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# DEALING WITH INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ETWINNING PROJECTS

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## **Abstract**

This document aims to analyse how eTwinning enhances interculturality in English as a Foreign Language lessons. Through this research, a theoretical framework has been designed to settle out the basis that helped to analyse, compare, and contrast all the data obtained via the different observations, questionnaires and interviews done. All the theoretical perspectives and approaches to teaching language and culture that are found in the theoretical framework, eTwinning and both topics combined. The different observations aimed to observe the level of cultural awareness and the cultural-linguistic teaching perspective followed in the different sessions. The questionnaires and interviews also aim to provide specific data about whether eTwinning is a useful tool to work on cultural aspects and if culture is relevant in eTwinning partnership projects.

Comparing all the results obtained in the study, it can be determined that eTwinning is a valuable tool to work on cultural aspects, but if the project is focused on that issue. Numerous teachers think that the simple fact of connecting with other cultures means that this situation will increase and improve the students' cultural competence. It depends on how the project is designed and what its main objectives are.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language, eTwinning, culture, Cultural Competence and interculturality.

Aquest document pretén analitzar com eTwinning millora la interculturalitat a les classes d'anglès com a llengua estrangera. A través d'aquesta recerca, s'ha dissenyat un marc teòric per establir les bases que han ajudat a analitzar, comparar i contrastar totes les dades obtingudes a través de les diferents observacions, qüestionaris i entrevistes realitzades. En el marc teòric es poden trobar totes les perspectives i enfocaments teòrics sobre l'ensenyament de la llengua i la cultura, eTwinning i tots dos temes combinats. Les diferents observacions pretenen observar quin era el nivell de consciència cultural i quina era la perspectiva d'ensenyament lingüístic cultural seguit en les diferents sessions. Els qüestionaris i entrevistes realitzats també pretenien proporcionar dades específiques sobre si eTwinning és una eina útil per treballar aspectes culturals i si la cultura és rellevant en els projectes eTwinning.

Comparant tots els resultats obtinguts en l'estudi, es pot determinar que eTwinning és una bona eina per treballar aspectes culturals, però si el projecte se centra en aquest tema. Molts docents pensen que el simple fet de connectar amb altres cultures fa que

aquesta situació augmenti i millori la competència cultural dels alumnes. En general, depèn de com es dissenyi el projecte i quins siguin els objectius principals del mateix.

**Paraules clau:** anglès com a llengua estrangera, eTwinning, cultura, Competència Cultural i interculturalitat.

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## **1. Introduction**

This paper has been written in La Garriga, and the different research methods that intervened to collect all necessary data were conducted online (interviews and questionnaires) and face-to-face (observations) in Escola Sant Josep, Navàs (Catalunya). This report is aimed at studying and analysing the role of interculturality in Primary Education lessons, concretely, in English as a Foreign Language class using an eTwinning project. This is not the only aspect to be discussed, because there exist several studies about how culture intervenes and determines English lessons at school.

We are living in an era with many changes, and among these changes, technology and digital environments are gaining a lot of importance in our society, hence, in education too. Several programs, didactic units, teaching methods, and resources are designed to be settled out with technology. That is why this aspect might help not only having more resources to consult or the fastest information, but it would also help to create interactions between students from different countries and cultures.

Interculturality is a contemporary reality in today's technological and educational world and, therefore, it plays an important role in Catalan schools. The intercultural reality that many teachers may know is the usual exchange of cultures that coexist regularly in schools. Despite that, there are appearing new contexts in which distinct cultural situations in which students must interact according to interculturality too.

The launch of different telecollaboration platforms such as eTwinning has created a technological and educational context in which students from different countries (of the European Union) can participate in different tasks and activities. This is a situation in which students may not only have to work on the content and different language aspects such as grammar or vocabulary. Students from both countries must adapt their norms and target culture to create new meaning along with the foreign culture students. This is an interesting topic to observe and analyse how useful these platforms are to work on cultural aspects.

The purpose of this research is to analyse and study how intercultural awareness can improve pupils' social abilities, develop intercultural awareness, and learn English in a motivational and significant context, via the eTwinning online partnership program.

Language learners are exposed to diverse types of cultural elements due to media and how every time we are becoming increasingly linked between us thanks to technology and online resources. That is why English teachers should not underestimate this context and situation and must take advantage of it. Moreover, this is an interesting topic to research, because there is a lack of studies focused on discussing this issue.

Therefore, the aims of conducting this study are:

1. Concreting how eTwinning enhances interculturality in EFL lessons.
2. To determine if eTwinning is a valuable tool to enhance interculturality and how.
3. Observe how cultural aspects are treated in an eTwinning online class.
4. Which is the teaching language cultural perspective followed by the teachers.
5. To determine if students' cultural awareness improved after participation in the project.

We now finally turn to the main research question of the whole dissertation, which is *How does eTwinning enhance cultural and intercultural aspects in English as Foreign Language lessons?*



## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Language and Culture**

#### **2.1.1. Language definition**

The concept of language has been discussed for centuries. This is one of the most ancient ways of communication, hence, there have been many definitions and ways of interpreting it. For example, Patrikis (1988, as cited in Tran, 2010) defined language as signs that have a meaning in common. Kramersch (1998, p.3, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.3), defined language as a “system of signs that are seen as having itself a cultural value”. A language can be “regarded as a system of verbal and nonverbal signs used to express meanings” (Tran, 2010, p.4).

Many other aspects can intervene while speaking a language. It is not just talking about decoding different symbols and sounds, there can also be intentions, meanings, or purpose behind this way of communication. One of the most important aspects that is also related to the language, is culture. It is ought to be said that language and culture cannot be taught separately, and they always among them.

#### **2.1.2. Culture definition**

Goodenough (1957, p.167, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.4) defines culture as “whatever it is one has to know or believe to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and too so in any role that they expect for any of themselves”. Considering this definition, speaking a foreign language has a straight link with it. The foreign speaker must adapt his or her codes, manners, and ways of speaking to improve intelligibility between himself or herself and the receptor. Just by teaching or learning a foreign language, we are transmitting many cultural aspects that are included in the language.

Sowden (2007, p.304-305, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.5) defines culture as “that body social, artistic, and intellectual traditions associated historically with a particular social, ethnic or national group”. That is why language cannot be considered a simple decoding act. There is the history behind a language, culture, and civilizations that adapted their ways of living, but also their ways of communication.

According to Mead (1961, p.90, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.5), culture “is relative and changeable in space and time”. This adaptability is also characteristic of the language, and it is easy to observe how different civilizations changed their language code after many social, political, or historical changes.

This relation is also demonstrated and stated by Damen (1987, as cited in Tran,2010). Damen lists six characteristics that define closely the concept of culture. One of these

six points states that “language and culture are closely related and interactive” (Tran, 2010, p.6). There are other characteristics that state that culture is learned, it changes, and it is a universal fact of human life (Tran, 2010). These are also defining what language means to society.

### **2.1.3. The Cultural Competence**

After the 1990s, Catalan schools had to modify their methodologies to develop *Cultural Competence* among the pupils. This was considered an especially key factor for the nineties society, and it was not an aspect to take into consideration superficially, as many other Curriculum changes that were implemented then. All the institutional and educational changes implanted were intended to promote and improve pupils’ *Cultural Competence*.

Concretely, all the objectives to develop the *Cultural Competence* are stated in the document *Ethnic minorities and the Spanish and Catalan educational systems: From exclusion to intercultural education* (Garreta, 2005). These objectives were:

“(1) cultivate positive intercultural attitudes (respect, value, tolerate, overcome prejudices); (2) improve the personal, cultural and academic self-conception (look after one’s own cultural identity, introduce different cultural elements); (3) strengthen coexistence (discover resemblances, play and learn co-operatively, resolve conflicts constructively); and (4) improve the equality of opportunity for all pupils (maximise performance, adapt the Curriculum, manifest positive expectations)” (Garreta, p.268, 2005)

These were the main objectives to promote *Cultural Competence* in pupils, so these values would be transferred through different teaching methods and practices carried out by teachers that would, at the same time, be the basis of cultural awareness in the future.

Moreover, Taylor Hawk, Kelly Sherretz and Ariana Minella (2017) provided an overall definition of *Cultural Competence* according to what the National Education Association (NEA) from the United States exposes. The NEA establishes that Cultural Competence refers to teaching practice as “the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own” (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017, p.1).

Consequently, linking with the objectives for the pupils named before, the *Cultural Competence* referred to by teachers also intertwines developing interpersonal awareness, cultural knowledge and several skills that promote a successful cross-cultural teaching practice (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017).

The necessity of considering cultural differences to create innovative and inclusive teaching practices has the objective to prepare pupils to live in a culturally diverse society, specifically, the current society that Catalunya and most of the European countries are coexisting with.

Several research has stated that developing the *Cultural Competence* recognizes that multicultural education and equity are seriously linked among them, and this can provide a lot of significance to Primary Education students. Taking this aspect into consideration, Primary Education teachers can notice these cultural differences and identities to use them for increasing pupils' academic success (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017).

The study *Research spotlight on parental involvement in education* carried out by the National Education Association (2009) stated that culturally competent teachers can help improve communication among students' families.

In the case of the teachers that knew the native language spoken by English language learners, it helped to improve the relationship between the teacher, the student, and the family (National Educational Association, 2009, as cited in Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017). This had a lot of importance to the pupils' academic success because it had a positive impact on the school attendance, test scores and school discipline (National Educational Association, 2009, as cited in Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017). Tangentially, improving the scholar's *Cultural Competence* also helps reinforce the values that challenge discrimination and help to create a democratic society, such as tolerance.

Another important aspect to consider while talking about *Cultural Competence* is cultural awareness. Cortazzi and Jin (1999, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.7) defined cultural awareness as the ability "to become aware of members of another cultural group including their behaviour, their expectations, perspectives and values".

There are some diverse levels inside the same cultural awareness. The fourth one is the highest of the levels that teachers are supposed to achieve. At this level, people from distinct cultures "are brought together to create a culture of shared meanings. People dialogue with others, create new meanings and rules to meet the need of a specific situation" (Tran, 2010, p.8). During this process, there is a modification and acceptance in which the individuals should also doubt their target culture. That is how the cultural groups will move from monocultural, to multi-cultural, to finally achieve interculturality (Tran, 2010). This concept is very related to the fourth level of cultural

awareness, because, through interculturality, people from diverse cultures could interact with each other and understand their differences.

To conclude, it should be said that teachers must be aware of the intercultural and cultural components that language carry in education and society. Independently of the first language of the pupils, if English teachers know how to act according to the cultural and intercultural situations in school, it can determine a significant improvement in the pupils' use of both languages and the intercultural awareness and attitude of the students' and teacher.

#### **2.1.4. How to work on the Cultural Competence**

After being aware of what *Culture Competence* means and its benefits, the main question that appears among Primary Education teaching trainees and teachers is: *How can Cultural Competence be enhanced and how can it be worked in the class?*

The main factor that determines how to teach according to the *Cultural Competence* is the fact of understanding all the cultures that coexist in the same class and how they can influence the teaching practice. Moreover, Evertson and Weinstein (2013, as cited in Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017, p.2) state that some characteristics of culturally competent educators include:

- Developing an awareness of differences that exist between cultures
- Critically and creatively applying to the understanding of diverse cultures
- Facilitating open cultural exchanges in the classroom
- Adapting curriculum and classroom activities to better connect with students

These aspects can be applied in different methods such as classroom management, or curricular aspects (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017).

#### **Class management**

Regular class management in English lessons or any other subject usually does not focus on considering all the cultural differences that coexist in the same class. These strategies are not culturally neutral, and they are commonly created for white, middle-class students that live in eastern countries (Evertson and Weinstein, 2013, as cited in Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017).

The National Education Association (2009) of the United States sets out different Classroom Management strategies to implement a culturally respected relationship between the teacher and the pupils:

- “Recognize personal biases and how they may impact their expectations of students and classroom behaviour” (National Education Association, 2009, p.4).

Proposing readings or discussions talking about appreciating cultural differences or being critical of some identities socially constructed.

- “Expand on the knowledge of their students’ cultural backgrounds” (National Education Association, 2009, p.4).

If the teacher knows which is the closest environment for the students, s/he would know how to culturally improve their practice (behaviour, communication and learning styles).

- “Apply an understanding to their classroom management styles” (National Education Association, 2009, p.4).

Teachers must be critical of their practice and be open to changing it to cater for cultural or ethnic necessities.

### **Curriculum**

Referring to Curriculum, the role that teachers must adapt to integrate culturally responsive teaching should be present in as many subjects as possible. Independently of the subjects, culturally aware teachers must introduce cultural perspectives in the study of literature, mathematics, science, social sciences, and specifically, language teaching.

Some of the strategies stated by Hawk, Minella and Sherretz (2017) that are focused on integrating a culturally responsive Curriculum are:

- “Include multiple cultural perspectives” (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017, p.3).

Not teaching only from the national perspective would be a clear example of this strategy. Teachers should include history, literature, science discoveries, or creations made by other cultures.

- “Weaven students’ cultural backgrounds into the curriculum through student-powered activities” (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017, p.3).

Proposing investigations about unfamiliar cultures would be a clear example to work on this useful strategy.

- “Confront and engage in controversial topics” (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017, p.2).

*Taboo* and controversy should be also discussed in class. “Culturally competent teachers incorporate discussions of racism, historical atrocities, and powerlessness” (Hawk, Minella and Sherretz, 2017, p.3)

All these aspects can be tangentially worked during English lessons by using dissimilar materials and resources.

### **2.1.5. Teaching language and culture: a brief historical review**

It should be said that to completely understand which is the context of teaching language and culture during the last decades, it is also necessary to explain briefly which approaches and models have been developed during these years. All these theoretical approaches and models are chronologically explained in the next subsections and will help the reader to order and to have a clearer idea of the teaching language and cultural history.

#### **The acculturation models**

The first period in which teaching culture started being considered an important aspect of language teaching was in the fifties and it did not finish until the early 90s (Kiss and Weninger, 2013). During those forty years, cultures were treated as an object to teach. The students had to learn everything related to the target language culture and society. Schumann (1986) developed the *acculturation model*, in which it was stated that if the learner were integrated inside the target language community, s/he would have more chances to succeed in learning the language. The motivation was particularly useful for this perspective, due to the benefits and positive consequences obtained thanks to integrative motivation learning. Other important linguistics supported this theoretical model (e.g., Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner, 1988) (Kiss and Weninger, 2013).

#### **Language and Culture integration**

The second period took place during the 1990s, and it was focused on researching literature (Kiss and Weninger, 2013). During this period, researchers (e.g., Pulverness, 1995; Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993) developed a conceptual analysis of how culture and language were both integrated. English teachers' task was not focused on teaching culture and language separately. Despite that, they had to interpret them as complementary and that could not be separated (Kramsch, 1998, as cited in Kiss and Weninger, 2013). Teaching language and culture were then united and had to be taught simultaneously. Some researchers stated that a new target language culture was appearing, as English started becoming a *lingua franca*. It was at that moment when other papers were written to state *inter-*, *cross-*, and *transcultural* aspects in language teaching to achieve intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997 as cited in Kiss and Weninger, 2013). This period coincided with all the intercultural changes that started appearing in the Catalan and Spanish educational systems during the '90s and 2000s.

## **Internationalisation of the Language period**

Finally, the last research period can be identified during the 2000s. Risager (2011, as cited in Kiss and Weninger, 2013, p.697), defines this period as a “transnational or global/local approach, focusing on cultural complexity and hybridity”. The objective due to all the social changes and the evolution that the contemporary society was living referred to as language teaching was to create a “critical citizenship” (Guilherme, 2002 as cited in Kiss Weninger, 2013) and “global culture consciousness” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008 as cited in Kiss and Weninger, 2013). The main objective, as this research stated, was to create language learners that could use their knowledge to identify and select valuable information and reject misinformation or “identify between ideas and ideologies” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, as cited in Kiss and Weninger, p.698). Of course, this perspective of teaching culture and language can be integrated into present-day society because the main purpose of learning English is to be more integrated into today’s world. Having the opportunity to communicate with more members of this society and be able to differentiate between what can benefit the student and what cannot, are some of the main objectives searched in today’s English teaching competencies.

For English teachers, teaching a Foreign Language should not be understood just as an academic concept. While we are teaching this language, we are also teaching about the culture. It is not possible to separate both. Teaching only grammatical aspects without the international and cultural context would simply not make sense. As Jafarzadeh and Simin (2014, p.4) state, “cultural aspects make language learning a meaningful, rich and versatile experience”.

### **2.1.6. Teaching Language and Culture, a theoretical approach**

For decades, there has been an extensive debate about teaching culture and teaching language. The main purpose of language for several research is achieving intelligibility. That means that the foreign language learner can take the necessary steps to be understood by the receptor, and that is the main goal of communication. Moreover, McKay (2000, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014) states that while speaking any language, the learner must use it correctly and must adapt to native speaker rules.

As it was mentioned before, there are different opinions about this topic. Some researchers (e.g., Smith, 1976), defend that it is not necessary to learn a language by adapting some cultural norms that are provided by the target language, and

consequently, that the task is “to facilitate the communication of learners’ ideas and culture in the English medium” (Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.1).

Jafarzadeh and Simin (2014) mention in the article *Teaching English to EFL Learners and Cultural Related Concepts: Cultural Invasion Revisited*, that many students of non-western cultures can live as demotivating or unlikely to learn a language that implies also learning about western cultures that they do not feel related to. They also mention that this situation “may cause a culture conflict” (Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.1). This is a distinct perspective that teachers and students of English as a Foreign Language in western cultures usually do not think about, but it is also a reality.

Despite all the different arguments about teaching culture and language separately, there are several researchers (e.g., Buttjes, 1990; Jiang, 200; McKay, 2000) and studies that defend that teaching culture and language must be simultaneous and must support the inclusion of teaching cultural aspects while teaching the language.

There are more opinions agreeing to teach culture and language than refusing about including teaching culture. Some of the benefits of teaching both things simultaneously are that “it can promote international understanding, deepen an understanding of one’s own culture, facilitate learners’ visits to foreign countries, and motivate learners.” (Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi, 1990 as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.2).

Thus, Brown (2007, p.189-190, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.12) pointed out this interrelation between culture and language:

Language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of the language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition (as may be the case, say, in the acquisition of reading knowledge of a language for examining scientific texts), is also the acquisition of a second culture.

Language and culture are always united; hence, they cannot be separated. Any language has cultural aspects that define and determines it, and every culture has a language that determines and defines it. Speaking a language can determine the target culture of a person as “language reflects the culture. However, language is part of the culture, and it also constitutes the culture” stated Cortazzi and Jin (1998, p.100 as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.3).

### **2.1.7. Culture interpretation in language teaching**

Holme (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010), stated five diverse ways of interpreting culture in language learning. These are the communicative view, the classical curriculum view, the instrumental or culture-free-language view, the constructionist view, and the



competence view. Holme (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010) provides these definitions for each perspective:

- **Communicative view:** it “is derived from the communicative approach with its emphasis on giving the students language that can be put to quick use in a particular context” (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15).

Communication and oral interaction are the main purposes. Culture, in this case, would be used to “enhance discussion skills,” but it is not strictly necessary (Tran, 2010, p.15).

- **Classical-curriculum view:** it “helps to increase the intellectual value of the language” (Holme, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15).
- **Instrumental or culture-free-language view:** it “begins from a common concern in respect of hidden political and cultural agenda of a language” (Holme, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15).
- **Constructionist view:** it “postulates that language students may be manipulated by the cultural construction of a text and the text’s implicit message; language learning, therefore should entail a good understating of such meanings” (Holme, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15).

According to the author, the same purpose of learning the language is to enhance the ability to be critical of these types of messages.

- **Competence view:** it is stated that “the knowledge of a language’s culture is thought essential to a thorough understanding of a language’s nuances of meanings” (Holme, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15).

Tran (2010) explains that Holme (2003) noted that in the communicative and classical-curriculum view, culture is not necessary at all to learn the language and it becomes a more secondary aspect. Despite that, for the instrumental or culture-free-language, the constructionist and the competence views, culture is essential to learning a language. Culture becomes a necessity to learn the language, and language becomes a necessity to learn about the culture.

Moreover, Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.22), stated four unusual stages of cultural awareness: “recognition, acceptance, integration/ethnocentrism and transcendence”. The first stage is based on non-judgement. The second one is based on coping with ambiguity. The third stage is based on empathising with the other culture. Finally, the fourth stage is based on developing the ability to respect and appreciate the other culture.

Some research debated this last idea by showing that learning a language “is not a cultural construct but the result of a long biological adaptation process” (Pinker, 1994, p.19, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.3). The same author explains that this is an ancient process that comes from the evolution process and human nature. As it can be observed, depending on the ideology of the person and the perspective that has of both concepts, they can adopt one position or the other.

Risager (2007, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014) states that there can be two different ways of understanding the combination of culture and language: one is being aware of all the cultural components and context that incorporate a language (also learning it), and the other is observing it as a way of communication, with no other intention (as English is considered a *lingua franca* or international language). That was the main objective that Esperanto wanted to reach, but following the same perspective, that language could be interpreted as an effortless way of communication, or also as a cultural decision made by different linguistics from specific cultures to transfer knowledge and cultural components of the target culture.

#### **2.1.8. The English Language and Culture**

Different researchers defended the idea of an English language with international and communicative purposes. Quirk (1981, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014), defined it as a ‘Nuclear’ English.

The main goal of this perspective was achieving a non-culturally language “which would serve as a universal medium of communication” (Saleemi, 1985, p.16, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.4). Chew (1994, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014) believed in the necessity of internationalising the English language. She stated that the language does not belong to native speakers, because when it becomes international, it is not ethical to affirm that the language is the property of the target culture. Consequently, English should be denationalized (Chew, 1994, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014).

Swiderski (1993, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.16) stated that “in English as a second language and as a foreign language, setting the aspects of teaching and learning is cultural in nature”. Moreover, Atkinson (1999, as cited in Tran, 2010) defended that there is no more important concept in teaching and learning English than culture. The teacher must face cultural traits directly or indirectly, but they cannot avoid this concept. This is also related to the current internationalization of the language.

In the same vein, it has been also stated that the language and culture “are closely entwined in a language classroom setting, where the learners from a small socio-cultural group, language and the culture particularly interrelate in various and complex ways” (Asif, 2012, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.8). So, language and culture can also promote inclusion for selected minorities or social collectives.

### **2.1.9. Teaching Culture and Learning Motivation**

Nowadays, many schools are in favour of a bilingual or multicultural educational policy. This will “help students’ communicative tools and they will have greater access to world opportunities” (Crystal, 1997, p.368, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.8). This is an optimum occasion to promote bilingualism, multiculturalism, and motivation.

Not only by having the necessity of communication or greater future opportunities students will want to learn English motivationally. Jafarzadeh and Simin (2014, p.10) state that learners in teaching training programmes “demonstrated a more international outlook with a greater understanding of the target culture and they understood themselves better, showed a more self-confidence, and had increased motivation for foreign language study”. So, teaching culture and language would help us in two main aspects of the teaching task: motivating the students to learn the language and letting them know better themselves.

Seliger (1988, as cited in Tran, 2010) stated that culture affects how effectively is a second language acquired by the learner. In conclusion, language is

“employed in social exchanges, the feelings, attitudes and motivations of learners in relation of the target language, to the speakers of the language, and the culture will influence how learners respond to the input to which they are exposed.” (Seliger, 1988, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.16)

Finally, and according to Mavi (1996, p.54, as cited in Jafarzadeh and Simin, 2014, p.10), “teenaged pupils become more motivated when they learn about the lifestyle of the foreign country whose language is studying”. Consequently, bringing cultural aspects to the language classroom is a synonym for increasing motivation.

### **2.1.10. Role of teachers in language and culture teaching**

Although several factors can determine an effective language and culture acquisition (such as textbooks or curricula), the teacher has a lot of importance. Damen (1987, as cited in Tran, 2010) stated that there were some limitations for the English as a Second Language teacher in terms of culture:

- “Teachers do not know what culture to teach” (Damen, 1987, p.5, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.18).

There is not a unique culture to teach, so this is an important aspect to consider.

- “Until recently only a few textbooks of methodologies have been available to assist teachers in the direction of culture learning” (Damen, 1987, p.5, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.18).

As this is a very recent issue that has been important and has been discussed in terms of education, most of the materials were not ready to include cultural learning aspects.

It is usually considered that English teachers know how to teach culture naturally. This is a common mistake that is not considered, and to do teaching language culture an effective task, English teachers should receive proper training and instructional methods to provide the best educational experience (Tran, 2010).

Consequently, many students know how to apply all the knowledge that they have learnt about the language, but they have not learnt any cultural aspects. That is also why culture has been considered, many times, a secondary aspect to teach English as a Second Language lesson (Tran, 2010). Tran explains that content such as grammar or vocabulary is taught occupies the greatest amount of time during English lessons, while culture remains the weakest component in these classes.

Taking these aspects into consideration, teachers should establish these three main goals that Richards (2001, as cited in Tran, 2010) explained to enhance interculturality in their lessons:

1. “Human beings are generally motivated to pursue specific goals” (Richards, 2001, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.22).

Teachers must generate a purpose or meaning to learn English. If students do not have a goal or a purpose, they will find learning English demotivating.

2. “The utilization of goals in teaching improves the effectiveness of teaching and learning” (Richards, 2001, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.22).

Teachers must set reasonable goals. By setting these kinds of goals, students would be more motivated after achieving them, and hence, they would like to continue learning the language.

3. “A program can be effective to the extent that its goals are sound and clearly described” (Richards, 2001, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.22).

This would help the teachers to set reasonable and clear goals for their students.

Hughes (1986, as cited in Tran, 2010) settles out some techniques that can help the teachers to teach cultural awareness. Some of them are the *comparison method*, in which an item of the target culture is described considering the differences from the students' culture, the *culture assimilators*, in which the students present an explanation of different cross-cultural situations or *newspapers*, so students can compare the newspaper of one and the other country (Hughes, 1986, as cited in Tran, 2010). The authors explain other methods such as projecting media, the culture island, drama techniques or Total Physical Response (Hughes, 1986, as cited in Tran, 2010).

To conclude, Peterson and Coltrane (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010) stated some strategies to teach language and culture simultaneously. These are some effective methods to integrate both aspects in English lessons:

- “Using literary texts as sources for learning culture” (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.27).
- “Using films and television segments to provide students with an opportunity to witness behaviours which are not obvious in-text” (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.27).
- “Presenting objects as figures, tools jewellery to discuss other cultural, historical, and linguistic factors [...]” (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.27).
- “Sending students into the community of the native speakers of the target language to find information about their target culture” (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003, as cited in Tran 2010, p.27).

## **2.2. About eTwinning**

### **2.2.1. The e-Twinning Online Partnership**

This online programme was launched in January 2005, and it has provided a lot of English teachers around the world with an especially useful tool to work on content and language whilst students from different countries can be in contact while learning. It was founded by the Erasmus+ community, which is a programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport of many countries, 34 concretely, that is part of the European Union since 2014 (eTwinning, 2018). Although it is used by English Primary School teachers, other members of the educational community can also take benefit from it, for example, librarians or headteachers.

An important aspect of this platform is that it was created to implement the Information Communication Technologies (ICT) use in students and schools. Students can enter its portal through the same webpage. It is available in 28 languages and there are several projects that teachers can choose from.

Through e-Twinning, *Live teachers* can connect with other *eTwinners* from different countries and start a simultaneous project altogether. Moreover, they can create their project and wait for other online partners to contact them to be the other part of their project. The same eTwinning community describes the main objective of the platform as “teachers can create their projects in which they can set oof activities on different topics and key competencies by collaborating with two or more teachers and their students” (eTwinning, 2018). This is the main idea of the whole project itself.

### **2.2.2. eTwinning in Education**

Being part of the eTwinning community meant a massive impact on the schools that want to teach through this method. That is why cooperation among teachers is especially important for the teaching task and learning process of the student, but also the institutional development of the schools. Simona Velea (2011, p.143) describes this process as a “flexible action, without procedures or written agreements, but based on teachers’ interest to diversify their students’ learning activities, share ideas and experiences”.

This same commitment is what makes teachers engage among them to participate in these programmes. They can also visit the centre with chich they are collaborating or other schools around the European countries that also participate thanks to Erasmus+.

Although this method is incredibly attractive for teachers, the main receivers of the reaching benefits, students, cannot be forgotten. Students can find a different and attractive way to learn different languages and content, improve communication skills and find specific items or cultural features whilst they learn about ICT and improve their experience working online (Velea, 2011).

Not just language and content learning are involved in eTwinning. Research stated that students are exposed to the use of many language skills that also improve social and interpersonal communication (Velea, 2011). Professor Piet Van de Craen (2008) highlighted the importance of eTwinning for intercultural relationships stating that “The more intense is the exchange culture, the better we will know the “other” and the more European we become” (Velea, 2011, p.144). That explains why is crucial for learning language teaching culture and not to differentiate or split them; the more we know about the target culture, the better the communication will be and the better the language is going to be learnt.

Several researchers stated that students prefer collaborative projects in which they can make use of ICT. The incorporation and implementation of ICT in schools have diversified and made more efficient and motivating participation in projects (Velea, 2011). But not also for students, Gheorghe (2008, as cited in Velea, 2011, p.144) stated that “also for other students and teachers in school, these manifesting their desire to start working on such project”. That means that participating in this kind of project also increases motivation among pupils.

In conclusion, research stated that teachers should use this platform to improve the learning and teaching experience of both students and teachers. Are a lot the benefits of learning language while students use ICT; students generate a critical idea about ICT use and technologies, they learn how to communicate with students from other countries, they learn new aspects about language, they work on some cultural aspects, and finally, they find this task a very motivational project in which they can participate actively.

### **2.3. eTwinning and Teaching Language and Culture**

This topic is unusual in educational research. There are many studies meant to research intercultural and cultural aspects or ICT aspects, but not focused on combining both topics. Whereas, as Alcaraz-Mármol (2020, p.157) stated in the article *Developing intercultural communication in the EFL primary education classroom: Internationalization through virtual team collaboration with eTwinning*, “despite there is a lack of studies that combine eTwinning and intercultural awareness, some exceptions are found”.

Some of these examples are Camilleri (2016, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020) who stated that after a collaborative project with people from other cultures with eTwinning, could state that it is a successful tool to enhance intercultural awareness in students. Bozdog (2018, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020), pointed out after a study with German and Turkish students via eTwinning that there were some problems when trying to introduce this kind of program in some specific social contexts. This was not an exception, but as it is a very unknown issue, the author claims that the whole teaching institution should provide more sources to investigate more about this topic (Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020).

Although these difficulties can be found, some studies state the benefits of ICT and intercultural language learning. Healey (1998, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020), demonstrated that the simple fact of owning a computer and Internet connection can help by providing immediate feedback, having access to infinite resources, taking profit from individualized learning, or using the collaborative network to improve co-working. Moreover, Alcaraz-Mármol (2020) at the end of her study provides an example of how users can be eTwinning when proposing a specific unit to work the intercultural competence.

The studies about eTwinning are usually focused on motivational and social development aspects. Despite that, Martínez (2012, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020, p.156) stated that e-Twinning and another collaborative online program can “be efficient in the development of communicative skills and some formal aspects of the FL learning process”.

Also, Angelova and Zhao (2016, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020), pointed out the benefits of proposing a project in which Chinese and North American students used e-



mail and Skype to virtual discuss and interact. Chinese students demonstrated significant improvements in grammar use and word order.

This document aims to study how eTwinning enhances interculturality in ESL lessons. That would be similar research to the last authors but specifying by observing different schools and interviewing experienced teachers, which of the cultural components stated by Holme (2003, in Tran, 2010), are determining the cultural exchange.

### 3. Research study

#### 3.1. Objectives and hypothesis

As was mentioned in Section "1. Justification," the research question that is going to guide the whole study is:

- *How does eTwinning enhance cultural and intercultural aspects in English as Foreign Language lessons?*

Solving this question will determine the research methods that are going to be used in the study, as well as the main objectives to achieve. These are:

- To observe how cultural aspects are treated in schools that follow an eTwinning project.
- To determine which stage of cultural awareness (first, second, third or fourth) stated by Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8) is reached by students during the eTwinning project
- To determine which cultural perspective the school follows (Communicative view, Classical-curriculum view, Instrumental or Culture-free-language view, Constructionist view or Competence view)
- To contrast and compare the data to observe if eTwinning improved the levels of cultural awareness and interculturality of the students.

The last objectives and the research question determine the nature of the same study as a qualitative one. Despite that, also some data obtained through these qualitative methods is going to be interpreted quantitatively.

Finally, the hypothesis considers that the results of the study are going to show if eTwinning is a useful tool to enhance interculturality and improve the Cultural Competence and cultural awareness of students. Maybe, some of the schools would not have thought about a project focused on this issue, but teachers might realize that they also worked on language and cultural aspects simultaneously.

## **3.2. Methodology**

### **3.2.1. Research design**

In this research, three different research methods are going to be used: interviews, questionnaires, and observations. These three tools are going to help in the task of collecting data to provide an accurate answer to the research question *How does eTwinning enhance cultural and intercultural aspects in English as Foreign Language lessons?*

The main research method to evaluate how culture is introduced in EFL lessons is by observation. Moreover, the questionnaires and interviews would help to specify and contrast the results obtained through the data collection. As was explained in section *2.3 eTwinning and Teaching Language and Culture*, there is a lack of studies related to this project, and mostly all of them were done by observation. After that, thanks to the planned questionnaires and interviews, a clearer idea would be got after contrasting all the information and providing a specific explanation of the research issue.

All the data collected via the observations and questionnaires are planned to be done in a state-funded Primary Education School located in Navàs, Catalunya. Currently, the school is participating in an eTwinning project with three different promotions: fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. The first observation is going to be conducted with fifth graders, as well as the questionnaires. The teacher that made this process possible, and who is currently organising the English at school, is also an ambassador of the eTwinning platform.

### **3.2.2. Participants**

As it was mentioned before, the participants in the observations and questionnaires are the pupils of a public school in Navàs, Catalunya. They are diverse fifth and sixth-graders groups in which pupils from ten to eleven years are participating in an eTwinning project with different schools, from Italy, France, and Poland.

After getting informed about the project's topic, it could be inferred that working on cultural aspects is not the focus. Despite that, indirect behaviours and conducts from part of the target culture and foreign cultures students and teachers are going to be analysed through observation.

The participants of the interviews are five teachers from different nationalities. Three of them are Catalan, one of them is Italian, and the last is from Switzerland. They are

*eTwinners* experienced teachers and one eTwinning ambassador whose contributions are essential for the case study.

### **3.2.3. Data collection methods**

Three different research methods are going to be used in the research study: interviews, questionnaires, and observations. All these methods are part of qualitative research. The qualitative methods include the techniques of observing, documenting, analysing, and interpreting characteristics, patterns, attributes, and meanings of human phenomena (Leininger, 1985, as cited in MacDonald, 2012).

These collection tools are considered “equitable, liberating and life-enhancing” (MacDonald, 2012, p.34) which is why also all the data collected in this study has followed the ethical criteria guideline of the University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia. Also, all the staff responsible for each school, as well as parents, tutors, and teachers, were provided with an explanation of the project and all the necessary documents.

#### **Observations**

This research technique consists of watching behaviour or events in their natural setting, in this context, in a classroom (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). The observation method includes all the steps to follow for conducting action research, identifying the problem, gathering the data, interpreting, evaluating the results, and proposing changes to the original methods.

Observations can be direct or indirect. Direct observation is focused to observe when the different interactions and behaviours take place in the same moment, immediately (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). On the other hand, indirect observation is focused on the results of these interactions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). In this case, both observations are going to be indirect.

To correctly plan the observation, the researcher should consider these six steps according to (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018):

- 1- **Determine the focus:** thinking about what the main aspect is to observe. Summarizing, which is the problem to solve. This part is strictly linked with the research question.
- 2- **Design a system for data collection.** Different tools can be used, for example recording sheets and checklists, observation guides or field notes.

- 3- **Select an adequate number of sites.** These sites will determine the results contrasted after collecting the data.
- 4- **Select the observers.** The students are going to be noticed that they will be observed.
- 5- **Time the observations appropriately.**

As interculturality and how it is worked and enhanced via eTwinning is the main issue to discuss in this paper, various aspects to observe in the classroom are detailed in the observation grids. All these aspects are explained in Section 2. *Theoretical Framework*, concretely in subsections 2.1.3 “*The Cultural Competence*” and 2.1.7 “*Culture interpretation in language teaching*”.

Referring to the first section, the aspects to determine through the observation are the various stages of cultural awareness that pupils might have reached thanks to the eTwinning project by staying connected with the other culture.

As Cortazzi and Jin (1999, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.7) defined, cultural awareness is the ability “to become aware of members of another cultural group including their behaviour, their expectations, perspectives and values”. That would be the main aspect to determine via observation. If teachers have acted consequently to the Cultural Competence criteria, the students might have reached the highest of the four levels of cultural awareness.

Considering what Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8) stated, each level is recognised by:

- **First level:** recognition. In this stage, the students recognise each other culture. They do not judge the differences between cultures.
- **Second level:** acceptance. The students accept the differences between both cultures. It is based on copying with ambiguity.
- **Third level:** Integration/Ethnocentrism. The students integrate the other culture. The students integrate other cultures, but the target culture is still the most important. They empathise with the other culture.
- **Fourth level:** Transcendence. The students develop the ability to respect and appreciate the other culture.

So, by following each stage's characteristics, this observation grid has been developed:

Stages of cultural awareness	Stage Achievement Grading				OBSERVATIONS
	Very Clear	Clear	Not very clear	Not clear	
<i>First stage. Students recognise each other culture. They do not judge the differences between cultures.</i>					
<i>Second stage. The students accept the differences between both cultures. It is based on copying with ambiguity.</i>					
<i>Third stage. The students integrate the other culture. This stage is also called the ethnocentric stage. The students integrate other cultures, but the target culture is still the most important. They empathise with the other culture.</i>					
<i>Fourth stage. The intercultural or transcendence stage. The students develop the ability to respect and appreciate the other culture.</i>					

Figure 1. Stage of cultural awareness according to Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8) observation grid

First, all the observations related to each stage are going to be noted in the section *Observations*. Depending on the behaviour that students show whilst participating in the class and while interacting with the foreign culture students, each stage will be marked as *Very clear*, *Clear*, *Not very clear* or *Not clear*. It is ought to be said that these levels are gradings of the last stage. That means that for achieving the fourth stage, the other three must be achieved as well. After collecting all these data, the stage of cultural awareness in which pupils are settled is going to be stated.

Then, referring to section 2.1.7 "*Culture interpretation in language teaching*", Holme (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010) provides different definitions for each perspective of interpreting language and culture in the classroom: *communicative view*, *classical-curriculum view*, *instrumental/culture-free-language view*, *constructionist view* or

*competence view*. Each perspective is defined in the observation grid that can be found below.

The procedure is the same as before. First, all the observations are going to be noted in the *Observations* section. After that, and contrasting all the data collected, the cultural language teaching perspective that is followed in class is going to be stated.

Cultural language teaching perspective	Perspective Achievement Grading				OBSERVATIONS
	Very Clear	Clear	Not very clear	Not clear	
<i>Communicative view. "Giving the students language that can be used in a particular context" (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i>					
<i>Classical-curriculum view "Helps to increase the intellectual value of the language" (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i>					
<i>Instrumental/ Culture-free-language view. "It begins from a common concern in respect of hidden political and cultural agenda of a language" (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i>					
<i>Constructionist view "Language students may be manipulated by the cultural construction of a text and the text's implicit message; language learning should entail a good understanding of such message" (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i>					
<i>Competence view "The knowledge of a language's culture is thought essential to a thorough understanding of language's nuances of meanings" (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i>					

Figure 2. Cultural teaching perspective observation grid

## Interviews

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018, p.1), an interview is "a method of asking quantitative or qualitative questions orally of key participants". In this case, all the questions that are going to be proposed are based on qualitative aspects, but there are going to be also quantitative aspects. The difference

between them is that qualitative aspects tend to be open-ended questions, and quantitative questions tend to be close-ended questions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

There exist three different approaches to building the structure of an interview followed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018):

- Informal conversational interviews. These interviews usually are spontaneous.
- Semi-structured interviews. There are some topics or issues to cover, but the interview is free to order the order or wording of the questions.
- Standardized open-ended interviews. These are the most structured interviews. The order and wording are strictly followed.

In this case, the third option is going to be the followed one. The questions are going to be asked to experienced international eTwinning teachers that have participated in several projects. The order and wording of each question is going to be strictly followed.

Then, to correctly plan an interview according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018), these are the different steps to follow:

1. **Determine the focus.** The evaluation questions are going to be useful for the research.
2. **Develop an interview guide or questionnaire.** Written a guide will help to build the structure of the same interview.
3. **Select the number and type of people to be interviewed.** It would be better if the selected people are experts in the investigating issue.
4. **Train the interviews.** Explain the objectives of the research and the guideline.
5. **Ensure respondents' confidentiality.**
6. **Pilot test the interview guide or questionnaire.** It can help to correct some misunderstandings that might appear while doing the interview.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018) also explains that interviews are useful for evaluation:

- To get more in-depth information about perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences, or beliefs.
- When you are evaluating individual differences between respondents' experiences and outcomes.



- As a follow-up another method.

In this case, the interviews will help to contrast the different data collected through the different observations. Not only by showing a specific case study is going to determine that eTwinning helps to work on interculturality aspects. If experienced teachers explain what their opinions and beliefs about this topic are, it will help to create a clearer answer to the research question and approximation of the hypothesis made before.

The questions are meant to specify how teachers think that culture intervenes in the eTwinning project if it resulted effective to enhance cultural traits through eTwinning and finally, to evaluate if they consider that the students showed improvement in their level of cultural awareness.

### **Questionnaires**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018, p.1), a questionnaire is “a set of questions for gathering information from individuals”. These questionnaires can be administered by mail, telephone, face-to-face interviews, or even electronically.

This qualitative research method should be used, as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018) states:

- When resources are limited, and you need data from many people.
- To gather data about knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.
- When it is important to protect the privacy of participants.

In this case, the second option is the one that fits better in the study proposal. The different questionnaires that are going to be introduced to the students that have participated in an eTwinning project, will demonstrate which was the level of achievement of the various aspects stated in the theoretical framework and the other research tools.

This questionnaire will demonstrate, empirically, that students have reached the fourth stage of cultural awareness stated by Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8) and have worked on Cultural Competence and interculturality. By contrasting these data with the data obtained in the interviews and observation grids, a conclusion is going to be discussed at the end of this paper to answer the research question.

Moreover, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018) states which is the order to plan a correct questionnaire:

1. **Define your objectives.** The questions must have the same objective.
2. **Select the number and type of participants for your questionnaire.**
3. **Develop questions that communicate what you want to know.** Simple and clear wording must be used.
4. **Decide when to use close-ended versus open-ended questions.** Closed questions are easier to analyse, whilst open-ended questions can provide much-unexpected information to analyse, as it is subjective.
5. **Include demographic questions.** In this case, this option is going to be avoided, as the questionnaire will be handed to Primary Education students.
6. **Place questions in a logical order that flows well.**
7. **Pilot test the questionnaire.**

The different questions that appear in the questionnaire are focused on determining if students consider that they have learnt cultural traits while using eTwinning and to specify which ones, if they find this method of learning the language motivating, and if they find that the English language helped to learn unfamiliar cultural aspects from the other country.

The different questions are written in Catalan, so the students could express themselves better. There is a mix of closed and open questions that will determine which was the achievement of Cultural Competence and cultural awareness.

## 4. Study results

In this section, the different results obtained from the collected data via questionnaires, interviews and observations are going to be discussed.

### 4.1. Results of the observation

The results of the two different grids that were used to conduct the observation can be found in Section 8. *Appendices* and the Subsections “8.1 Results of the observation of the cultural and teaching perspective” and “8.2 Results of the observation grid of the stages of cultural awareness.” As was mentioned before, these were the result of observing the students from a school, in Navàs (Catalunya).

The first of the two grids, *Results of the observation about the cultural and teaching language perspective*, determine which was the perspective followed in class to give importance and enhance working on cultural aspects. There are five different perspectives to observe according to Holme (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010): the communicative view, the classical-curriculum view, the instrumental/culture-free language view, the constructionist view, and the competence view.

There can be found a grading of each perspective depending on the observations that were noted and obtained after all the sessions. If the perspective has been completely followed, a *very clear* grading will be marked. If the perspective has many aspects in common with the perspective but not completely, the *clear* grading will be marked. If the perspective has not been followed at all, but there are some aspects of it in the practice, the *not very clear* grading will be marked. Finally, if the perspective is not clear or there are not any aspects to observe and determine that perspective, the *not clear grading* will be marked.

So, considering how this first grid works, each perspective determination result is going to be explained one by one.

#### **Communicative view**

Referring to the communicative view, the observation determines that this was the most followed perspective. As the different projects were not made to work on cultural aspects specifically, culture did not intermediate actively. The culture was not necessary to learn the language because although students did not pay much attention to interculturality, they could acquire a successful English level. The communicative intention of the level predominated during the whole project, and the students learnt

how to express themselves perfectly in different communicative situations, written or orally.

### **Classical-curriculum view**

Secondly, there could be aspects stated about the classical-curriculum view perspective. Children also could participate in different activities, some ludic and others were more focused on content, curricular aspects, and the eTwinning objectives. The grading for this perspective was *clear* because students did not have to increase the intellectual value of the language in each session. Despite that, there were lessons in which they just had to enjoy playing and showing what they learnt differently. The culture was not the focus of this perspective as well, despite that, there were implicit cultural aspects that appeared during the whole observation. Students could find a real context of communication with the other school in which they had to use 'real English,' so they found this part very motivating, and it also helped to increase the intellectual value of the language.

### **Instrumental/culture-free-language view**

Thirdly, the instrumental/culture-free-language perspective was marked as *clear*. All the aspects observed could not completely determine that this perspective was followed. There must be a common concern about the hidden political and cultural agenda of the language. In this case, this political and cultural agenda was stated by the same projects and platform. This platform is made to enhance communication between different countries of the European Union. That means that not all the cultural frameworks are going to be the same, but they will have many things in common because they are coexisting in the same European macro-cultural context. That is why, depending on the situation that some of the countries of the EU might be living, this common concern might also change. So, the statement of this perspective will also depend on the schools that we are in contact with, the country from which this one provides, the social situation of the country, the teaching task, and the nature of the project.

### **Constructionist view**

Fourthly, and referring to the constructionist view, there were not any aspects observed. Any intention or objective from the projects observed aimed to develop a critical understanding of a manipulative intentioned text provided from a foreign culture.

## Competence view

Finally, the competence view was marked as *not very clear*. All the observations conducted in the different projects could determine that culture is not completely necessary to learn the language. This option was marked as *not clear* because although culture was not completely necessary, some cultural traits could be observed. There were many indirect and implicit cultural aspects that appeared during all the lessons, but as culture was not the focus of the project, they were not given much importance. That did not block the process of learning, because children showed many linguistic skills such as grammar structures and vocabulary learnt through the project. They could understand which were the nuances of the meaning of the language, but without culture being the focus of it.

All these observations determine that the most followed perspectives are the communicative view and the classical-curriculum view, the ones in which culture is not essential to learn a language.

The perspectives in which culture is necessary are not very determined. That helps to understand that participating in an eTwinning project does not mean that cultural competence and interculturality are going to be enhanced, it will depend on how the project is designed and which are its objectives.

By analysing the results of the second grid, *Results of the observation of the stages of cultural awareness* are also found in section 8. *Appendices*, the level of cultural awareness reached by the students is going to be determined.

Referring to the first level stated by Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8), in which students recognise and do not judge the differences with other cultures, they demonstrated following this aspect *very clearly*. They understood that they were interacting with a different culture and there were differences. Instead of judging them, they realized that, for example, the pronunciation of the other students might be different, and they respected that completely.

Then, they reached *very clear* in the second stage according to Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8) as well. The students accepted the differences between cultures. They knew that there were different beliefs, ways of thinking, hobbies, or other cultural traits depending on the country that they were in contact with. They understand this part accurately and showed constant respect for the other culture.

Thirdly, the student's integration of the other cultures could not be stated very clear because not all the clues of acquiring this third level of cultural awareness appeared. The students could integrate aspects of the other culture, but not completely. They learned some aspects of the foreign culture, but they did not completely integrate them. To make this possible, the whole project shall be designed to work on interculturality and acculturation. Despite that, they showed clear clues of empathising with the other culture, but the target culture was still the most important. It is ought to be said that as all the countries were part of the European Union, many cultural traits were shared and integrated.

Finally, the students could reach the fourth stage stated by Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8). They showed many attitudes that demonstrated respect and appreciation for the other culture. Despite the project was not designed to work on these aspects, they showed respect and could identify some cultural traits. That is why it cannot be ensured that pupils completely integrated how the other culture worked, but they could learn some aspects of it.

So, after all these observations, it can be determined that the students, before finishing the project were situated between the ethnocentric and the transcendence stage. They learnt many implicit aspects from the other culture, but they did not completely integrate them. As was mentioned before, it can be understood that culture is not always the focus of an eTwinning project, because all the countries are part of the European Union, so they share a similar cultural framework, and they might already know some cultural traits about the other country.

#### **4.2. Results of the questionnaire**

As was mentioned before, all the questions in the questionnaire are made to analyse these three aspects:

- **Aspect 1:** Cultural aspects learnt. If students have learnt cultural traits and which ones while using eTwinning.
- **Aspect 2:** Motivation. If they find eTwinning engaging and motivating to learn from other cultures.
- **Aspect 3:** English as the target language. If the English as a vehicular language helped reach interculturality.

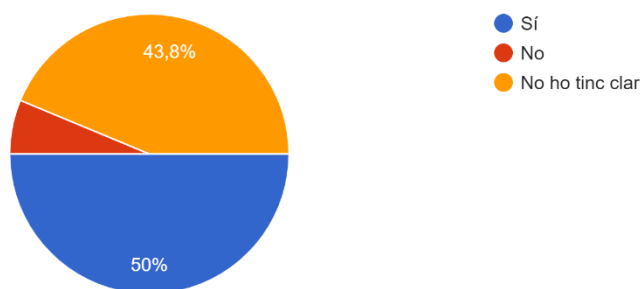
So, depending on each aspect to observe there were different questions to analyse. These are going to be discussed in the next subsections.

## Aspect 1. Cultural aspects learnt

The questions that were found to provide an answer to this aspect were questions number 3, 4, 5, and 10. The respective questions asked:

- **Number 3.** Do you think that you have learnt any aspect of the foreign culture?
- **Number 4.** If you answered 'Yes' in the last question, which aspects have you learnt?
- **Number 5.** Do you think that eTwinning has eased learning aspects about the other culture?
- **Number 10.** Do you think that you have learnt aspects of your culture? In the affirmative case, which ones?

The different answers obtained for questions number 3 were:



*Figure 3. Pie chart that represents the results of question number 3 Do you think that you have learnt any aspect of the foreign culture?*

This graphic shows the percentages and averages obtained after asking if the students of a state-funded school in Navàs (Catalunya) had learnt any cultural aspect through their eTwinning projects. Fifty per cent of the students consider that they learnt cultural aspects, 6,3% of the students consider that they did not learn any cultural aspects and 43,8% of the students are not sure if they have learnt any cultural aspects.

This graphic demonstrates that it is not sure that any eTwinning project is meant to work in cultural terms. Students could get some implicit cultural aspects from the foreign culture, but the other half per cent of the class consider that they have not, or they are not sure.

If eTwinning and participating in a collaborative project are thought to work directly on culture, these graphics demonstrate that it depends on the nature of the same project.

Despite all the children who consider that they did not learn anything or are not sure, the students that consider that learnt some cultural aspects answered distinct cultural traits.

These were introduced in question number 4, which aimed to know which cultural aspects, in the affirmative case, the students could achieve. The question was focused on knowing if they worked on cultural aspects in the current project '4EVER WILD'. These are the most relevant participation: "Different traditions, festivities, myths," "The way of living, the languages, how is the class," "I have learnt about the traditions, some words in their language."

After that, in question number 5, the objective was to know if the students found eTwinning a successful tool to learn aspects of the other cultures, independently of the project that they were doing at that moment. The different answers obtained were these:

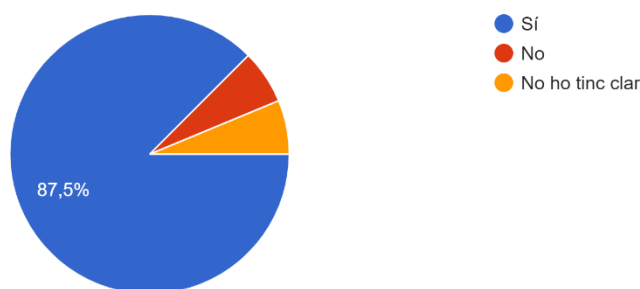


Figure 4. Pie chart that represents the results of question number 5 Do you think that eTwinning has eased learning aspects about the other culture?

The 87,5% of the students at the school in Navàs consider that eTwinning helped to know better the other culture. Then, 6,3% consider that eTwinning does not help, and finally, another 6,3% consider that they are not sure. This determines that, if the project that is being conducted is focused on culture, the pupils can learn many cultural aspects. On the other hand, if the project is far from working cultural aspects, children might, in best cases, learn some implicit aspects of the foreign culture.

Finally, in question number 10 the students were asked if they had learnt any cultural aspect about their own culture that they did not know before.

All of them answered no, except for four participants. These stated that "I have learnt the legend of *Timbaler Bruc* and other traditions that I did not know", "I have learnt about endangered animals and informatics tools", "Yes, because when I have to



explain something, I always learn new things” and “Yes, because during Christmas I had to explain different Catalan traditions to the partners”.

These answers demonstrate again that if the main purpose of the project is to explain cultural traits and generate a cultural exchange, children would develop cultural competence, hence they would become more intercultural.

## Aspect 2. Motivation

The different questions which aimed to provide an answer to this aspect were questions number 1, number 2, number 8, and number 9. These questions are:

- **Number 1:** Did you like using eTwinning in English lessons?
- **Number 2:** What did you like the most? And less?
- **Number 8:** Which was the activity that you liked the most? Why?
- **Number 9:** Would you repeat the experience with eTwinning?

Referring to question number 1, these were the results obtained:

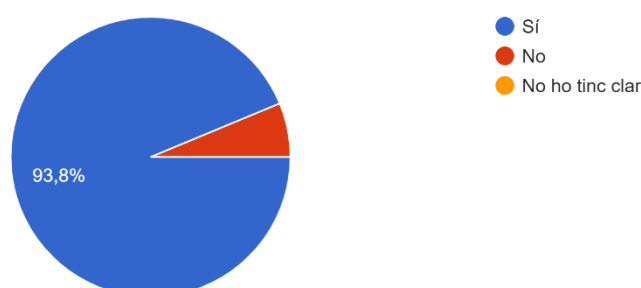


Figure 5. Pie chart that represents the results of question number 1 Did you like using eTwinning in English lessons?

Mostly all the students (93,8%) liked using eTwinning during English lessons. A 6,3% of the students did not like using eTwinning. This demonstrates that learning a language via a collaborative programme can enhance motivation to learn a language. This motivation can be used to work on cultural awareness and language simultaneously. eTwinning has advantages in terms of motivation, and teachers must keep it in mind while designing a project about culture and language using the platform.

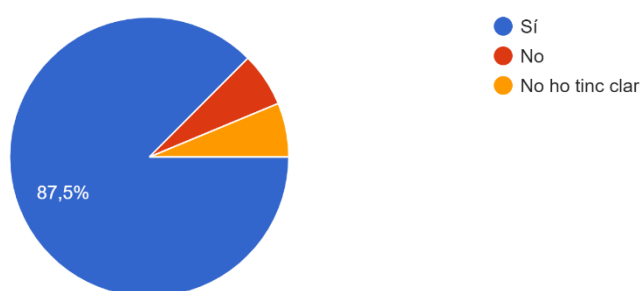
Then, in question number 2, students could express their beliefs about which activities they liked the most and less. Among the answers about what they liked the most, the most common are collaborating online with other schools, playing online games with other schools, and the general experiences that they have lived with the other partners

online. It is also relatable that students did not say anything that they did not like and found everything motivating. Just two answers said that they did not like writing.

This also helps construct a clearer idea about how motivating eTwinning is for the students and the positive benefits that it might have to work on culture.

Question number 8 provided an answer to which was the activity that the students enjoyed the most. All these aspects highlight games, video calls, and creating avatars and posters. All these answers determine that students like to participate in activities in which technology is highly involved. This situation must be considered while creating a project, because they find it very motivating, and it can generate a great occasion to create a communicative situation with motivating purposes.

Finally, question number 9 results, which asked the students if they would repeat the eTwinning experience, were:



*Figure 6. Pie chart that represents the results of question number 9 Would you repeat the experience with eTwinning?*

The 87,5% of the students answered that would participate in another eTwinning project. A 6,3% of the students consider that they would not participate, and another 6,3% of the students are not sure.

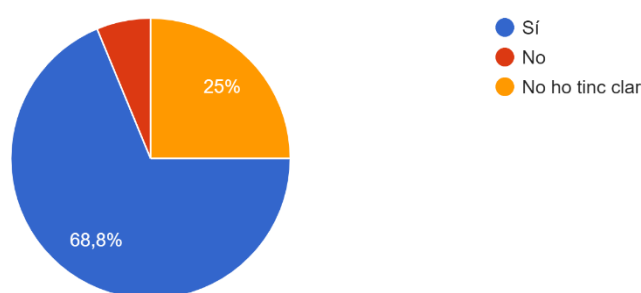
This data determines that eTwinning can be settled out in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade and the increase difficulty and content gradually. If students would repeat the experience, they are used to working on the eTwinning project, they might achieve a good cultural, linguistic, and technological level. They would be competent in all the objectives that the platform wants to reach.

### Aspect 3. English as the target language

To answer this question, two main questions were proposed to the students, these were questions number 6 and 7. These questions asked:

- **Number 6:** Do you think that English helped to learn aspects about the other culture?
- **Number 7:** If you had done the same project with students from your country, it would have been the same?

The different results for question number 6 were:



*Figure 7. Pie chart that represents the results of question number 6 Do you think that English helped to learn aspects about the other culture?*

The 68,8% of the students considered that English helped to learn cultural aspects, the 25% are not sure and the 6,3% think that English did not help.

It must be considered that the pupils who think that English did not help might have problems expressing themselves written or orally. Otherwise, if they wrote all their essays and communicated verbally in Spanish or Catalan, there would also exist a lack of communication, because of the target language in all the cases is English.

Despite that, many students find English a useful language to learn diverse cultural aspects. This demonstrates the consolidation between language and culture, which cannot be separated.

Finally, in question number 7, students could answer if this experience would have been the same with students of the same culture. Ninety-three percent of the students answered that it would not be the same, because they already knew their cultures and could speak the same language, hence they would not have learnt as many things as they did with eTwinning.

This demonstrates that students recognise English as a thorough source to share unfamiliar cultural experiences, beliefs, or traditions, and it can help enhance the cultural exchange.

### **4.3 Results of the interviews**

All the interviews were proposed to teachers who had previous experience using the eTwinning platform. They had to answer eleven questions that aimed to determine these main focuses:

1. Experience in years and countries that the school stayed connected with.
2. If teachers, consider that eTwinning is a reliable source to work on cultural aspects.
3. Cultural improvements were found thanks to eTwinning.
4. Advantages and disadvantages of using eTwinning.
5. Focus on the content or focus on culture
6. Grade of cultural awareness achieved by the students

#### **1. Experience of the interviewers**

All the interviewers had previous experience using the platform. One of them has been using the platform since last year, whilst the rest of them have been using the platform for three, to twelve years long. That determines that all of them could participate in one eTwinning project, hence they can answer the different questions proposed.

Moreover, as they have been staying connected with diverse cultures and realities, they can answer widely and deeply because they might have several contexts to express their experiences.

#### **2. Is eTwinning useful to work on culture?**

All the participants affirm that eTwinning is a useful source to work on cultural traits. They underline how motivating is for students to participate in these kinds of projects, and how easy it is to explain cultural aspects such as festivities or traditions.

Two of the answers also state that telecollaboration is useful to know other realities. It is practical to know how other educational systems work and which are the similarities and difficulties about them. So, students will learn also about the foreign educational culture reality.

It should be also considered that two answers stated that “It helps you to work on European cultural aspects” and “I would not like to reduce eTwinning only to the linguistic aspect which for me is secondary to the cultural one and the acquisition of European citizenship skills.” Both affirmations determine that eTwinning is not only focused on learning about the foreign culture, but also a platform in which students can learn and share the European values, perspectives, and ways of thinking. Despite cultural diversity, schools share the European cultural framework.

### **3. Cultural improvements were found thanks to eTwinning.**

All the answers demonstrate that students learnt cultural aspects of the foreign culture. eTwinning eased that because it is easier to share their work and realities via the platform. Children can appreciate the diverse realities and integrate them. These are the main objectives of being culturally competent and achieving one of the last stages of cultural awareness. That means that children can learn about several cultural traits via eTwinning.

This process cannot be possible without communicative situations. Depending on the project, students should communicate in distinct ways. For example, in subsection “*8.4 Interview answers (2)*” the interviewer comments that they collaborated with a Ukrainian school. Also, in subsection “*8.6 Interview answers (4)*” the interviewer stated that “Depending on the type of project, it allows wide learning of cultural items or aspects”.

This forms part of the nature of eTwinning. The social reality and circumstances of each country can determine what projects can the schools participate in. This aspect might also change depending on the country that the school is staying connected with, due to social, political, or economic circumstances. This was the case of the school that enrolled in a project with the Ukrainian school. The students had to adapt to the communicative situation due to the social and political circumstances of the war that the country was living.

#### **4. Advantages and disadvantages of using eTwinning.**

All the advantages that the interviewers shared are:

- Real context of communication
- It is easy to share traditions and cultural aspects
- It helps to improve the digital competence of the students
- It helps to understand the European citizenship

All the disadvantages that the interviewers shared are:

- The distance between the partners
- Lack of time of the teachers and schools
- Class management

All these results state that, despite there might be some difficulties for teachers while using the platform or preparing a project, the educational benefits are significant. The four positive aspects that the interviewers shared determine some of the contemporary objectives followed by English methodologies and teaching approaches.

Thanks to the real context of communication and working on digital aspects, the language is motivating for the pupils, so they demonstrate a positive attitude to learn it and improve their skills because it will become a necessity. Moreover, they will have to reach the cultural and intercultural part of the language, in which they will have to show respect and appreciation for other cultures and languages.

#### **5. Focus on the content or focus on culture**

The different results obtained to discuss this issue state that students especially learn about cultural aspects of the project and are focused on working on these aspects. If the project is centred on sharing traditions and festivities, students will widely learn about the foreign culture. If the project is fully focused on content, the students might learn about the use of the language, but not about cultural aspects.

Despite this last observation, one answer showed that students always learn about both topics. Despite this project is just focused on working on language content, students will also learn about some cultural traits.

The consideration that can be gained from these aspects is that by proposing a cultural centred project, students are going to learn about both aspects. If they want to share cultural aspects, they might have to share the meanings of language. Consequently, if the target language is English and both parts want to share cultural traits, they will simultaneously learn about language and culture.

If the project is just focused on content, it will be ensured that they learn about the use of the language, but students will just learn some implicit cultural aspects, not the explicit and deeper ones.

## 6. Grade of cultural awareness achieved by the students

All the participants think that, depending on the project, the students improved their level of cultural awareness. Some of the students could conquer the last stage of cultural awareness, and some of them could get distinct aspects about the second, third and four aspects, but not a specific one. These aspects were the four stated by Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8):

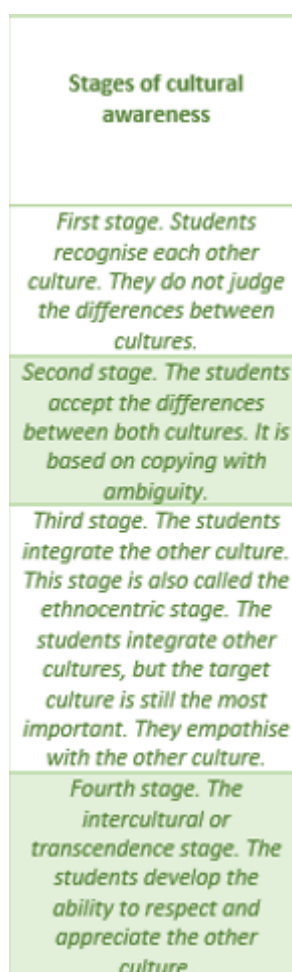


Figure 8. Cultural awareness stages stated by Gaston (1984, as cited in Tran, 2010, p.8)

All the participants agree that students have improved their level of cultural awareness but depending on the culture and school they were in contact and the nature of the project, they could reach unusual characteristics of each stage.



## 5. Discussion

In this section, the results of the conducted research and the aspects observed in the theoretical framework are going to be discussed.

First, it can be determined that the main objectives of the research have been achieved. All the data was collected in one school and just two lessons could be observed. These situations made me aware of the difficulties that can appear during the research process and how methodical, specific, and accurate can the process be.

It should be also considered that there is a lack of studies on the combination of both research topics: culture and eTwinning. Despite that and after analysing and contrasting all the data obtained, the results can be compared with the previous studies conducted.

Camilleri (2016, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020) stated that through collaborative online projects, the students improved their level of intercultural awareness. Considering all the results obtained, this aspect can be completely ensured. Observations determined that students could reach a positive attitude toward other cultures, and, despite the culture, the teaching perspective was not focused on teaching culture, there were many implicit aspects that the students could get from the project.

This affirmation is also demonstrated by the different answers provided by the students on the questionnaires and by the teachers in the interviews. The students could share some of the cultural aspects that they could learn during the project, although it was not focused on culture. Fifty per cent of the class also affirmed that had learned about foreign cultures.

The teachers could state which level of cultural awareness did their students achieve after participating in a project. Most of them answered that they achieved a successful level, and they could build cultural bridges thanks to eTwinning and telecollaboration.

Moreover, all the benefits that Healey (1998, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020) demonstrated could also be contrasted.

Healey (1998, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020) explained that both schools could receive immediate feedback. During all the observations, teachers could share what activities they were interested to work on, which aspects were successful and which aspects could be improved. The observed teacher explained that they were in constant contact to contrast and improve the online experience with the other teachers. Students could also receive immediate feedback, in fact, during the observations students

participated in a game and there appeared different corrections from part of both schools.

Another benefit that Healey (1998, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020) observed was that the students could also take profit from individualized learning. The projects were specifically designed for them and synchronized with current social issues and topics. The teachers tried to select motivating and engaging projects. Therefore, the students could participate actively and could learn about the language and culture.

The last benefit demonstrated by Healey (1998, as cited in Alcaraz-Mármol, 2020) referred to the improvement of the co-working online experience. This could be also analysed via observations and interviews. The co-working experience might improve their adaptability to these situations by the students. This would depend on the project and the current activity that is conducted. Some teachers explained that the class management could be difficult in some situations because the students were so excited. Despite that, they could also learn several online collaborative tools and methods to improve their digital, social, and linguistic skills.

All these observations were considered in the study case that Alcaraz-Mármol (2020) proposed. She could demonstrate after her whole study that if the project is focused on teaching cultural aspects, the eTwinning platform eases the entire process of communication, interaction and online co-working.

The different answers obtained after the interviews determine the internationalization of the language and the platform. The main purpose of the language is to achieve a “critical citizenship” (Guilherme, 2002 as cited in Kiss Weninger, 2013) in which the students know that they are learning a language to become critical of information and achieve “global culture consciousness” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008 as cited in Kiss and Weninger, 2013). The different answers state that the objectives of developing European citizenship and cultural awareness were successfully reached after using eTwinning.

The different teaching perspectives explained by Holme (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010) and stages of cultural awareness could be determined after the research process. Specific traits and other overall ones could be demonstrated after the different observations and reflections.

Finally, and referring to the main objectives achieved by the eTwinning platform (eTwinning, 2018), it has been demonstrated that students improved their digital ICT

skills use, their language abilities, and their communicative and integrative culture levels.

All the conclusions and determinations obtained after contrasting and analysing all the data obtained, studying cultural and language aspects, and comparing these both with previous studies, can be found in the next section.

## 6. Conclusions

After conducting all the investigations about which is the relationship between eTwinning and culture, different conclusions and statements can be determined after the complete process. These conclusions are going to be settled in this section, and an answer to the research question *How does eTwinning enhance cultural and intercultural aspects in English as Foreign Language lessons?* is going to be provided as well.

All the process followed to reach those conclusions is writing a specific theoretical framework and conducting the different observations, interviews and questionnaires which provided the necessary information to get a conclusion.

About the theoretical framework, several articles and papers talked about culture and language teaching. It has been a very researched topic in education, and the most relevant conclusions and perspectives of different authors were stated in the theoretical framework as well. The same happened with the other issue related to this topic, the eTwinning platform. Research articles state the importance of eTwinning to improve pupils' motivation while learning English or the digital competence. Although these are especially prominent issues discussed, as mentioned in the section "2.3 *eTwinning and Teaching Language and Culture*," there is a lack of studies about eTwinning and teaching language culture interrelated. Those studies stated that learners improved language abilities, such as grammar, writing and reading skills. This is a good aspect, considering that one of the eTwinning objectives is to improve pupils' English level.

So, after all the information and data collected and its analysis, the first conclusion that can be stated is that it is not clear to affirm that all the projects conducted by eTwinning also imply work on cultural aspects.

These projects might be about different topics, for example, the ones observed were about animals in risk of extinguishing and the European Union. Although there could be found several cultural aspects in these projects, it cannot be ensured that culture is one of the main focuses while using eTwinning. Despite the different schools connected and shared an online space between them, it is not specified that during those hours the students learnt how to act culturally correct or how to develop their cultural awareness.

According to the eTwinning objectives, these projects resulted successful, because students were learning English while improving their digital skills.

This conclusion does not state that eTwinning is not a useful tool to work on Cultural Competence and interculturality. As Alcaraz-Mármol (2020) exemplified with her study, if the English teacher designs a specific project with clear objectives and methods to reach the highest level of cultural awareness and interculturality, eTwinning is a wonderful platform that can simplify the teaching task.

So, the other conclusion got after all the research, is that the cultural and intercultural aspects can be worked accurately, but if the didactic unit is specifically about this topic.

One aspect that is considered is that the simple fact of using eTwinning will provide the students with deeper knowledge about the other culture. That is not true, because research stated that depending on the nature of the project, the students can work intensively on cultural and intercultural aspects or, on the other hand, do not work any of them. Both possibilities exist depending on the main goals and nature of the project.

So, if English teachers want to improve Cultural Competence and cultural awareness, they could use the several pieces of advice and guides that Richards (2001, as cited in Tran, 2010) and Peterson and Coltrane (2003, as cited in Tran, 2010) give to the readers and that is explained in subsection “2.2.10 *Role of teachers in English language and culture teaching*”. These methods and approaches can be also worked via eTwinning. The platform will ease the process to communicate the results with the other school, sharing information and materials, and providing feedback.

Another important aspect should be considered while talking about culture and eTwinning. As stated in the theoretical framework, eTwinning is only available to specific countries that are inside the European Union. Thanks to the observation of the project about the EU, the conclusion that the students who participate in an eTwinning project are also under the same cultural framework and cultural context could also be get. They might all know about the same values, beliefs, and perspectives that are present in the European Nation, hence in western cultures.

This would completely switch in case of changing the origin of the other school. In the case of being a non-western culture school, there would be other opinions, beliefs, and life goals completely different compared to the ones shared between the two European schools. The cultural framework would drastically change, so the cultural interrelations and attitudes worked also would.

This would be an interesting study to settle out, also the fact of launching an eTwinning international platform in which any country could participate.

To conclude, a definitive answer is going to be provided to the research question and the hypothesis is also going to be contrasted.

The eventual answer to the research question *How does eTwinning enhance cultural and intercultural aspects in English as Foreign Language lessons?* is that it can help a lot to focus on intercultural aspects, but it completely depends on the nature of the project. If the main goal is to know better the other culture and the activities, tasks and planning have been specifically designed for that, eTwinning eases the entire process to work on cultural and intercultural aspects, hence, it is an excellent method.

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## 8. Appendices

### 8.1. Results of the observation of the cultural and teaching language perspective

Cultural language teaching perspective	Perspective Achievement Grading				OBSERVATIONS
	Very Clear	Clear	Not very clear	Not clear	
<p><i>Communicative view.</i>  <i>"Giving the students language that can be used in a particular context"</i>  <i>(Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i></p>	X				<p>This is the most relevant aspect that has been observed during all the sessions. Culture is not necessary to learn the language, because the student's objective is to learn how to express themselves, independently of which culture they are in contact with. It is ought to be said, that the same intention of the different projects was to improve digital and linguistic pupils' skills, and not enhance interculturalism. Despite that, there always appeared diverse cultural aspects indirectly.</p> <p>In both projects, pupils demonstrated an exceptionally good English level, and they are constantly learning many language aspects referred to as grammar, vocabulary, speaking, reading, and listening. This does not mean that they are not working cultural facts because there are many implicit intercultural aspects that, while connected with other countries, interrelation and communication generate.</p> <p>If the language aims to be communicatively competent, children have reached it successfully. They know how to adequate their speech to the receptor, how to order a text, write letters or use linkers to express their opinions and thoughts fluently.</p>

<p><i>Classical-curriculum view “Helps to increase the intellectual value of the language” (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i></p>		X		<p>Children participated in many different activities. They could prepare a game to play with their partners online in class or write a letter to the president of the UNO. Depending on the project they were involved in and the activity they were doing, the classical-curriculum view appeared clearly.</p> <p>Despite that, they were always working to increase the intellectual value of the language. eTwinning did of this part of the process of learning English a very motivating one because the students could find a real context of communication in which they had to use ‘real English.’</p>
<p><i>Instrumental/ Culture-free-language view. “It begins from a common concern in respect of hidden political and cultural agenda of a language” (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i></p>		X		<p>This was an important aspect underlined by the nature of the projects and the platform, and by teachers.</p> <p>eTwinning has been designed to be used in certain European countries that are integrated into the European Nation. That means that the cultural existing framework of all the schools that participate in the projects is going to be remarkably similar. Not all the countries, hence schools have the same traditions or ways of acting, but they are commonly united by the rights, perspectives and ways of thinking that are enhanced by the European Nation.</p> <p>So, it is logical that the political agenda of the language is going to be the same. Despite that, and because of recent war conflicts, children could be in touch with Ukrainian schools that allowed them to work on uncommon projects.</p>

<p><i>Constructionist view</i>  <i>“Language students may be manipulated by the cultural construction of a text and the text’s implicit message; language learning should entail a good understanding of such message” (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i></p>				X	<p>Any aspects of this perspective could be observed.</p>
<p><i>Competence view</i>  <i>“The knowledge of a language’s culture is thought essential to a thorough understanding of language’s nuances of meanings” (Holme, 2003 as cited in Tran, 2010, p.15)</i></p>			X		<p>After observing the different sessions and projects, I can determine that the culture was not essential to learning the language. Children showed different linguistic improvements referred to grammar or vocabulary. In the case of the 4EVER WILD project, children learnt many vocabularies related to climate change, nature, and the environment that they did not know before.</p> <p>This is one of the objectives of the eTwinning platform, so it is not negative at all. Despite that, in terms of culture, there appeared some implicit aspects that were not the focus of lessons. This is normal because if children have already been in contact with the other school, they might already know which are the traditions, festivities, or typical songs.</p> <p>They could easily understand which were the nuances of the meaning of the language, but without taking culture as the most important part.</p>

## 8.2. Results of the observation grid of the stages of cultural awareness

Stages of cultural awareness	Stage Achievement Grading				OBSERVATIONS
	Very Clear	Clear	Not clear	Not clear	
<i>First stage. Students recognise each other culture. They do not judge the differences between cultures.</i>	X				The students show respect for the other culture. They understand which are the differences between both cultures and the current situation of each country and school.
<i>Second stage. The students accept the differences between both cultures. It is based on copying with ambiguity.</i>	X				The students accept the difference between both cultures. They understand that there are diverse ways of acting or interpreting things depending on the country and culture.
<i>Third stage. The students integrate the other culture. This stage is also called the ethnocentric stage. The students integrate other cultures, but the target culture is still the most important. They empathise with the other culture.</i>		X			Independently that Sant Josep school was in contact with a school from another country, these two are part of the European Union. That means that they also share different values, beliefs and thoughts that are not necessary to integrate from the other culture. They could empathise with the other culture, but they did not fully integrate it as well. That is not a problem for the teacher or the platform, because the projects observed were extremely far from a culture-based eTwinning project. The target culture was still the most relevant and important too.
<i>Fourth stage. The intercultural or transcendence stage. The students develop the ability to respect and appreciate the other culture.</i>		X			There were not many aspects to observe. They showed some facts about recognising and explaining cultural aspects of the foreign culture. They explained them respectfully and with appreciation. Despite that, we cannot ensure that students developed a complete understanding of how the foreign culture worked, but yes, some aspects of it.

### **8.3. Interview answers (1)**

- 1. How long has your experience been with the eTwinning online internship programme?**

Just one year through one project.

- 2. How many countries/schools have you been staying connected with?**

3 schools from three different countries: Italy, Hungary, and Ukraine.

- 3. From these last, which one do you think was the most significant one? Why?**

The school in Italy, because it was the one with more experience in eTwinning and the one that most collaborated in the project, respecting the deadlines and constantly proposing new activities.

- 4. It is already known that eTwinning is a valuable tool to work on the content and learn, specifically, the English language. What do you think about this online experience to work on cultural aspects?**

It is great to work on cultural aspects because you can exchange experiences and traditions, see which are in common and which are so different. And all explained by children like our pupils that live and celebrate the traditions or know perfectly the cultural aspects worked.

- 5. Did you find any improvements in cultural aspects after using eTwinning? In the affirmative case, which ones? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project)**

I think that after working with these schools they know more things about the countries and traditions and they feel like they are more near them, I mean, when they hear something about these countries, they immediately recognise something we have been working with, or when we talk about traditions, they easily compare what we do with what they do. The project has broadened their minds and now they are more open to seeing things from different points.

- 6. Do you think that students might know better the other culture thanks to the eTwinning platform? Why?**

Yes, of course. It is just what I have explained in the two previous answers.



**7. Could you say the best and worst quality of eTwinning in cultural terms?**

The best thing is that it allows us to easily share traditions and cultural aspects, so, not only know about them but live them and even participate somehow.

I do not think it has any bad qualities.

**8. Which aspects do you think are better to focus on? Why?**

The most significant and interesting points to focus on are traditions and festivities and food associated with these moments.

**9. In terms of interculturality, why would you recommend using eTwinning?**

Because it helps to stay connected with other cultures.

**10. Considering your experience, did students know better the other culture, or did they just focus on learning content? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project)**

In our case the content was about learning about the other cultures, so yes, they did learn about them.

**11. To conclude, after participating in an eTwinning project, which stage of cultural awareness do you think could students reach (first, second, third or fourth) while learning language and culture?**

I think they can easily reach the fourth stage.

**8.4. Interview answers (2)**

**1. How long has your experience been with the e-Twinning online internship programme?**

I have experienced the E-twinning program for about 10 years.

**2. How many countries/schools have you been staying connected with?**

I have been in contact with ten countries.

**3. From these last, which one do you think was the most significant one? Why?**

for the points of contact between the two cultures and for the ability of the Spanish partner who was highly active.

**4. It is already known that e-Twinning is a valuable tool to work on the content and learn, specifically, the English language. What do you think about this online experience to work on cultural aspects?**

It is a remarkably simple and fun way to practice the English language as a vehicular language for many projects and to experience the language of communication immediately. However, I would not like to reduce eTwinning only to the linguistic aspect which for me is secondary to the cultural one and the acquisition of European citizenship skills.

**5. Did you find any improvements in cultural aspects after using eTwinning? In the affirmative case, which ones? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project)**

The pupils are much more open mind and much more aware of cultural differences, in which they have found common points. Our last experience in Etwinning also involved a Ukrainian school, so the children were able to directly understand the drama of the war that involves the country because they did build empathy with them.

**6. Do you think that students might know better the other culture thanks to the eTwinning platform? Why?**

Yes. I believe that through eTwinning the pupils, even the youngest ones, can physically enter the schools of their peers, learn about their habits, play games, see their faces, hear their stories; exchange views on everything children may be interested in and learn aspects about a country that adults often do not consider interesting. Are a safe platform and they can use it at school.

**7. Could you say the best and worst quality of e-Twinning in cultural terms?**

The best thing is the possibility of being able to experience citizenship that is wider than the one our teachers and pupils are used to practising, the European citizenship.

**8. Which aspects do you think are better to focus on? Why?**

It is important for primary school pupils to always find an interest in their real lives; in my experience, the easiest and most profitable activities are those that involve aspects of traditional festivals and typical country narratives. These aspects can involve arts and crafts and an exchange of products. The funniest project we did was called "Xmas in a shoebox" and it also involved the pupils of

the kindergarten. A flash project that the children loved a lot. Long projects risk being boring and difficult to manage.

**9. In terms of interculturality, why would you recommend using e-Twinning?**

E twinning is a simple and safe way to contact other cultures and discover differences and similarities. Exchanging photos, and seeing others, makes them seem closer and stimulates curiosity to know something more about others. Stay in touch with others to create the right empty. They can not only accept a diverse culture, but they start to integrate it

**10. Considering your experience, did students know better the other culture, or did they just focus on learning content? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project)**

They mostly understood the cultural aspects of the project

**11. To conclude, after participating in an eTwinning project, which stage of cultural awareness do you think could students reach (first, second, third or fourth) while learning language and culture?**

I hope the fourth. They learn how to build cultural bridges.

**8.5. Interviews answers (3)**

**1. How long has your experience been with the e-Twinning online internship programme?**

I have been participating in eTwinning projects since 2010, 12 years.

**2. How many countries/schools have you been staying connected with?**

The last countries that we have been staying connected with are Greece, Poland, Italy, Wales, France, Germany, and Ukraine.

**3. From these last, which one do you think was the most significant one? Why?**

Greece and France were the most collaborative planned project by the teachers. Students could also share a lot of experiences and work together.

**4. It is already known that e-Twinning is a valuable tool to work on the content and learn, specifically, the English language. What do you think about this online experience to work on cultural aspects?**

This is a valuable tool. It helps you to work on European cultural aspects and to understand better how different educational systems work. Depending on how you design the project, you are always going to work on cultural aspects more directly or indirectly.

**5. Did you find any improvements in cultural aspects after using eTwinning? In the affirmative case, which ones? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project)**

Yes, I did. Once the students started learning aspects about the foreign culture, they set out a comparative in which they contrast their own culture with the other one. This helps to reinforce the values that they have and to learn different shared ideas and beliefs. All these aspects help the students to be part of the same European cultural framework.

**6. Do you think that students might know better the other culture thanks to the eTwinning platform? Why?**

Yes, because they have been staying connected with other cultures and learnt specific cultural aspects.

**7. Could you say the best and worst quality of e-Twinning in cultural terms?**

The best quality is that it enhances the digital and communicative competence, from teachers to students. The cooperative work is also very enhanced, as well as the students' motivation. This makes learning incredibly significant. Autonomy is also developed, and critical thinking too.

Working with partners sometimes is difficult because online resources are sometimes difficult to be worked on. Despite that, the results are significantly better. Another difficult aspect to consider is that class management is sometimes complicated.

**8. Which aspects do you think are better to focus on? Why?**

eTwinning has not got any specific topic, which is why teachers are free to choose the topic depending on the current global situations or experiences of the students. They can be artistic, social, natural... Many times, they are simultaneously combined with English language learning.

**9. In terms of interculturality, why would you recommend using e-Twinning?**

I would recommend it because the motivation that the students experience while discovering the other countries and their own culture is most significant compared with a regular class project.

**10. Considering your experience, did students know better the other culture, or did they just focus on learning content? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project)**

They usually work on content, but there are always indirect cultural aspects that appear.

**11. To conclude, after participating in an eTwinning project, which stage of cultural awareness do you think could students reach (first, second, third or fourth) while learning language and culture?**

I think that it would be a mix of them, but the fourth one is the main one.

**8.6. Interview answers (4)**

**1. How long has your experience been with the e-Twinning online internship programme?**

I have been developing eTwinning projects with other schools for 3 years now.

**2. How many countries/schools have you been staying connected with?**

I have been working with twenty-two, but I stay connected with one school because with the other schools we just developed small projects (one month long or so). With my main colleague, who is from Sweden, we developed a complete project of about 3 or 4 months of work.

**3. From these last, which one do you think was the most significant one? Why?**

The school in Sweden has been our main project partner. We developed together with the project, and we followed all the steps. We send each other the final product and the students could see their Swedish mates.

**4. It is already known that e-Twinning is a valuable tool to work on the content and learn, specifically, the English language. What do you think about this online experience to work on cultural aspects?**

It is remarkably interesting to see that the students understand the importance of learning a foreign language. They understand it to communicate. Besides,

the fact of sharing experiences with children from other countries allows them to know about unfamiliar cultures, ways of learning, characteristics of schools... Even the clothing can be different! And they are really satisfied to get to know that from a direct dialogue or video specifically created to make them know their partners.

**5. Did you find any improvements in cultural aspects after using eTwinning? In the affirmative case, which ones? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project.)**

As I said before, the students learn about the fact that languages are different, and that it is important to learn them to communicate. And with the small projects (about Eastern), they also learned about the unusual ways in which people celebrate special occasions in other countries.

**6. Do you think that students might know better the other culture thanks to the eTwinning platform? Why?**

They realise the differences and enjoy them. The fact of communicating with children in other countries at least awakens their curiosity. Depending on the type of project, it allows wide learning of cultural items or aspects.

**7. Could you say the best and worst quality of e-Twinning in cultural terms?**

The best of it is, without any doubt, the fact of the real thing. Real contact with the partners allows for the first line of communication.

The worst are the distance and the time: schools are always dedicated to different activities and projects, and they sometimes lack time to concentrate on important aspects, and the distance and the lack of time do not help to delve into some aspects of the projects.

**8. Which aspects do you think are better to focus on? Why?**

The most prominent issue in the eTwinning field is the use and learning of real language and cultural contents. Allowing the students to communicate in a foreign language and do it to talk about things they already know well, as well as learn about other cultures, makes them feel comfortable with their learning and become confident and motivated. That is why the real subjects, of interest to the students, should be at the centre of the eTwinning projects.

**9. In terms of interculturality, why would you recommend using e-Twinning?**

eTwinning does not put any limits on cooperation with other students in other countries. Projects could be as huge and interconnected as the teachers should imagine them.

**10. Considering your experience, did students know better the other culture, or did they just focus on learning content? (The answer may change depending on the nature of the project.)**

The eTwinning experience motivates the students. Depending on the type of project, they would focus on learning content, learning to communicate, or learning about the culture. Usually, they learn a little bit of everything... The fact of being motivated is a success already!

**11. To conclude, after participating in an eTwinning project, which stage of cultural awareness do you think students reach (first, second, third or fourth) while learning language and culture?**

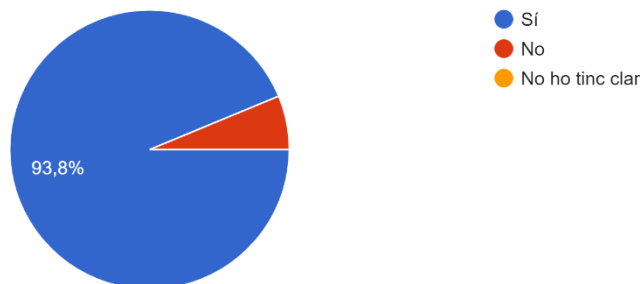
I think I cannot answer this question... Depending on the project, on the group, on the countries, you cooperate with... I would say we could find stages 2, 3 and 4 in different partnerships. I would also add that it depends on the number of times the students had been working on eTwinning projects, as this kind of project opens their minds and makes them feel more comfortable with other cultures.

## 8.7. Questionnaire results

### Question 1

1. T'ha agradat utilitzar l'eTwinning a l'assignatura d'anglès?

16 respuestas



### Question 2

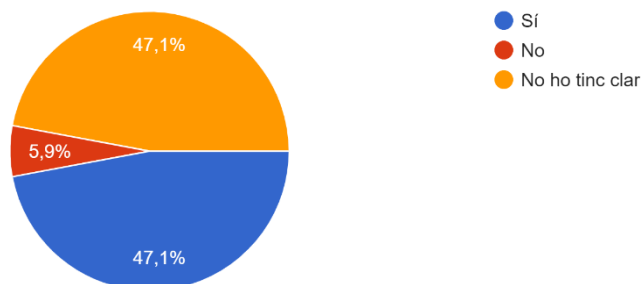
2. Què és el que més t'ha agradat? I el que menys t'ha agradat?
M'ha agradat tot i no hi ha res que no m'hagi agradat
M'ha agradat treballar amb altres escoles, tot m'ha agradat.
El que més m'ha agradat es treballar online amb gent d'altres països, però no hi ha res que no m'hagi agradat.
El que mes me agrada es el jocs que fem me agrada tot
En realitat m'ha agradat tot en general, però si tinc que escollir es la de la videotrucada (jungle trip).
A mi m'ha agradat tot però el que més han sigut les vídeo trucades.
El que més m'agrada son els treballs amb equip i no hi ha res que no m'agradi
El que més es els jocs que em fet I el que menys escriure tant
Conèixer més persones i el que menys res
Les experiències amb els altres països.
En general tot i no sabria triar el que no m'ha agradat
el que mes m'ha agradat es conèixer coses noves. I el que menys el wi-fi es talla molt.
tot m'ha agradat!
M'ha agradat tot
El que més m'ha agradat es el board game i cap no m'ha agradat
El que mes es el 4everwild i el que menys res



### Question 3

3. Creus que has après aspectes sobre la cultura de l'altre país?

17 respuestas



### Question 4

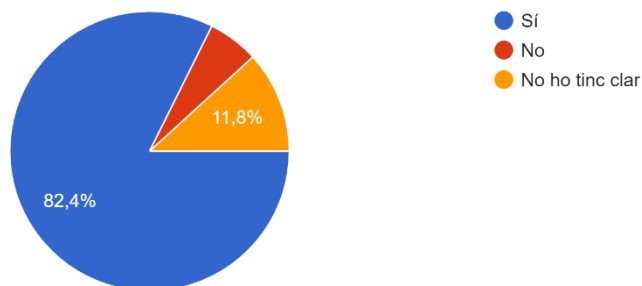
4. Si a l'anterior pregunta has marcat l'opció 'Sí', quines coses has après sobre la cultura de l'altre país?

<b>Quants animals quedaven als altres països</b>
<b>Per exemple les diferents llegendes, tradicions, festes...</b>
<b>Cançons, tradicions, vocabulari...</b>
<b>Que encara porten mascareta, que es diverteixen molt i que els agrada aprendre.</b>
<b>Les cultures, hàbits.</b>
<b>No he marcat que sí</b>
-
<b>La manera de viure, els idiomes, com es la classe...</b>
<b>He après sobre les seves tradicions, alguna paraula amb aquell idioma...</b>
<b>Res</b>

## Question 5

5. Creus que l'eTwinning ha facilitat aprendre aspectes de la cultura d'altres països?

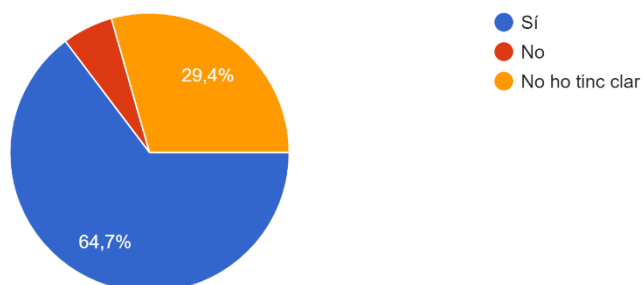
17 respuestas



## Question 6

6. Creus que l'anglès ha facilitat aprendre aspectes sobre les altres cultures?

17 respuestas



## Question 7

7. Si haguessis fet el mateix projecte amb estudiants del teu país, hauria sigut el mateix?

Per què?

**No, perquè parlariem entre nosaltres amb català.**

**No, perquè aprens l'idioma de cada país i altres formes de vida.**

**No, perquè no hagués après nous idiomes, tradicions, paraules...**

**No perquè e après molt anglès**

**No, perquè els estudiants del meu país no saben parlar gaire anglès com els de fora, i no seria molt divertit.**

<b>No perquè no aprendríem coses d'altres països.</b>
<b>No perquè son coses que ja sabem. Però si perquè a eTwinning és parla en anglès</b>
<b>No ho tinc clar</b>
<b>No perquè ja sabries moltes coses sobre ells i amb altres països no</b>
<b>No. Perquè podríem haver parlat amb castellà hi no hauria sigut tant guai.</b>
<b>No. Perquè parlem el mateix idioma i no aprendríem idiomes estrangers</b>
<b>No, per que seria tot molt igual.</b>
<b>No, perquè ja mes o menys ja sabríem les seves tradicions</b>
<b>Si. Perquè m'ha agradat molt</b>
<b>No, perquè no hauríem treballat el anglès</b>
<b>Si perquè això ho pot fer tots els països</b>
<b>Sí perquè és divertit i es xulo fer servir ordinadors</b>

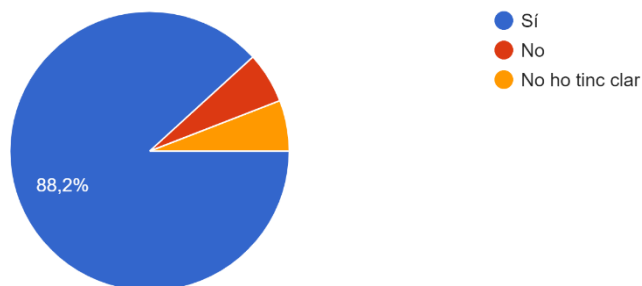
### Question 8

<b>8. Quina és l'activitat que t'ha agradat més? Per què?</b>
<b>Fer el pòster perquè ho fas amb ganes i creativitat</b>
<b>El logo, perquè em descobert noves pagines per crear pòsters i logos hi ha sigut molt guai.</b>
<b>Fer uns avatars, perquè va ser molt divertit</b>
<b>El jocs fets per nosaltres perquè es divertit</b>
<b>La que m'ha agradat mes es el del jungle trip.</b>
<b>L'activitat que m'ha agradat més a sigut fer el joc amb vídeo trucada tots junts.</b>
<b>El menú conta preferit a siguin molt guai fer els vídeos</b>
<b>No ho tinc clar</b>
<b>El joc doncs perquè és divertit</b>
<b>Ha sigut el joc on-line amb els altres països</b>
<b>La majoria de les coses</b>
<b>Fer els jocs, per que m'ho passo molt bé dissenyant-los.</b>
<b>Fer els pòster em va agradar molt i també fer els jocs perquè va ser molt divertit</b>
<b>Jocs</b>
<b>El board game, perquè em après moltes coses i també perquè em treballat amb l'ordinador</b>
<b>El 4everwild perquè em fer notícies el logo etc...</b>
<b>El "boardgame" perquè va molar fer una videoconferència amb altres nens de països diferents</b>

## Question 9

9. Repetiries l'experiència que has tingut amb l'eTwinning?

17 respuestas



## Question 10

**10. Consideres que també has après aspectes sobre la teva cultura? En cas afirmatiu, quines?**

No
Si, per exemple la llegenda del timbaler del Bruc i tradicions que no coneixia.
Si, dels animals en extinció i també he après eines informàtiques
No
No, ja les sabia totes.
Jo ja les sabia però fen això les he recordat.
Ja les sabia
No ho tinc clar
No
No ho se.
No.
Si, perquè en la forma de explicar descobreixo coses noves
Si, quan a la nostre classe expliquem descobreixo coses noves que no sabia
No me'n recordo de res
A eTwinning per nadal els i vam explicar que era el tio i que cagava regals...
No
No