Exploring Goal Setting by Foreign Language Learners in Virtual Exchange

Authors : Suzi M. S. Cavalari, Tim Lewis

Abstract : Teletandem is a bilingual model of virtual exchange in which two partners from different countries(and speak different languages) meet synchronously and regularly over a period of 8 weeks to learn each other's mother tongue (or the language of proficiency). At São Paulo State University (UNESP), participants should answer a questionnaire before starting the exchanges in which one of the questions refers to setting a goal to be accomplished with the help of the teletandem partner. In this context, the present presentation aims to examine the goal-setting activity of 79 Brazilians who participated in Portuguese-English teletandem exchanges over a period of four years (2012-2015). The theoretical background is based on goal setting and self-regulated learning theories that propose that appropriate efficient goals are focused on the learning process (not on the product) and are specific, proximal (short-term) and moderately difficult. The data set used was 79 initial questionnaires retrieved from the MulTeC (Multimodal Teletandem Corpus). Results show that only approximately 10% of goals can be considered appropriate. Features of these goals are described in relation to specificities of the teletandem context. Based on the results, three mechanisms that can help learners to set attainable goals are discussed.
Keywords : foreign language learning, goal setting, teletandem, virtual exchange
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