious that you're engaged in something else, you know, showing facial expressions as if he was reading and discussing something unrelated, laughing about something that had nothing to do with the class, which is quite distracting. At least for me, it distracts me a bit, and I become concerned about bringing that student's attention back to what is happening here. Although we know that a student is not fully there 100% of the time, it still bothered me.

Maintaining engagement and interest throughout the project is one of the challenges of Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL), especially since this approach respects the diversity

¹² Kanban Board is a visual work management tool aimed at maximizing project effectiveness. The teacher used the Padlet tool to create the board.

of students' abilities and learning styles. In the second phase of the project, which focused on information processing, the students, particularly the American ones, began to show signs of discouragement, to which the teachers attributed a series of reasons, which will be discussed further.

In the virtual environment, turning off the cameras signaled this lack of interest, as described by P1:

But I found it odd because, curiously, in today's class, three or four students had their cameras turned off, something they usually never did. (...) In this class, some students had their cameras off the entire time. (...) For example, [student's name] joined the class with her camera on, saw that others had theirs off, and turned hers off, too.

More evidently, the students' disinterest was linked to periods of lecture-driven classes, as P1 reports:

(...) Maybe also because the class was a bit more centered on me, I don't know, so they felt more comfortable to just turn off their cameras since they're not participating much, you know. So I think that's more or less why they act this way, it's a matter of virtual class comfort, being able to relax, perhaps do something else while attending the class.

And PC agrees:

(...) Several students with their cameras off make it difficult to gauge reactions. Only when they respond in chat or audio. (...) too much focus on the teacher. Little student participation. [Teacher's Name] explains more than enabling students to see/understand the differences between the texts.

However, underlying contextual conditions may help explain the disinterest shown by some students. One such condition relates to reconciling institutional demands, meeting deadlines, and addressing students' interests. One characteristic of successful projects, which ensures their authenticity, is the alignment of the problem or question with the student's interests and concerns. Given the pioneering nature of this initiative within the Program, along with time pressures, the motivating problem as well as the idea for the final product were presented to the students in advance, which ultimately deprived them of making a genuine choice. They showed interest in the topic because it related to a socially relevant issue and were able to make their choices throughout the process. However, the teachers and the Program's management made the initial choice.

Regarding this, it is important to consider that granting students voice and autonomy to discuss and determine the tools to be used, the roles to be played, and the products to be created, while respecting and welcoming their ideas, all within a limited time frame and with set deadlines, requires the teacher to have not only time management skills but, above all, emotional sensitivity. Although it is understood that the focus of Project-Based Language Learning should be on the process, in the end, a quality product must be delivered, which certainly triggers pressures that need to be considered in project design.

Active educational approaches require proactivity not only from teachers but also from learners. Like some teachers, certain learners also face challenges in abandoning traditional practices and adopting a more active stance. One of the foundations of quality projects is the creation of a learning culture that encourages student independence. However, the development of autonomy for learning is a complex process that is built over time and involves the interaction of various elements (Teng, 2019). Educational systems typically maintain a strong centralization on the figure of the teacher, with learners still dependent. This is precisely why the investment in active teaching methodologies is so necessary.

This investment begins with the teacher's preparation. As anticipated by theorists in the field, Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) requires study and preparation to ensure a successful experience, which in turn involves a commitment of time. In this context, collaborative work among teachers can prove to be a facilitating element, especially when organized, as proposed by Damiani (2008):

(...) by working together, the members of a group support each other, aiming to achieve common goals negotiated by the collective, establishing relationships that tend toward non-hierarchical structures, shared leadership, mutual trust, and shared responsibility for the conduct of actions (Damiani, 2008, p. 215, our translation).

The accounts of P1 and PC illustrate how this type of collaboration can facilitate the actions of teachers, expanding their repertoire of practices, and also play a crucial role as emotional and affective support:

P1: Our collaborative work, I thought, was essential (...) because you helped me to have consistency in the classes, in the narrative, and in the guidance, and also gave ideas for activities to be done. So, it was essential. Essential also in the sense that it gave me more security, you know? I think teachers should always work in pairs ((laughs)), doing these reflective sessions and, at the same time, preparing the class and everything else.

PC: I was thinking that some things maybe I couldn't do alone. For example, she had an idea to use a word cloud. That's something I've never done; I would have to learn how to do it and all, so that made it much easier for me.

Teaching languages through projects is challenging, but, above all, rewarding. The joint construction of a high-quality final product, with educational and social impact, fostered a sense of authorship, empowerment, and generated a shared feeling of "mission accomplished" among the teachers and learners. For them, especially, the opportunity to meet and interact with people from the countries and cultures related to the languages they were learning was very significant and enriching, not only in linguistic terms but also personal and professional¹³. Projects that encompass intercultural exchanges, like this one, contribute to the development of a global understanding of social phenomena, in addition to promoting intercultural competence and stimulating critical thinking.

Finally, the difficulties reported here aim to reflect on the experiences lived in order to guide future practices, both ours and those of other teachers interested in fostering an education geared towards the autonomy and active participation of learners. Through experimentation, error, and reflection on the lived events, teachers build and refine their repertoire of practices, developing abilities and competencies that will guide their actions.

Considerações finais

Active teaching methodologies capture the nuances of contemporary society, bringing together a variety of elements and allowing a natural integration of technologies. This combination prepares students to act in the world, both personally and professionally. Therefore, they need to be incorporated into pedagogical practices, which can no longer be limited to traditional models that are insignificant and inefficient.

In Project-Based Language Learning, the design of quality projects encompasses a series of criteria. To spark student curiosity, it is essential that projects are relevant and meaningful, incorporating authentic themes that resonate with their realities and interests. Furthermore, they should foster collaboration while valuing individual skills. Projects should also offer opportunities for language use that is close to reality. It is also necessary to ensure that projects align with curricular objectives. Another fundamental aspect is the adoption of assessment methods that allow students to monitor the results of their learning.

¹³ According to feedback collected through a Google form.

Meeting these demands requires preparation, dedication, and time, which can lead teachers to feel overwhelmed and consequently demotivated to conduct projects. Collaboration among teachers can prove to be an effective alternative to address this issue. When properly organized, teamwork provides emotional support through dialogue and idea exchange, simultaneously expanding the teacher's repertoire of actions, which then incorporate into their practice methods previously not considered.

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