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A DOOR OUT

eTWINNING IN

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

A qualitative study on students' reflections on the potentials for language learning when participating in an eTwinning project, in lower secondary school

Master's thesis - Didactics for English and foreign languages

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To be in contact with real people in Twin Space made a big difference and I truly liked to try out new work methods on my computer other than our course book. I even used Spanish in my spare time, and this is very unlike me. (Student Jakob)

For my boys, big as small

Abstract

This study focuses on the educational use of eTwinning in foreign language learning, from an emic perspective. The eTwinning Platform can be described as a learning community for schools in Europe which promotes school collaboration through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This offers a real opportunity for authentic communication and intercultural collaboration. Today it is a great emphasis in gaining communicative competence and intercultural competence in foreign languages, exemplified from the curriculum of foreign languages in LK06, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and other documents relevant for foreign language learning.

This study's main objective has been to explore the language learners' reflections on potentials for foreign language learning from participating in an eTwinning project, in lower secondary school. The data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and reflection logs. The data have been triangulated and analyzed thematically. Two overall themes related to authentic communication and intercultural competence were established, with reference to the main research questions defined in my study: *What are the potentials for foreign language learning when participating in an eTwinning project in lower secondary school, as perceived and expressed by the students?*

I found that there was a high degree of consciousness that using the language in real and authentic communication situations with other language learners is beneficial for the language learning outcome. This study also showed that intercultural collaboration in an eTwinning project was considered to increase the participants' intercultural competence. The study furthermore displayed that eTwinning was evaluated to be an efficient tool in foreign language learning because it embraces many parts of the subject. This makes it possible to develop many skills simultaneously and hence learn Spanish more effectively. In addition the study found that scaffolding was essential for language learning to take place. Learning language together was one of the most important benefits from participating in the eTwinning project, according to the students.

Sammendrag

Denne studien fokuserer på bruk av eTwinning i fremmedspråklæringen, fra et emisk perspektiv. eTwinning-plattformen kan beskrives som et læringssamfunn for skoler i Europa som promoterer skolesamarbeid gjennom bruk av informasjonsteknologi (IKT). Dette skaper en reell mulighet for autentisk kommunikasjon og interkulturelt samarbeid. I dag er det stort fokus på å oppnå kommunikativ- og interkulturell kompetanse i fremmedspråk, eksemplifisert gjennom læreplanen i fremmedspråk i LK06, det felles europeiske rammeverket for språk (CEFR) og andre dokumenter relevant for fremmedspråklæring.

Denne studiens hovedfokus har vært å utforske språkelevenenes refleksjoner omkring potensialet for fremmedspråklæring, gjennom å delta i et eTwinningprosjekt i ungdomsskolen. Dataene ble samlet inn gjennom spørreundersøkelser, semi-strukturerte intervju og refleksjonslogger, og ble triangulert og analysert tematisk. To overordnede tema relatert til autentisk kommunikasjon og interkulturell kompetanse ble etablert med referanse til hovedforskningsspørsmålet i studien min: *Hva er potensialet for fremmedspråklæring av å delta i et eTwinning-prosjekt i ungdomsskolen, oppfattet og uttrykt av elevene?*

Jeg fant at det var en høy grad av bevissthet om at det å bruke språket i autentiske kommunikasjonssituasjoner sammen med andre språkelever, er nyttig for utfallet av språklæringen. Denne studien viste også at interkulturelt samarbeid i et eTwinningprosjekt øker var ansett å øke deltakernes interkulturelle kompetanse. Studien viste videre at eTwinning ble sett på som et effektivt læringsverktøy i fremmedspråklæringen fordi det omfavner mange deler av faget. Dette gjør det mulig å utvikle mange ferdigheter samtidig noe som gjør spansklæringen mer effektiv. I tillegg fant studien at «stillasbygging» var sentralt for at språklæring skulle finne sted. Å lære språk sammen med andre var en av de viktigste fordelene med å delta i eTwinning prosjektet, i følge elevene.

Preface and acknowledgements

About myself:

I have been teaching in lower secondary school since 1999, 4 of those spent in a Norwegian school in Rojas, Spain. As long as I can remember I have been fascinated by other languages and cultures. My first encounter with eTwinning at NTNU, in 2012, made a strong impression on me, and since then I have used eTwinning as a learning activity in my classes. After the first encounter there was no question in my mind that the research during my master's degree in didactics for English and foreign languages, should be related to the use of eTwinning as a foreign language learning activity.

Being a part of this process and finally completing this master's thesis have been an quite a journey. A hectic but interesting period combining teaching, parenting and master studies has finally come to an end. Yes, I finally did it!

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My parents, Grete and Jarle. You are always backing me up, no matter what! And you encourage me to fulfill my dreams. Thank you for showing me the value of education!

My mother in law, Gunnvor, for babysitting and a providing us with a considerable amount of home cooked meals in busy times.

My soulmate Ellinor, for being who you are. Your peptalks are absolutely priceless!

And last, but certainly not least... Thank you Peder for your never-ending patience with being married to a lifelong learner, and thank you Sivert for being the most cheerful and sweet 4 year old there is.

Surnadal, May 2015

Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland

Vignette

I remember it as it was yesterday, the bobbling feeling of excitement we got when the teacher entered the classroom with a big box filled with letters and other artifacts from our American pen pals. You could feel the tension in the classroom and we almost wrestled to get a first glimpse of the content. Our Californian friends sent us letters, poems, American flags and leaflets and sometimes chewing gum and candy. I remember us being top motivated when the teacher announced that now we were going to work on the texts to our penpals over there. It felt like a door out as our classroom suddenly was connected to the rest of the world.

(A memory from a Norwegian classroom back in 1985)

The bell rang outside the 10th grade Spanish class. The sound was still echoing when the Spanish teacher entered. -Without books? One of the students commented. Then they knew, in this Spanish lesson they could check for new comments on their Christmas text. –Today, the teacher began; -today we are going to bring a glimpse of the world onto our classroom. During the explanation the student sat in fascinated attention. The students got their laptops from their shelves, and rapidly started on their comments. With the mountains of Trollheimen as scenery from the classroom windows these students from a small rural school in Norway suddenly composed Spanish texts to be sent all the way to France. – Teacher, “Albert” said, two of the French boys also play ice hockey! – I have received 3 comments on my text about my animals, and I understood most parts, “Emma” burst out. “Amanda” is completely lost in her own world, reading and writing eagerly on her computer. Suddenly she shouts: -Teacher, come and take a look, she has exactly the same spare time activities as me! She continues: - How is the Spanish word for “langrenn” spelled, again?- I wonder if they have snow there in the wintertime?

Once again she was totally lost in her writing, commenting the answers she had received from a girl in the French class she was eTwinning with for the moment. All the students were also occupied on their lap tops. You could not hear a needle fall. The world has gotten smaller, the teacher thought.

(Observations from a foreign language classroom, spring 2014)

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abstract | III |
| Sammendrag | IV |
| Preface and acknowledgements | V |
| Vignette | VII |
| Table of contents | IX |
| Index of figures and tables | XII |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 eTwinning..... | 2 |
| 1.1.1 Characteristics | 2 |
| 1.2 Background, purpose and research question | 4 |
| 1.2.1 Research question..... | 6 |
| 1.2.2 Information about the eTwinning project “Practicamos Español” | 7 |
| 1.2.3 eTwinning in foreign language learning | 8 |
| 1.3 Definition of terms | 9 |
| 1.4 Earlier studies | 10 |
| 1.5 Chapter summary and structure of the research study | 11 |
| 2. Theory | 12 |
| 2.1 The international dimension in foreign language learning..... | 12 |
| 2.2 Foreign language learning and communication | 15 |
| 2.3 Socio-cultural approach to collaborative ICT communication/language learning..... | 17 |
| 2.3.3 Zone of proximal development and scaffolding | 18 |
| 2.4 <i>Authenticity</i> in Foreign Language Learning | 19 |
| 2.5 Intercultural competence | 23 |
| 2.6 Computer Technology in the language classroom | 26 |
| 2.7 Chapter summary | 27 |
| 3. Methods..... | 29 |
| 3.1 Qualitative Research | 29 |
| 3.2 The perspectives of this study | 29 |
| 3.3 The context of this study | 30 |
| 3.4 The participants | 30 |
| 3.5 Data collection from questionnaire | 32 |
| 3.5.1 Question design | 32 |
| 3.5.2 Reflections and ethical challenges/considerations | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 3.6 Data collection from interviews | 34 |
| 3.6.1 Selection of participants for the interviews..... | 35 |
| 3.6.2 The Interview Guide..... | 35 |
| 3.6.3 Conducting the Interviews | 35 |
| 3.6.4 Reflections and ethical issues..... | 36 |
| 3.7 Doing research in one’s own workplace | 37 |
| 3.8 Validity and reliability | 37 |
| 3.9 Chapter summary | 38 |
| 4. Analyses and findings | 41 |
| 4.1 Methods of analysis..... | 42 |
| 4.2 Qualitative analysis | 44 |
| 4.2.1 Identifying codes and establishing categories and themes..... | 44 |
| 4.3 The main themes with categories | 46 |
| 4.3.1 Categories related to the theme authenticity in foreign language learning..... | 46 |
| 4.3.2 Categories related to the theme Intercultural competence | 48 |
| 4.4 Presentation of the findings..... | 49 |
| 4.4.1 Individual portraits of the interviewees..... | 49 |
| 4.4.2 Findings related to the theme <i>authentic communication</i> from the portraits..... | 53 |
| 4.4.3 Findings related to the theme <i>intercultural competence</i> from the portraits | 55 |
| 4.5 Presentation of findings from the questionnaires..... | 57 |
| 4.5.1 Findings related to the theme <i>authentic communication</i> from the questionnaires.. | 58 |
| 4.5.2 Findings related to the theme <i>intercultural competence</i> from the questionnaires .. | 59 |
| 4.6 Other findings..... | 60 |
| 4.7 Chapter summary | 62 |
| 5. Theoretical discussion | 63 |
| 5.1 Overall findings..... | 63 |
| 5.2 eTwinning and authenticity in foreign language learning..... | 66 |
| 5.2.2 Authentic language learning material..... | 66 |
| 5.2.3 Learning language through communication with others..... | 67 |
| 5.2.4 The authentic foreign language classroom..... | 69 |
| 5.3 eTwinning and the intercultural dimension in foreign language learning | 70 |
| 5.4 eTwinning as an all-embracing activity in foreign language learning | 72 |
| 5.5 eTwinning and the international dimension in foreign language learning..... | 74 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 5.6 Chapter summary | 75 |
| 6. Conclusion..... | 77 |
| 6.1 Research question revisited | 77 |
| 6.2 Suggestions for further research..... | 78 |
| 6.3 A door out..... | 78 |
| Bibliography..... | 80 |
| Appendices: | |
| Appendix 1: Letter from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services with permission to collect data for the study | 84 |
| Appendix 2: Letter of information and parental consent | 85 |
| Appendix 3: Questionnaire..... | 87 |
| Appendix 4: Interview Guide | 94 |
| Appendix 5: The reflection log | 97 |
| Appendix 6: Print Screen of the eTwinning Desktop of the project «Practicamos Español” .. | 98 |

Index of figures and tables

Figure

Figure 1.1 Screenshot of the TwinSpace in our project «Practicamos Español»

Figure 4.1 The Data Analysis Spiral, Cresswell

Table

Table 2.1 Communicative language competence

Table 3.1 All the participants in the survey

Table 3.2 The participants from school 1

Table 3.3 The participants from school 2

Table 1.4 Main themes of the interview guide

Table 4.2 Categories for the theme “authentic communication”

Table 4.2 Examples of citations for the theme “authentic communication”

Table 4.3 Categories for the theme “Intercultural competence”

Table 4.4 Example of citations for the theme “intercultural competence”

Table 4.5 The interviewees’ reflection on the theme “authentic communication”

Table 4.6 The interviewees’ reflection on the theme “intercultural competence”

Table 4.7 A distribution of the number of the participants, from question 7 (extract)

Table 4.8 A distribution of the number of the participants, from question 7 (extract)

Table 4.9 The categories for the theme “eTwinning in foreign language learning, basic skills”

1. Introduction

The vignette thematizes in many ways the platform for this study. The retrospection from the previous page contains memories from a Norwegian classroom in the mid-1980s related to my own experiences as a student. The second part is observations I did in my Spanish class during the eTwinning project “Practicamos Español” which provided data for this study. The eTwinning Platform¹ is a learning community for schools in Europe which promotes school collaboration through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). An eTwinning project is a simple way to communicate and collaborate with another school in Europe, which will be described further in section 1.1.

I still remember the excitement when we got the letters in English class back in the 80s. If I close my eyes I can even remember the smell. However I think there was something else that fascinated me back then, other than the different colors and the smell, or the fact that you received a “physical” letter you could hold in your hands. I believe the main excitement was related to the fact that the letters were authentic and written by a ‘real’ American boy or girl. It was not just another text from our course book explaining what young people in America think about school and what they do in their spare time. I could find in the letter exactly what “Amanda” from America had done in her summer holiday and what her taste in music really was like. From this I could learn about similarities and differences and compare these to my own life. When the teacher gave us time to communicate with our American pen pals, my classmates almost fought to get hold of a dictionary to be able to find the words needed to write a proper answer. We were suddenly highly motivated, and very concerned about writing correct English, which wasn’t always the case when doing tasks in the course book. The same enthusiasm about communicating in an authentic way with young people their own age in the language classroom is obvious when “Amanda” eagerly answers the email from a French girl in Spanish in the eTwinning project.

This study is set out to explore whether and how eTwinning can make an impact to the foreign language learning, as perceived by the students. I aim to describe the essence of the participants’ experiences and reflections on how eTwinning can assist their Spanish learning. The main research question is set out as follows:

¹ <http://www.etwinning.net/>

What are the potentials for foreign language learning when participating in an eTwinning project in lower secondary school, as perceived and expressed by the students?

The purpose of my study is therefore to explore learners' *meta-reflections* on potentials for foreign language learning from participating in the eTwinning project "Practicamos Español". In addition to the main research question, two additional research questions have been defined and will be presented in section 1.2.1. I will however first present a more detailed description of eTwinning, and include some additional information about the background and purpose of this study. This is done to allow for a more extensive understanding of the basis of my study.

1.1 eTwinning

Ever since the Internet was introduced in 1991, we are able to communicate with people from all over the world using ICT. The students' learning contexts are changing in school and technology plays a huge part in the types of learning practices that are emerging. The students enjoy communicating and getting to know people from different places, and ICT facilitates contact among these students. The eTwinning Platform offers a real opportunity for interacting among students from different multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, opening the classrooms to the world's cultural and linguistic diversity. A digital platform like eTwinning can be seen as a fusion between the old pen-pal tradition and the use of new technology, and presents a new way of doing old tasks.

1.1.1 Characteristics

The eTwinning Platform is a learning community for schools in Europe that promotes school collaboration through the use of ICT. Its Central Support Service is coordinated by European Schoolnet² and eTwinning is further supported at national level by 36 National Support Services. The concept of eTwinning was launched in 2005 as the main action of the European Commission's eLearning Programme, and is celebrating its 10th anniversary in May 2015, and it has now been integrated in Erasmus+³. This is a web-based platform used by teachers and students to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share knowledge and be a part of a learning community. eTwinning has the potential of constructive and collaborative school partnerships that foster digital education projects across all age groups and subject categories (Central Support Service of eTwinning, 2014).

² An international partnership of 30 European Ministries of Education developing learning for schools, teachers and students across Europe

³ The new European Programme for Educational Training, Youth and Sport, since January 2014

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

(Before January 2014 called The Comenius Programme, which was a part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme)

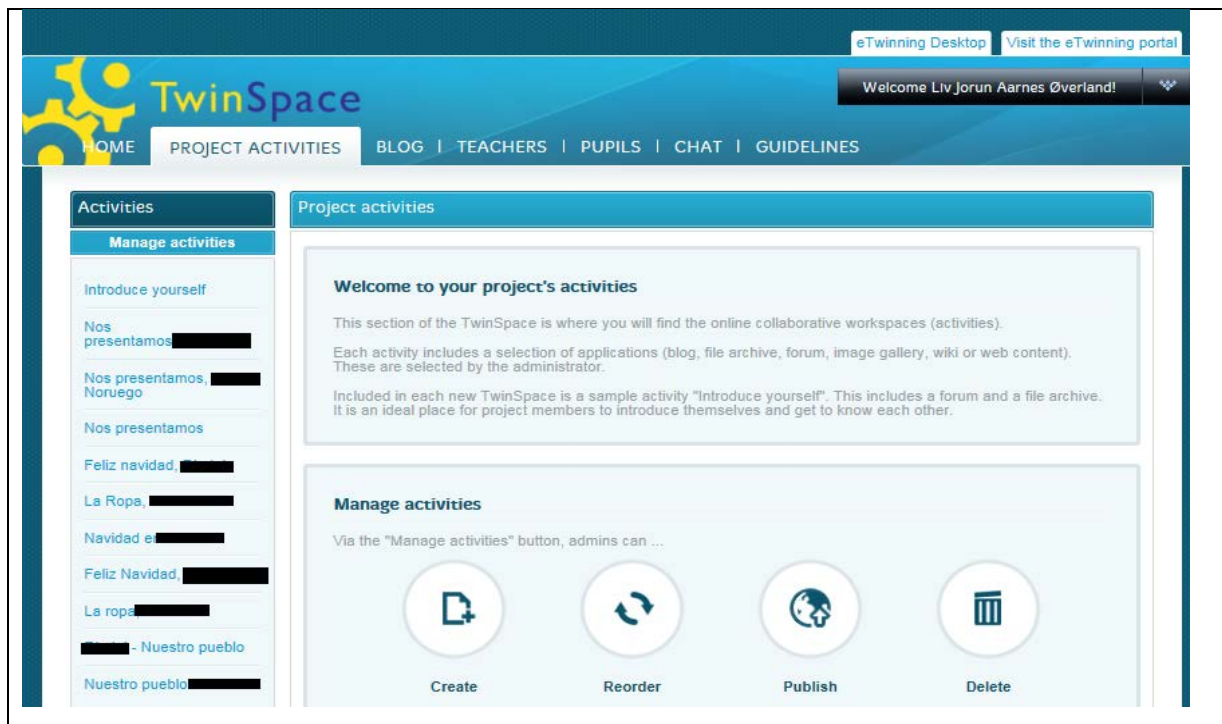


Figure 1.1: Screenshot of the TwinSpace in our project «Practicamos Español»

The eTwinning Portal is the main meeting point, and is now available in twenty-six languages. The Portal provides online tools for teachers to set up a project, share ideas and start collaborating immediately. Each project is given its own individual virtual learning environment called a TwinSpace. It is a multilingual tool designed specifically for the eTwinning projects. TwinSpace was developed so that the teachers and students could have access to a safe platform for collaborative work. When you register a project you get a password, and you do not have to work open on the internet. It can be used as a base for communication related to the project activities, a showcase for project outcomes or a location to store all documentation. Statistics released from the eTwinning press in January 2014⁴, gave the number of 307413 registered teachers and numerous of active projects between 139898 schools across Europe. eTwinning is becoming a major force in European education because it is easy to use, and has created a wealth of projects between schools across Europe (Griffin, 2014).

In Norway eTwinning is used at all levels, in all subjects and has been even more relevant lately because of the implementation of new electives in lower secondary school 2012-2013. In the subject *International Collaboration* eTwinning is a natural part of the curriculum. The number of registered teachers in Norway is approximately 3000 (March 2015). The

⁴ http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/discover/what_is_etwinning.htm

Norwegian Centre for ICT has the responsibility for the National Support Service (NSS) in Norway.

1.2 Background, purpose and research question

I was first introduced to eTwinning during my master studies at NTNU.⁵ I was immediately fascinated by this European learning community and right away saw that eTwinning had a potential for my own language teaching. When attending an eTwinning seminar in Croatia October 2013⁶, I became even more convinced of the possibilities of using eTwinning in language learning. Since the first encounter I have used eTwinning in my language classes, both in English, Spanish and the new elective “International cooperation”, as well as tried to develop eTwinning as a language learning activity at my school, with my own students and colleagues.

During my first encounter with eTwinning I thought about my American pen pal described in the vignette, and I wondered if communicating with pen pals using ICT through an eTwinning project could intrigue the students’ motivation to work with their foreign language skills as much as it did with my class back in the 80’s. My assumption is that eTwinning can be an effective option for learners to learn about youths at their own age who live in distant countries, and that eTwinning can bring an international dimension into the language classroom. In addition, the fact that they get to know the culture directly from the other students and telling them about our culture, most likely increases the students’ cultural awareness and intercultural competence.

As a language teacher I often experience that it can be a challenge to find tasks that motivate the students to work with their language learning. I am interested in new approaches to learning and think it is crucial to give learners access to various ways of developing, using and presenting their knowledge. I am convinced that students should meet a variety of approaches to use in their language learning. I do not believe that *one* particular method or activity is more efficient than others. Exercises in course books where they for example writes to a “fictive friend” from a Spanish city, does not always create the biggest commitment. I believe in creating an authentic learning environment in the foreign classroom providing my learners with authentic intercultural contact with other students their own age and see

⁵ NTNU: Norwegian University of Science and Technology

⁶ eTwinning Contact Seminar in Croatia 24-26 October 2013. «Cross-curricular collaboration with the use of Web 2.0»

eTwinning as an excellent platform to achieve this. And I am very interested in knowing whether the students in my language classes also see it as a useful learning activity. Maybe the excitement about communicating with a “real” person instead of doing tasks in workbook, can motivate the students to work more with their language learning?

Another purpose for implementing the use of eTwinning as a language learning activity at my school is to offer the students possibilities of meeting the target language in authentic communication situations. I work at a small school in the countryside with little or no international influence and very few immigrants living in the community, so my learners are at a disadvantage because they have very few opportunities for interpersonal communication in both L2 and L3 (here Spanish). Little has been done to add an international dimension to the language teaching at our school, and I see the value in making the language teaching more international by communicating with students from other countries. Even if this municipality is rated high in surveys over best places to live, the community has experienced depopulation and has today around 2000 inhabitants. If we give the students the opportunity to learn several languages, travel and get an international network, we can give the students insight that the world has become smaller because of the new technology, and it is possible to keep an international dimension in life and a good job even if you choose to live in the countryside.

In 2012/2013 our school participated in the pilot for the strategy «Motivation- Mastery - Opportunities» White paper 22 (2010-2011), which is a strategy for competence development in Primary and Secondary Education, presented by the Ministry of Education and Research. This year our school participates actively in the development work “Motivation and Mastery for better Learning”, which is a strategy for lower secondary education in Norway. One of the main objectives in the strategy is “Motivation and mastery for better learning through more practical and varied education” (p, 5). This strategy applies for the start of the 2012/2013 school year until the 2016/2017, and the eTwinning project is an attempt in that direction. Even if I, as a teacher, am quite convinced about the possibilities I see in using eTwinning for language learning purposes, in this study I am more interested in my students’ reflections and experiences on the use of the eTwinning platform, I will therefore explore what the students think about the potentials from participating in the eTwinning project “Practicamos Español in Spanish class. I will use their answers and meta-reflections from the questionnaire, reflection logs and interviews. I hope to gain a broader understanding of how the language learners experience and evaluate the outcome from this eTwinning project.

1.2.1 Research question

The purpose of this study is to explore the potentials of foreign language learning from participating in an eTwinning project in Spanish class, and to investigate how the participants think this can assist them in their foreign language learning. My study focuses on students' reflections on potentials for foreign language learning from eTwinning. I aim to describe the essence of the participants' experiences and reflections on this matter.

One main research question as well as two additional research questions have been outlined to investigate the field.

The main research question is:

What are the potentials for foreign language learning when participating in an eTwinning project in lower secondary school, as perceived and expressed by the students?

Two additional research questions are set out as follows:

How can authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project impact students' foreign language learning, as perceived by the students?

How can participating in an eTwinning project contribute to increased intercultural competence, as perceived by the students?

To answer my research questions I will carry out a qualitative study. Empirical data from 5 in-depth interviews, 22 questionnaires, 6 reflection logs and my field notes are related to how the students express their experiences and reflections about the language learning potentials from activities during the eTwinning project. The *emic* perspective is dominant since the study focuses on the participants' *subjective experience* from participating in this eTwinning project, when it comes to the potentials of foreign language learning.

In order to answer my research questions a phenomenological approach was adopted. I will hence refer to this study as a phenomenological study. According to Creswell (2013, p. 76) "a *phenomenological* study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon". My descriptions focus on how students experience a concept. In my study the concept is eTwinning. I am interested in finding out more about students'

experiences and their reflections about their foreign language learning from participating in an eTwinning project.

Even if I am doing research in my own classroom, this is not referred to as action research. It is also of interest to look at whether the findings from this study can result in improvements of my language teaching practice, but again this is not the main aim of this study.

As described in section 1.2.1, the focus in this study is on whether the eTwinning project as an approach to L3 learning, is useful as perceived by the students. A print screen of the TwinSpace is included in section 1.1.1 to give the reader an impression of the site, as well as an overview of the description of the project in appendix 6, but no student products are presented. Whether the students received good results or participated actively is not a part of the study. This study is limited to look at how students *reflect on* the potentials for their Spanish learning when an eTwinning project is used as a third language learning activity. This study was based on a “convenient sample”, and it cannot be assumed that the findings can be generalized, only refer to the sample groups involved in this study.

1.2.2 Information about the eTwinning project “Practicamos Español”

The study was conducted in a small rural school in the middle of Norway. There were three partner classes from 10th grade involved: One secondary school in northwestern of France, a class from a large city in the middle of Norway and the class from the school I work, which is a small rural school in Norway. All three partner classes were chosen as the students were of similar abilities and age. This study focuses only on the findings from the Norwegian participants. The French class would not participate in the study about the project. One characteristic of qualitative research is that the samples are usually relatively small (Postholm, 2010). My class consisted of 6 students, The French class of 17 students and the other Norwegian class of 16 students.

The eTwinning project was called “Practicamos Español “. The project lasted for one school year with three main activities each semester. The tasks were designed in accordance with the curriculum in Spanish as a third language.⁷ The tasks focused on various ways of authentic communication and intercultural contact. The first activities were related to present themselves and to get to know each other. They shared different products on TwinSpace. It was important that the students experienced their Spanish as good enough to be able to

⁷ See appendix 6 for a screen shot of the desktop of the project “Practicamos Español”

The aims were set out as follow:

- get to know students in another European country
- exchange knowledge about each other and cultural differences and similarities in Norway and France
- having an understanding for another culture than their own
- improve the vocabulary
- learn to understand the importance of learning languages
- exploit his or her own experience of language learning in learning the new language
- use communication technology to cooperate with others, and to find and interact with authentic language
- find relevant information and understand the main content in written and oral adapted and authentic texts in various genres
- adapt to some extent his/her language to various communication situations
-

1.2.3 eTwinning in foreign language learning

The use of eTwinning as an activity for learning foreign languages needs to be grounded in the Norwegian national curriculum, after this referred to as the *Knowledge Promotion* (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006). Even if we read about all the benefits an eTwinning collaboration can offer both in the publications about different projects and on the homepage, it is important that the projects align with the competence aims and the learning objectives in the curriculum. In my opinion, using an eTwinning project to enhance the students' language learning is exciting because it can allow for a motivating way to practice the basic skills⁸ and several other competence aims in LK06, as well as other key competences. Digital skills have become one of the basic skills in the Knowledge Promotion and it is interesting to see how digital skills development can take place in a natural and creative way in an eTwinning project. The specific competence aims within the curriculum for foreign languages imply what is important to emphasize in the language classroom. With reference to my own experience several of them can be reached through working with an eTwinning project such as "Practicamos Español".

⁸ In the compulsory and secondary education reform of 2006 The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has developed a Framework for the five basic skills, namely *oral skills, reading, writing, digital skills* and *numeracy*. They were defined as basic to learning in school, work and social life.

In the main part “Communication” we find: “Use communication technology to cooperate with others, and to find and interact with authentic language” as well as “adapt to some extent his/her language to various communication situations” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, p. 103). This is linked to how students can use digital technology to communicate with other young people in a foreign language, for instance through an eTwinning project. While gaining competence in a foreign language you also have the cultural dimension trying to put yourself in the cultural shoes of another person, to understand their customs, habits, modes of behavior, sense of humor, taste in music etc. Anne Gilleran and Caroline Kearney (2014) states in their report “Developing pupil competences through eTwinning” that when the students manage to understand the other students’ language and culture and see them as they are, they strip away the stereotypic views and national prejudices. This makes us more human, tolerant and generous. In regards to developing foreign language competence, there is real authenticity in the learning. The language becomes a real thing, a real vehicle for real communication, not just a set of empty exercises in a book. (Gilleran & Kearney, 2014) explains that students’ attitudes towards foreign language learning does undergo a real change as they experience success in actually communicating with other young people on the topics of life that concern them.

1.3 Definition of terms

To avoid ambiguity and allow for a common understanding of the terms, it is necessary to define some of the terms frequently used in the thesis. Spanish is one of several foreign languages taught in lower secondary school. The *Third language or foreign language (L3)* is a language acquired after the first language (L1), which is the students’ mother tongue, and after the students have already studied their second language (L2) since first grade. L2 in Norway means in most circumstances English. L3 in this study is limited to the learning of Spanish. This is in accordance with the *Knowledge Promotion*. Several other countries refer to second language (L2) as any other language than the student’s mother tongue (L1). The Norwegian terminology distinguishes between a learner’s second and third language. *Third language* is in the *Knowledge Promotion* referred to as a *foreign language*. The competence aims in the Subject Curriculum are same for any foreign languages (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006). In this thesis I will therefore use the terms L3, *foreign language* or *Spanish*.

To avoid any confusion I will refer to every student who took part in the study as participants. When I quote or refer to them I will use participant and a number. The two schools are referred to as school 1 and school 2. To avoid confusion I have given the participants from

school 1, numbers from 1 to 6 and the ones from school 2, numbers from 7 to 22. The participants who took part in the interview have fictive names, as I will use when quoting them. When referring to them I also use the term *interviewee*. When I use the term *students*, this implies a generalization and includes all language learners in general, not only research participants from this study.

1.4 Earlier studies

The eTwinning Programme is as mentioned celebrating its 10th anniversary in May 2015 and reported to have active projects going on in 140.000 schools in Europe. Even so little independent research has been conducted in relation to eTwinning projects and their benefits for secondary school students' foreign language learning. There are studies concerning eTwinning and language learning, but I have not found any focusing on the meta-reflections of the students. Even though a number of the aspects related to language learning might be transferable between countries, I consider results from national studies would be more relevant to relate to. To my knowledge, there are no previous Norwegian studies where the focus is on the use of eTwinning in third language learning in lower secondary school

Geraldine Kane, a teacher from Ireland, has in her master's theses⁹ been focused on the benefits of participating in an eTwinning project for small collaborative groups in a primary classroom setting (Kane, 2011). Her study examined the ease of the use of the eTwinning TwinSpace platform as well as examining the interaction, communication and collaboration within small groups and the motivation of the students while using computer technology. The cognitive aspects of learning were examined to ascertain if participation in an eTwinning project can promote broad based learning. Kane concluded that participating in an eTwinning project is extremely beneficial for primary school students, both cognitively and affectively. The eTwinning project promoted broad based learning. They were intrinsically motivated in the project, especially from using computer technology, and continued their learning outside of school time.

In various publications from the Central Support Service for eTwinning (CSS) one can read about different ways eTwinning collaboration can assist the students' language learning. Conor Galvin (2009) claims that curriculum-based collaborative eTwinning projects gives the language learners the opportunity for authentic intercultural contact in the context of foreign language classroom. The possibility to interact with youths from other cultural realities

⁹ <http://ulir.ul.ie/handle/10344/1820>

contributes to the development of intercultural communicative competence, as well as digital competence. Further CSS has released several “cook books” on the use of eTwinning related to specific age groups, subjects and competence aims, providing recipes, such as Learning with eTwinning (2006) and Developing pupil competences through eTwinning (2014). Several studies about the benefits of eTwinning projects are founded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union, many of them exploring what potentials the teachers experience by using eTwinning.

To my knowledge there are not conducted any studies with the focus on the students’ meta-reflections on the potentials for language learning, i.e. the emic perspective. For that reason I will argue that this legitimates this study, where the attention is on the language learner perspective.

1.5 Chapter summary and structure of the research study

My study focuses on students’ reflections on potentials for foreign language learning from eTwinning. One main research question as well as two additional research questions are outlined to investigate the field. Chapter 2 contains the presentations of the theoretical framings relevant to this study. Chapter 3 highlights the methods used to collect data. Chapter 4 presents a descriptive analysis of the material and findings in this study research. Chapter 5 discusses the analyzed findings and relates and contrasts these findings to the theoretical framings outlined in chapter 2. Chapter 6 concludes the study and offers some recommendations for further research.

2. Theory

This chapter will present the overall theoretical framings this study is based on. It is divided into seven sections. I rely on different theories as framings, as a help to understand the complexity of this study. The first section presents some documents regarding the international dimension in language learning. I find this relevant to include since the foreign language learning in Norway is influenced by European framework, strategies and plans, and eTwinning being an action from the European Union eLearning Programme. The second section explains some aspects regarding foreign language learning and communication. This is considered valuable background information to help me comprehend more about how the participants reflect upon the potentials for language learning through an eTwinning project. Section 3 presents the socio-cultural perspective. I base my study on a socio-cultural understanding on how language learning is assumed to take place. Socio-cultural theory is focused on learning activities with others, and how these activities are organized through social interaction. Since the socio-cultural approach emphasizes the process of collaborative learning, I find this approach relevant to help me understand how the students reflect upon the potential for language learning from collaborating with other language learners in an eTwinning project. Different approaches regarding authentic communication and intercultural competence in foreign language learning are in particular important to understand the main purpose of my research and will be presented in the fourth and fifth section. Section six focuses on computer technology in the language classroom. I find it relevant to mention the digital dimension because in this study it is the eTwinning action that represents the opportunity for authentic, intercultural contact as it cuts out the geographical distances through integrating ICT tools in the foreign language classroom. Finally, chapter 2 concludes with a brief summary of the topics presented. I hope that conducting this study in the light these theories and background documents will give a broadest possible understanding of my research questions

2.1 The international dimension in foreign language learning

Norway is a part of the European Council and, the plans and the policy for the foreign language teaching in Norway are strongly influenced by different European strategies. Curricular integration of the eTwinning action is an action from the European Union e-learning plan of the Lifelong Learning Programme. This gives us an opportunity to introduce *intercultural contact, authentic material and practical use of ICT* in language learning

Therefore I find the parts of these national and international agreements, framework, plans and document, which are relevant for my research question, valuable as background information for this study.

In addition to national definitions and frameworks, various international competence frameworks exist, including the European Union's Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning¹⁰, the UNESCO framework¹¹, the OECD DESECO framework¹² and Partnerships 21 framework¹³. eTwinning recognizes the availability of various international frameworks, as well as the richness of each national framework, which is bound to a country's culture (Anne Gilleran & Caroline Kearney, 2014) This might help schools develop good local curricula in which the international perspective is included. On the eTwinning portal one main purpose is described to be able to offer an intercultural network of collaborative projects based on the use of ICT between schools from different countries in Europe, while providing the opportunities to strengthen the European dimension in their curriculum (Galvin, 2009).

The report No. 14 to the Parliament (2008-2009) "Internationalization of Education in Norway" describes the main objectives as: "Help the schools and teachers develop good local curricula in which the international perspective is well addressed", and further: "Ensure that Norway seeks active participation in international programmes directed at schools...", (Utdanningsdirektoratet, p. 10). The report claims that internationalization strengthens the language teaching and gives more relevant education, which again means better language skills and a better understanding of and insight in other cultures. I consider one way of doing this is to seek active participation in international cooperation programs, such as eTwinning, and in that way give the students access to intercultural contact and authentic communication situations in the language classroom.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is issued by the Council of Europe as a way of standardizing the levels of language learning in Europe. The Council is concerned to improve the quality of communication among Europeans of different

¹⁰ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm

¹¹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/icts/teacher-education/unesco-ict-competency-framework-for-teachers/>

¹² <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/definitionandselectionofcompetenciesdeseco.htm>

¹³ <http://www.p21.org/>

language and cultural backgrounds and underlines the importance of *intercultural awareness* and *intercultural skills* as well as *communicative skills*. The essence of the intercultural dimension is to help the learners to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms, and to be aware of their own identities and those of the partners. It is the hope that the language learners become intercultural speakers and will be successful not only in communicating information but also in developing a human relationship with people from other languages and cultures. (European Council, 2009) .The CEFR gives a broad description of what competencies one needs to be able to communicate effectively in a language (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2011, p.1). In an *intercultural approach*, it is a central objective of language education to promote the development of the learners' whole personality and sense of identity in response to the experience of otherness in language and culture (ibid., p. 1). As mentioned in chapter 1, the main purpose of my research is to investigate whether and how authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project can assist the students in their foreign learning, when it comes to increasing their communication skills and the skills in intercultural competence.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP)¹⁴ allows learners to plan and reflect upon their learning, and might help to develop language learning and intercultural skills (Council of Europe, 2011). In this document learners can record their language learning and cultural experiences at school or outside school. My students used the ELP throughout the whole work process with the eTwinning project "Practicamos Español". This helped them to reflect upon their foreign language learning during the process and they saw that they kept track of their language learning development.

Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) (2007-2013)

This is mentioned as one of the world's biggest Education Programme. The key competences¹⁵ are related to knowledge, skills and attitudes fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society. Because they should be acquired by everyone, this recommendation proposes a reference tool for European Union (EU) countries to ensure that these key competences are fully integrated into their strategies. The competence aims with particular relevance to this study:

¹⁴ <http://elp.ecml.at/>. One of the initiatives from The Council of Europe

¹⁵ Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006].

- *communication in foreign languages*, which involves, in addition to the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue, mediation *and intercultural understanding*.
- *digital competence* involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) and thus basic skills in information *and communication technology* (ICT).
- social and civic competences. Social competence refers to personal, interpersonal and *intercultural competence*. (Council of Europe, 2006)

The strategy «Language Open Doors» 2005-2009

Language Open Doors is a Strategy for promoting foreign languages in primary and secondary education, and was established by the Ministry of Education and Training. The strategy has six main objectives within the three policy areas, two which I find particularly relevant to this study:

1. Greater diversity and breadth in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT)
2. Strengthened internationalization in FLT

2.2 Foreign language learning and communication

Foreign language learning is an immensely complex phenomenon and a lot of research has been done. Learning a foreign language entails more than attaining the mastery of a system of linguistic norms or the functional and pragmatic aspect of that language, as described by Mitchell and Myles (2004). It is known in the language teaching profession that learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language, but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways. The concept *communicative competence* was introduced by Hymes as reactions to Chomsky's focus on the individual speech. This was namely a competence which includes both grammar competence (the ability to build and interpret sentences) and pragmatic competence (the capacity to express oneself in different communication contexts). Hymes' main points were that language always has an interactional dimension and that Chomsky's theory did not accept imperfection in language performance. He also claimed that a native speaker's competence of language in context and language in use is not covered through the concept *linguistic competence*. It was important to know when to speak, when not, where and in what manner" (Hymes 1972, in Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

“The ability to participate appropriately in relevant speech events has been seen as an important part of communicative competence, generally accepted since the 1970s as the broad eventual target of second language learning (Mitchell & Myles 2004, p. 240). I assume this is equally relevant for L3 learning. I find Hymes’ theory in particular relevant for background information in this study, as I am looking at communication in different ways and in various contexts in foreign language learning. The ability to interact, explain, and describe the world around us begins the day we are born.

Gillera and Kearney (2014) emphasize that to be competent in a foreign language you must require knowledge of vocabulary and functional grammar and an awareness of main types of verbal interaction of the language. Knowledge of societal conventions and the cultural aspect of language are also important. To keep a positive attitude where you appreciate cultural diversity and show an interest and curiosity in language and intercultural communication is important.

Today it is a great emphasis on gaining communicative competence and intercultural competence in foreign languages, exemplified from the curriculum of foreign languages in LK06, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and other documents relevant for foreign language learning. I have used the CEFR, described in section 2.1, to show what language competence embraces. The CEFR described what competences one needs to be able to communicate effectively in a language (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011. p. 1). This describes the skills they need to exhibit when communicating in a foreign language. The definitions are made with the L3 learner in mind and include lexical competence, grammatical competence, semantic competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence (European Council, 2009. p. 108-129). The table below constructed from the CEFR document, shows the different competences and skills the students have to control when communicating in Spanish. A combination of these competences must be mastered to be able to communicate successfully in a third language.

| Communicative language competence | Description |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| lexical competence | The knowledge of and ability to use the target language's vocabulary in Spanish |
| grammatical competence | The ability to use the grammar of Spanish in an appropriate manner, which do not interfere with the understanding of the message |
| semantic competence | The ability to build meaningful texts , orally and written |
| sociolinguistic competence | The skill of communicating in a socially accepted and appropriate manner in a third language |
| pragmatic competence | The skill of building and using messages in a foreign language |

Table 2.1 Communicative language competence

In my research I want to investigate how the students consider that participating in an eTwinning project might assist their foreign language learning. The main focus in this study is on authentic communication and intercultural competence. The participants' communicative competence is a necessity for being able to participate in the authentic communication situations in the project and from that gain intercultural competence.

2.3 Socio-cultural approach to collaborative ICT communication/language learning

Socio-cultural theory constitutes the overall theoretical framings according to the foreign language learning parts of the eTwinning project. Socio-cultural theorists believe that the same learning mechanism will apply to language, as to other forms of skills and knowledge (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky is well known for his work on developing learning theories related to how individuals learn in their social environment. "A sociocultural approach to mind," he says, "begins with the assumption that action is mediated and that it cannot be separated from the milieu in which it is carried out" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 18). Vygotsky claimed that "the individual and the social were conceived of as mutually constitutive elements of a single, interactive system; cognitive development was treated as a process of acquiring culture" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 148). The socio-cultural perspective on learning places of interest the significance of an active participation in a "social community" in order to build understanding and meaning. A social community can be a class, and because of that I find this perspective relevant for understanding the use of eTwinning in my Spanish class, and relevant for my research.

From a socio-cultural point of view the technological changes creates numerous of language learning possibilities. Wertsch (1985) claims that technology influences cultural tools and instrumental environments which in turn might change the cognitive impact. Vygotsky used the term *tools* and by that pointed at both material and something more abstract, such as signs and symbols as in e.g. language (Vygotsky, 1978). These tools might support the students learning process. Today we might interpret this term as *digital* tools, for instance the different tools provided in a TwinSpace.

2.3.3 Zone of proximal development and scaffolding

Vygotsky's well-known concept *the zone of proximal development* is "the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky created the term "zone of proximal development" when he tried to describe the "interactional nature of the changes we call development" (ibid., p. 155). He made a distinction between "actual development" and "potential development". Vygotsky underlined that the students increase their knowledge through instruction and structure and have to practice and repeat. Intelligence is not seen as something static, but rather as dynamic and quite sensible to the environment. Wertsch (1991) claims that from a Vygotskian perspective "electronic social interaction utilizes and creates the zone of proximal development to nurture learner skills and capacities that were active only in collaborative or assisted learning situations. This gradually becomes internalized as an independent self-regularly processes (Wertsch, 1991). The tasks may be beyond the students' current capacities, but by assisting the learning process the tasks become manageable within their current capacities.

Scaffolding theory was first introduced in the late 1950s by Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist. The notion of scaffolding has been linked to the work of Vygotsky. Bruner used the term to describe young children's oral language acquisition. Scaffolding has been defined as "the purpose of supportive dialogue which helps the learner's through successive steps of a problem (Wood et al. in Mitchell & Myles, 2004). An adult (i.e. a teacher) has to control those elements of the task that are essentially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence (ibid.)

According to Mitchell and Myles (2004), Jerome Bruner's idea of scaffolding is understood as instructional and supportive elements. Scaffolding takes place within the learner's zone of proximal development, wherein instruction is designed to use mediational means in order to shift *intermental* discourse to *intramental* functioning. In other words, teachers or more capable peers use technical tools and language to help learners grasp concepts that they cannot reach on their own. The notion of scaffolding is increasingly being used to describe the support provided for students to learn successfully in classrooms, especially the use of project- or design-based activities. The students can achieve considerably more with guidance from someone, e. g a teacher or a class mate. In this study one can say that the digital environment for communication in the TwinSpace with the tools and instructions, represent a scaffold. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) also underline the importance of a supportive teacher. John Dewey's social perspective on learning and constructivists' learning theories emphasize the competence development within a social learning context, where learners are engaged in active learning in real life situations (Gillera & Kearney, 2014). I find the socio-cultural perspective relevant to the process of an eTwinning project. There is the relation between the language learner and his products on one hand, and the situation where the language learning takes place on the other hand. And during the whole process the students receive feedback from the teacher, their classmates, and the other partner students in the eTwinning project. This makes the whole work period a socio-cultural process.

2.4 Authenticity in Foreign Language Learning

Authenticity became an issue in *Communicative Language Teaching* in the 1970's and brought with it a new focus on *realism* in language learning material and activities. Authenticity is related to notion for *realness* or *trueness* to origin (Judith Buendgens- Kosten, 2014). She writes in her article "Authenticity" in the ELT Journal¹⁶, that *authenticity* is an important, though critically debated notion that is very much present in the foreign language learning today (ibid., p. 457) In language learning the term has been used to characterize text (written and spoken), learning material, tasks, cultural artifacts, and multimedia products. A variety of definitions co-exist and different aspects of language learning can contribute to confusion in its use as a technical term (ibid).

In the late 1970's, Widdowson introduced a distinction between *authenticity* as it applies to texts viewed in isolation (*genuineness*), and texts in their pedagogical context, including

¹⁶ <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/>

learners' response to them. He therefore extends the focus of the term to include classroom activities. *Genuiness* is characteristic of the (text) passage itself and is an absolute quality. *Authenticity* is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response (Widdowson 1978, in Buendgens-Kosten 2014). So if a text is designed to meet a communication purpose directed at students playing their role in a normal context, it is *genuine*. Genuiness is not irrelevant but “making genuiness correspond to authenticity” is referred to as a desired aim (ibid., p. 169). *Authenticity* is present if a text is used in ways that correspond to normal communication activities (ibid.).

From this I might call the oral and written products made during the eTwinning *genuine*, since they were made to meet a communication purpose. Further the oral and written material can be defined as *authentic* since they were used in natural communication activities between the students in the project. Authenticity is a feature of how we use text, not of the text itself.

Guariento and Morley (2001) make a similar point saying authentic materials in language learning are significant since it increases students' motivation for learning and makes the learner exposed to the 'real' language. They explain the benefits from exposure of authentic material like this:

- Positive effect on learner motivation.
- Provide authentic cultural information.
- Provide exposure to real language.
- Relate more closely to learners' needs.
- Support a more creative approach to teaching.

Guariento and Morley (2001, p. 347)

David Taylor (1994) writes in his text about authenticity that there is no such thing as an abstract quality “authenticity” which can be defined once and for all (p.3). He points out that authenticity is a function not only for the language but also for the participants, the setting, the nature of the interaction and the interaction the participants bring to the setting (ibid.). Taylor says that we must acknowledge the classroom itself as a real place, and that activities do not have to be “artificial, they might be authentic. The classroom language is very real to the learners, and the classroom has its own naturalness.

I consider that an eTwinning project might serve as a natural way of providing authenticity into the language learning in a way that make the classroom create its own authenticity, without striving to make it as much as real life as possible.

Taylor (1994) highlights that there are different types of authenticity. These are not always clearly distinguished, and he explains that it is not always clear whether we are dealing with authenticity of language, authenticity of task, or authenticity in situations. Breen (1985, cited in Taylor 1994) distinguishes between four types of authenticity, described below:

1. Authenticity of texts which we may use as input for our learners
2. Authenticity of the learners' own interpretation of texts
3. Authenticity of the tasks conducive to language learning
4. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom

(Breen 1985, p. 1 in Taylor 1994)

Taylor (1994) says that complaints about inauthenticity or artificiality often seem to ignore all these different types of authenticity, assuming there is a global notion of authenticity which can only exist if all the above types of authenticity are simultaneously present. But as he says authenticity is a relative matter and different aspects of it can be presented in different degrees (ibid.). I will argue that using an eTwinning project in third language learning might contribute to a high degree of authenticity in the language classroom in all different types described by Breen.

Tuva Bjørkvold is interested in looking into how we can place authentic texts within a school context. She discusses how teachers can find a method where the students write texts about something that matters to them in real life, and not just a task designed by the teacher. Bjørkvold claims that writing *authentic texts* is part of the solution here, and found in her report *Nysgjerrigpermetoden* (2012) that two factors in particular motivated the student to write. Firstly that the writing was built around self-made hypotheses, and secondly that the texts based on the results were a part of a research competition outside school. The students had real recipients to their products and the text was a non-school genre, which created an authentic communication situation. Bjørkvold saw that this motivated her students to put more effort into their products.

Bjørkvold leans towards the definitions of Purcell-Gates (2007) and Duke (2007). Purcell-Gates explains that *authentic texts* must belong to a genre also used outside school and the texts have to be used for the same purpose as they are used outside school. The result is that the students write better texts (Purcell-Gates 2007, p. 14 in Bjørkvold 2012). Duke made a similar point as defining *authentic literacy* as writing competence aimed at a social context outside school. He claims that an important criterion is that an authentic text includes a real

recipient, a non-school genre and has a clear purpose with the writing from the writer's point of view (Duke 2007 in Bjørkvold 2012).

It has to be taken into consideration that material needs not only to serve an *authentic communicative* purpose, but also to serve the purpose of *language learning*, in order to be authentic to the purposes for which the learners find themselves in the language classroom. Authenticity is a feature of how we use the material, not of the text itself. I will argue that this can be transferred to the eTwinning project in this study where the students were supposed to write and read authentic texts created for real language learning purposes.

Gilmore (2007) says that “concerning authentic learning activities, the opportunity they provide for *engagement, meaningfulness, and authentication* by learners are often cited beneficial. More recently the internet has provided easy access to varied authentic language material and options for intercultural collaboration. This came with an increasing emphasis on *autonomy* in language learning (ibid.). The intercultural collaboration in the eTwinning project in this study can be seen as an example of an easily available forum for authentic communication.

Kramersch (1993) also stresses that the use of the language is authentic even if it is in the classroom. In computer-mediated communication this dimension is easier to reach, and I claim that through an eTwinning project the language classroom can become quite *authentic*. Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom. This requires the language patterns being put into practice in real life situations, as through an eTwinning project. The learners feel that they are learning the 'real' language. Kramersch argues that the learners are going to be *autonomous* speakers but not *native* speakers. It is not necessary to be fluent but to be in control of your language, and you must be able to use the language to communicate. As she underlines: You are not 'almost there', you are there but not native (Kramersch, 1993). She also point out, as does Widdowson (1990) that we have to distinguish between language-learning activity and language-using activity. They both argue that inauthentic behavior may very well be *effective* language learning behavior. As Kramersch (1993) argues that all pedagogy is an artifact of educational discourse (p.184) and that we as teachers need to measure what goes on in the language classroom. Not to measure the level of authenticity, but whatever communicative goals are appropriate in the particular educational context.

So the definitions of authentic materials are slightly different in literature. What is common in these definitions is 'exposure to real language and its use in its own community. It has to be something the language learner needs in terms of real life and meaningful communication. A similar point is made by Bjørke, Dybedahl, & Myklevold (2014) in *Fremmedspråkdidaktikk*, where they claim that “it is important to bring the real world into the classroom by using authentic texts and creating authentic communication situations where the students are orally active and learns to use their whole register of communication right from the start” (p. 30). As mentioned earlier in this section. I believe an eTwinning project can add more authenticity into the language classroom and in that way assist the participants’ language learning.

2.5 Intercultural competence

Learning a foreign language entails more than attending the mastery of a system of linguistic norms or the functional and pragmatic aspects of that language. As mentioned in section 2.3, it also requires learning to adapt to different cultural norms. A big challenge is to provide the language learners with enough opportunities to interact with people from other countries and cultures. An eTwinning project might give the students excellent opportunities for intercultural collaboration providing authentic communication situations in the foreign language learning classroom. There are several theories about intercultural competence. In this study I find it useful to look at parts of the theories and viewpoints from Michael Byram, Claire Kramsch, Karen Risager and Ragnhild Elisabeth Lund and Magne Dybedahl.

There has been a transition from an emphasis on *cultural* competence to today’s emphasis on *intercultural* competence in language teaching. This is not a new trend as Aud Marit Siemensen, professor at UiO¹⁷ points out; already in 1990 there were clear signals from EU about stronger emphasis on the intercultural dimension (Siemensen 2003, p.5). Most scholars agree that intercultural competence has to do with knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Intercultural competence is the ability to see from both sides (Risager, 1994), Byram (1997). Risager (2007) explains that an interculturally competent person is one who knows and cares about global issues and who sees him- or herself as a world citizen, while Lund (2008) explains intercultural competence to be the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own. According to Lund cultural knowledge is relevant only if it can be useful in *communication situations* and it can help students cope with the cultural challenge they might face (Lund, 2008).

¹⁷ University of Oslo

Lund posits that it is not enough only to know facts about issues related to specific countries on a national level. Such information may promote stereotypes. Language learners must have in mind that communication takes place between individuals and not nations. Magne Dybedahl (2004) agrees with Lund and states that the students will have to cope with cultural differences at the *individual* and *local level*, not at the national one. To be able to do this, the language teaching must assist the students in developing a cultural *sensitivity*. Through an eTwinning project the participants get to know each other personally at an individual level and not just as parts of a whole culture. This might fight stereotyping and lead to an increased cultural sensitivity for others.

The model of intercultural competence made by Professor of Education Michal Byram, where he describes intercultural competence in detail, has been most influential (Byram, 1997). He claims that intercultural competence consists of five main elements, which he calls *saviors*. They allow the intercultural speaker to establish and maintain relationships with people from other cultures (*ibid.*). These saviors are described as:

- Attitudes (*savoir être*)
- Knowledge (*savoir*)
- Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*)
- Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*)
- Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)

(Byram 1998, p. 230)

Most theorists who have entered the debate of what intercultural competence comprises agree with Byram that the concept has to do with attitudes, skills and knowledge (e.g. Risager 2007, Lund 2008).

Attitudes are described in terms of *curiosity* and *openness* towards other cultures. Cultural *sensitivity*, respect for *otherness*, *tolerance* and *empathy* are other key words here. Cultural *knowledge* is relevant if it can be used in communication situations (Byram, 1997). He emphasizes that it is important to focus on cultural traits, rather than specific information about specific countries. Intercultural *skills* are related to situations of intercultural meetings, where foreign language skills often are needed (*ibid.*). The learners must also be able to interpret the new meanings and behave in appropriate ways that will not offend anyone in the communication situation. Byram (1997) underlines that to develop his last *savoir*, *critical cultural awareness*, the students need to engage not only in 'surface learning', but in 'in-depth learning'. Central elements here, according to him, are independent thinking and critical

reflection. Byram explains that critical cultural awareness is a qualification for students to be able to question their own modes of understanding (ibid.). Cultural awareness is important when communicating with people from different cultures and countries. The participants need to know that people from other cultural environments might interpret and evaluate things differently than themselves.

Byram thinks that the five savors, and the principles they rely on are useful in language teaching. He says it is important to develop relationship between the learner's *own* culture and *other* culture, and to acquire interest in and curiosity about *otherness*. He underlines the fact that when you are born into a culture and that you are a native speaker can make you "blind" and make it difficult to explain your own customs. Byram underlines how important it is that the learners have an awareness of themselves and their *own culture* seen from other people's perspectives too. This lay the foundation for also developing intercultural competence (ibid.). With this Byram (1997) proposed an intercultural approach to teaching a foreign language and culture by pointing out a new goal: The *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC).

Dybedahl (2007) points out that it is not enough for students to only 'know facts' about issues linked to specific countries on a national level. Such information may promote stereotypes. He underlines that communication takes place between individuals and not between nations. To use a foreign language learners have to cope with cultural differences on the individual and local level, not at a national level. To be able to do this, the learners have to be sensitive towards *cultural complexity* and *diversity* (ibid.)

Kramsch (1993) argues for an approach where cultural topics are linked to *several* countries and cultures. The learners need to be confronted with various cultures and multiple perspectives, she says, so that they easier can identify and reflect on their own cultural identity as only one among many possible identities. Byram (1997) calls this ability to *decenter*, i.e. to be able to remove oneself from the center of the universe (Byram, 1997, p.73). Kramsch (1993) states that language learning has earlier been presented as consisting of four linguistic skills *plus* culture, but she emphasizes that culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill; the culture is the *very core* of language teaching.

A solid understanding of one's own culture and a sense of identity can form a basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity and different cultures. Intercultural competence and intercultural awareness cover the appreciation of other people's culture as well as a deeper understanding of own culture. Through an eTwinning project the learners

need to become aware of both their own cultural background as well as learning about the target culture. They get practice in seeing both their own culture and the culture of the partner school from different points of view

As mentioned in section 2.1, to gain intercultural competence is one of the major goals for a life-long education of the twenty first century as reported to UNESCO. The subject curriculum for foreign languages reflects the current trend that more countries pay greater attention to the development of foreign language learners' ability to adapt to new contexts and to communicate across cultural boundaries. But even if intercultural competence is mentioned often in the curriculum, *cultural awareness* is not.

To sum up language teaching with an intercultural dimension e.g. through an eTwinning project might help the young language learners to acquire intercultural competence and hopefully the intercultural communicative competence, the intercultural awareness as well as a sensitivity to 'otherness'.

2.6 Computer Technology in the language classroom

After the World Wide Web introduction in the 1990s, everybody could suddenly use computers to communicate and collaborate. The schools got digital classrooms, and the use of Web 2.0 technologies in the language classrooms, offers language learning in new ways. This type of digital learning can be associated with a social constructive approach and learning, where the learning happens in the classroom between the partners on the internet (Grüters and Langseth, in Otnes (red.) 2009).

In The curriculum (LK06) digital skills is one of the basic skills. The competence is described as:

To be able to use digital tools in a foreign language helps to expand the learning areas for the subject and adds valuable dimensions to the learning process through the encounter with authentic language and through using the language in authentic communication situations (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006, p. 4).

The main purpose in this thesis is not to look at whether digital competence in foreign language learning can be achieved by using various digital tools in an eTwinning project. Even so, the digital dimension is central in my research. It is through the digital eTwinning platform the students can have intercultural project and communicate in Spanish with peers

their own age. The introduction to information and communication technology (ICT) in education not only enhances the access to information but also enables intercultural contact among students from different cultural backgrounds. The Internet has introduced new forms of interaction and learning environments. It increases new processes of socialization and mobility in virtual multicultural and multilingual environments. It is possible to have curriculum-based project using ICT, eTwinning can be an excellent example of such practice.

The strategy plan “Language open doors”, described in section 2.1, emphasizes aims for integrating ICT in foreign language learning. Using the internet the students can easily learn the languages in arenas where they are used to communicate, and not just in the classroom.

2.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented background documents and relevant theories for my study.

The main theoretical approaches are selected within a socio-cultural framing, as well as theories within the fields of authentic communication and intercultural competence.

Theoretical framing regarding communication in foreign language learning are also described.

3. Methods

This chapter describes the methods used for data collection. First I will present this study's perspectives, context and the participants. Secondly I will describe the methods used for data collection. For each data collection method presented I will reflect upon considerations made during the process. Thirdly I will discuss aspects related to doing research among my own students, at the school where I teach. Finally I will look at the validity and reliability of this study.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Doing qualitative research involves exploring human processes in a real setting (Postholm 2010). The researcher has to be open towards what the participants do or say, and try to understand and highlight the *perspective of the participants* (Postholm 2010, Cresswell 2013). The choice of methods depends on what we want to explore, and I have chosen qualitative methods to investigate my research questions.

To use different sources to confirm the findings is called triangulation and strengthen the research result (Postholm 2010). In this study I have used three sources of data. Empirical data from a questionnaire and interviews are related to how the students express their experiences and reflections on the questions. The research is carried out in in the two Norwegian schools in the project, as the French class was not interested in participating in the study about the project. All involved parties, i.e. the students and their parents, were informed about the research beforehand. They have all signed the consent form¹⁸ to participate prior to the data collection.

3.2 The perspectives of this study

According to Creswell (2013, p. 76), “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of *a phenomenon*”. He also posits that “the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the *universal essence* of that experience (ibid., p. 76).

In my research *phenomenology* is chosen as a perspective to reflect on the findings from the data collected where language learning through an eTwinning project is the phenomenon. Through analyzing the collected data in this phenomenological study I will aim to develop a description of the essence of the participants' experiences and reflections of how the concept eTwinning can assist their language learning,

¹⁸ See appendix 3 for full text of the parental consent form

Postholm (2010) says that when the focus in a study is on the participants, and what they perceive and express, the participants' perspective is often called *emic*. In view of that I will claim that the *emic* perspective is central in my research, since the study's main focus is on the student's subjective experience of the potentials of foreign language learning from participating in an eTwinning project.

3.3 The context of this study

The study was conducted in the school where I work as a teacher, but data was collected from participants from two different schools. One large lower secondary school situated in a big city with 750 students enrolled in the year of 2014/2015, and our school which is a fairly small rural school with 230 students. Both schools have primary and lower secondary levels combined in the same school.

Our school has approximately 100 students in 8.-10.th grade. The school offers options between Spanish or German as a foreign language or English in depth as a supplementary language study¹⁹. My research was carried out in two groups of 10th grade students following a course in Spanish, the smallest group with me as their teacher. All the students have chosen to follow an optional course in Spanish. The students from both schools represent all the levels of Spanish. The students are 15-16 years old, and in their final year at secondary school.

3.4 The participants

As mentioned in chapter 1, none of the participants in this study has taken part in an eTwinning project before. But after 10 months of using eTwinning as a learning tool they all became quite advanced users. I conducted the survey in my Spanish class at school 1, and the other Spanish teacher did the survey at school 2 and sent the answers from the participants by post. All the participants from my Spanish class participated, but one felt sick and asked to do it again the following lesson in Spanish, so she did. From the other school 16 students participated.

The material consists of 16 questionnaires from the participants in school 2, and 6 questionnaires, 5 in depth interviews and 6 reflection logs from participant from school 1. The tables below show an overview over the participants in this study.

¹⁹ In addition to the compulsory subjects in the core curriculum, pupils are required to choose from the following options: Second foreign language, Supplementary language study and Practical project work.
http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/compulsory-education/the-norwegian-education-system.html?regj_oss=1&id=445118

| Questionnaire | | | |
|---------------|--------------|--------|------|
| | Participants | Female | Male |
| School 1 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| School 2 | 16 | 8 | 8 |

Table 3.1: All the participants in the survey

| Interviews and questionnaire – School 1 | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| Fictional names | Participant | Grade |
| “Amanda” | Nr. 1 | Above average level |
| “Jakob” | Nr. 2 | Below average level |
| “Albert” | Nr. 3 | Average level |
| “William” | Nr. 4 | Average level |
| “Emma” | Nr. 5 | Above average level |
| “Chris” | Nr. 6 | Below average level (did not participate in the interview) |

Table 3.2: The participants from school 1

| Questionnaire – School 2 | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|------|---------------------|
| Participants | Female | Male | |
| Nr. 7 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 8 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 9 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 10 | | X | Average level |
| Nr. 11 | | X | Below average level |
| Nr. 12 | X | | Above average level |
| Nr. 13 | | X | Below average level |
| Nr. 14 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 15 | | X | Above average level |
| Nr. 16 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 17 | | X | Below average level |
| Nr. 18 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 19 | | X | Above average level |
| Nr. 20 | X | | Average level |
| Nr. 21 | | X | Above average level |
| Nr. 22 | | X | Below average level |

Table 3.3: The participants from school 2

3.5 Data collection from questionnaire

Questionnaire is a widely used method of quantitative research, but it can also be used to collect qualitative data, as in this survey. I decided to use a questionnaire to collect data in this study, for several reasons. One purpose to use the questionnaire was to gather the participants' reflections and thoughts on how the eTwinning project has assisted their FLL, and I designed it in a way which allowed the participants to express their views and reflection in own words. The answers provided me with a lot of data relatively quick to code. Another purpose regarding use of a questionnaire was to help me design the interview guide. The questionnaire was distributed to all the participants from the two schools, to gather information from every participant. The survey was conducted early in April 2014 in both places, as I wanted to wait until the eTwinning project was finished, before collecting the data.

3.5.1 Question design

The questions had to be formulated in a way they could provide answers to the research questions (Johannessen et al. 2010). The questionnaire used in the study was paper-based and consisted of 27 questions. It was semi-structured, which combined both open and closed questions (ibid. 2010). The closed ones provided me with data which were fairly easy to compare to look for patterns and tendencies, and quick to code. One of the limitations concerning closed questions is that they do not enable the participants to add any additional remarks. Therefore the questionnaire also contained various open questions where the participants could answer in their own words and exemplify if necessary, which provided more wide-ranging answers.

eTwinning was a relatively new phenomenon to both the teachers and the participants in this study, because it was the first time either of us have participated in a project like this. Hence I found it crucial to include a sufficient amount of open questions. I think this semi-structured questionnaire provided plentiful information about the participants' thoughts and reflections about the research topic, so it worked well as a base for designing the interview guide. To make certain I collected enough information, the questionnaire ended up quite extensive, which I will problematize in the next section

3.5.2 Reflections and ethical challenges/considerations

In retrospect I experienced that designing good questions for a questionnaire is hard and one needs more practice than I had gained at that point. As (Johannessen et al. 2010) also

emphasize that designing questions for a survey is quite demanding. The researcher should not ask about too much, but at the same time sufficient to collect enough data. Johannessen et al. (2010) emphasizes in that way you can tier the participants.

Even if I expected the participants to react to the large size of this questionnaire, I decided to carry on only with some small adjustment from suggestions after the pre-test. Experiences from my teaching have told me that students often work more focused at the beginning of the day. Hence the participants in my school did the survey in the beginning of the first lesson, as I know they also did on the other school. The participants from both schools were informed that they had as much time as they needed, and after handing it in, they had tasks from the work book to with to do afterwards. This was organized together with the fellow teacher in an attempt to avoid any stress to complete the questionnaire and to make the settings as similar as possible. All the 22 participants spent about 25-40 minutes to answer the questions. When asked afterwards in my class, they did comment on the numerous questions, as I was afraid of. In the other class, the teacher reported that 5 participants had made comments about the large size and too much “ticking off”. Why this difference? Maybe the participants in my group were just being polite, since we knew each other and because I was present? It must be mentioned that class is above average positively motivated.

The information from the open questions provided categorization of the findings, but I must say it became a challenge to categorize all the answers from the open question, since I have addressed so many issues. In addition I saw that some of the question were too similar, e.g. nr. 5 and 25 as well as 18 and 7. Already when writing this thesis I would have made more alterations due to the question design, now being more aware of the pit falls.

What could be the reasons to the lower participation in the other school? The consent forms were more difficult to get in return. Also the answers in the questionnaire were shorter, even if they had the same time available. It is complicated to compare two such different classes, But in retrospect I think the survey may have had more participants from the other school if I had been there personally to present the study when handing out the consent form, as well as the day the class did the survey. The Spanish teacher offered me to conduct the survey in her class. That way I didn't have to take time off from work and come all the way to do this myself. In the busy spring term, with lack of substitutes at school, I accepted this offer. Retrospectively I think it would have been best to be there in person, contributing to higher

interest and providing for a similar setting as possible for the survey as have the possibility to clarify questions if necessary.

I consider most of the questions to be neutral in tone and attempted to void too academic formulations, since the participants are in lower high school. Hence I think the language adapted was ok, since there were almost no questions for clarifications. The Spanish teacher from the other school confirmed this to be the situation there as well. But yet again it is impossible to know if the participants understood all the questions or if they were just being polite. I asked about advantages as well as disadvantages with participating in eTwinning project to project views of both sides.

Another issue that applies for both participating in the interviews and filling in the questionnaire is how the participants were treated during this process. It was important to me that they felt respected and secure. I made it clear to the participants that it was voluntary to participate in the interview as well as the survey. This information was also emphasized in the parental consent form. My fellow Spanish teacher had informed the participants from the other school. All the participants knew they could end the interview or refuse to answer some of the questions. They were also reassured many times about the anonymity.

3.6 Data collection from interviews

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them?” Cresswell (2013, p. 1). Johannessen et al. (2010) support this when explaining that qualitative interviews are beneficial when it is needed to give the participants more freedom to express themselves than with a questionnaire. With reference to the saying above, what I aimed in this study was to learn about how the participants reflect upon the language learning potentials when participating in an eTwinning project. One positive outcome from the large size and the numerous questions and topics addressed in the questionnaire, was that I already knew much about how the participant value the language learning outcome from an eTwinning project before doing the interviews. Even so I wanted to know more, and the interviews gave me the chance of following up the data from the questionnaires. The questionnaires were answered anonymously, so I could not relate the answers to each interview. I only used the overview over the whole group. Because I mixed these methods I gained more enlightening data helping me address the research questions.

3.6.1 Selection of participants for the interviews

When it comes to selection of the participants I decided to interview the whole Spanish class in the 10th grade. It is very unusual to have so small groups in Spanish at our school. The participants represent very different levels and “types”, so I was interested in hearing all voices. The week before the interviews were carried out one of the participants got ill, and did not return again before summer. So the number of interviewees was 5.

3.6.2 The Interview Guide

The interview guide²⁰ can work as a check-list to secure that all relevant topics for the research questions are covered and to make the interviews more systematical (Postholm 2010). I developed an interview guide including four main themes, related to my research questions, which helped me keep an overview of the topics and the order of the questions. The guide was a tremendous help since this is my first time doing this. If I was to conduct more interviews in the future I think my skills have improved, especially with the follow-up question. This time I was too tied to the guide. The themes in the interview guide are presented below:

| Main theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| eTwinning in foreign language learning | How the participants define the potential of foreign language learning from the activities in the eTwinning project |
| Authenticity in foreign language learning | What participants point to regarding the possibilities from authentic language communication, and getting authentic receivers for their products. |
| Intercultural competence | What kind of knowledge the participants say to have acquired about own and the other culture and the awareness of ‘otherness’ |

Table 2.4: The main themes of the interview guide

3.6.3 Conducting the Interviews

After interviewing the students I had asked for permission use the material to make a portrait of them, and explained briefly what the content would be like. All gave their consent. Even so the participant’s anonymity is an ethical issue to consider. Because the participants from school 1 are so few, and from a small rural school, enough has to be done to secure their anonymity. One step was to cover-up every detectable trait. I chose to write “above average level” instead of grade 5 or 6, and did not include their age, 15 or 16. I also switched the pseudonyms I already had made in a way that the girls’ names could be a boy and the other

²⁰ See appendix for full text of the interview guide

way around. The latter is maybe not ideal, but since difference related to gender is not an issue here, I chose to do this to secure their anonymity.

The participants have been given information about how the interview would be conducted and that it was totally voluntary to participate. They have all handed in the signed consent form prior to the conversation. I conducted all the interviews during one week, with the maximum of two daily. I used a “conference-room” beside their classroom, which was familiar to the participants. The interviews were recorded by a digital voice recorder, and lasted approximately 30 minutes. I did not take any notes during the interview, being a novice, I needed to stay focused on the interview guide, the students’ answers and any following-up questions if necessary. I found much support in the interview guide during the dialogs, but after number three I felt more at home in the setting. I had made sure I did not have any lessons after each interview, which gave me the opportunity to write down some notes from the conversation and make small “descriptions” of each student.

One should keep on interviewing until no crucial new information is provided (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2013). I had beforehand decided the number of interviews to be conducted. After conducting the five interviews I felt they provided me with plenty of information to help me understand and analyze the research questions.

I did the transcriptions the following weekend, and even if I did not attempt at verbatim interview transcriptions it was a lot more time-consuming than expected. Brinkmann & Kvale (2013, p. 210) explains transcriptions to be “(...) the transition from “an oral conversation to a written text” They claim that “Verbatim interview transcriptions produce hybrids, artificial constructs that may be adequate to neither the lived oral conversation nor the formal style of a written text” (ibid., p. 204). In spite the skepticism I found it very useful to have the transcriptions in paper-form in the analysis process, and not just on the digital tape recorder. I wrote down everything that was said during the interviews, but not the small talk in the beginning or if the participants coughed or laughed. I wrote it down in bokmål and not dialect.

3.6.4 Reflections and ethical issues

When conducting the qualitative interview I faced many ethical issues. Some of the interviewees expressed it was easier talking about whether eTwinning assisted their language learning than answering all the open questions in the questionnaire. Maybe it was easier for them to express their reflections orally, as often expressed by my students.

There are some things to consider. Cresswell (2013, p. 173) points out that “recent discussions about qualitative interviewing highlight the importance of reflecting about the relationship that exists between the interviewer and the interviewee”. This is also supported by Kvale and Brinkmann (2013), who explain that the nature of an interview sets up unequal power dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee, and Postholm (2010) supports that by underlining that the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee can be very different in each interview and it is crucial to establish a bond of trust.

3.7 Doing research in one’s own workplace

One of the surveys and the interviews were conducted in my own workplace, where I have worked since 2004. There can be both advantages and disadvantages with using one’s own school as the arena of doing research. The questionnaire was filled in at both schools, which gave some distance between me as a researcher and the participants, as was not the case when conducting the research in my classroom.

I have taught the 10th graders in the Spanish class since they entered lower high school. That means we know each other pretty well, maybe even more so because of the small size of this group. Because of this close relationship it is a challenge for me as a researcher to achieve distance to what is researched. It is a good chance the participants view me more as their Spanish teacher, than a researcher, something that may affect their answers. I think it is very likely that most of the participants appeared even more positive towards the eTwinning project, because we have worked together on it for almost a year. Due to the limitations of a thesis like this I did not conduct interviews with the participants at the other school.

Another aspect is my own enthusiasm about eTwinning used in my language teaching. It may very well be that this affects the participants’ answers in the research in a more positive way. It is not a secret that enthusiastic teachers have strong influence on the learning outcome and the motivation of the students, but for now it is not possible to determine whether this is the case in this study. Even so I think their reflections and answers are nuanced and shed light on both pros and cons regarding an eTwinning project. I have been aware of this challenge all the way, and tried not to let it interfere more than necessary.

3.8 Validity and reliability

According to (Postholm 2010, p. 170) validity is related to the methods that have been used to gather data and the interpretations made from that. She states further that the truth in qualitative research is continuously changing, but if data from several sources supports the

finding, this strengthens the validity (ibid., p. 170). In this study I have used different theories and findings from various researchers and sources as well as multiple methods to gather data from two different schools. I have been a researcher in my own classroom hence I find it even more central to strengthen the findings I will claim this triangulation strengthens the validity of my study.

Questions of reliability in qualitative research are frequently raised, and point at the importance of the researcher to be open about the process of data collection, data analyses as well as the relationship to the participants. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2013, p. 281) “Reliability pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings; it is often treated in relation to the issue whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers”. Reliability means being able to replicate the results. Postholm supports this by pointing out (2010) that it is a requirement that research results must be reproducible and repeatable. I will argue this as unattainable within the qualitative phenomenological methods I have used to conduct the research this study

As Johannessen et al. (2010) describes the reliability is connected to whether the data in the study are accurate and reliable, and argues that reliability does not apply in qualitative research. The eTwinning phenomenon changes and improves continually at the same time as the students, and the researcher acquires new knowledge. If another researcher should have followed exactly the same “recipe” these participants would already know a lot about eTwinning and the starting point would be quite different.

Phenomenological researchers often use the term *dependability* instead of reliability (Postholm 2010). In this study I have made an effort to be objective and consistent when conducting the research. For the study to be dependable I have explained about my professional experience, my motives to conduct this research, the background for my interest in the themes, my relationship with the participants, and my pre-understanding. I think this makes the process more transparent and hence supports the reliability in my research.

3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented the methods for data collection used in my study. The main material in this study consists of 22 questionnaires, 5 in-depth interviews. In addition I have used material from 6 reflection logs as well as my field notes. The questionnaire was mainly used to collect useful background information to help me design the interview guide. Relevant

aspects related to being a teacher researcher in my own class is mentioned as well as some reflections on possible ethical and methodological dilemmas.

4. Analyses and findings

Collected data do not speak for itself; they have to be interpreted (Repstad, 2007). The collected data have to be systematized to look for patterns which can be interpreted (Repstad, 2007). How I systematized and interpreted the collected data is what I am going to present in this chapter. According to Postholm (2010), analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process starting when the first data is collected. She underlines that this process of analysis is not at all linear, which I experienced conducting this analysis, after numerous rounds of reading and re-reading different parts of the data material.

The main data material consists of 22 semi-structured questionnaires from school 1 and 2 and 5 in-depth interviews from school 1. In addition I have used material from 6 reflection logs from school 1 as well as my field notes. I have used various methods for data analysis, based the data on several sources and collected the data using different methods. This triangulation is done to make use of a broader basis when searching for answers to my research questions, and to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study.

As mentioned collected data from both schools provide the basis for the analysis presented in this chapter. The main focus is not however to investigate the differences between the two schools. One reason for including an additional school was to provide for a broader basis to answer the research questions. Another reason was to include participants that are not my students and possibly offer more “objective” data material to the study. To include students which I have never met, also provides a distance between the researcher and the participants which is impossible to achieve when doing research in one’s own classroom. Nevertheless, significant differences with relevance for the research questions will be commented on.

As described in section 1.2.1 this study set out to explore how the participants reflect upon the potential of the eTwinning platform has to assist their foreign language learning and the overall research question is:

What are the potentials for foreign language learning when participating in an eTwinning project in lower secondary school, as perceived and expressed by the students?

The two additional research questions are set out as follows:

How can authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project impact students’ foreign language learning, as perceived by the students?

How can participating in an eTwinning project contribute to increased intercultural competence, as perceived by the students?

Firstly the methods used for analysis are described. Secondly I explain the process of conducting this qualitative analysis, including the different steps according to organizing the data within themes and establishing the categories. Then I will present the findings and relate them to my research questions. This is done in various ways to show as much of the participants' reflections as possible within the limits of such a study. First portraits are used to illustrate some of the findings from the interviews and reflection logs. Afterwards follows a presentation of findings from the questionnaire. Both are related to the two main themes, authenticity and intercultural competence. Some findings related to eTwinning in language learning, which is the more 'overall' theme in the thesis, will also be commented on. Because of the limitations of this study these findings are restricted to basic skills and variation in work methods. Finally a short summary is included to wind up this chapter. In this chapter, the findings are only described not discussed and related to theory which will be the main focus in the next chapter. Chapter 5 will start with a summarized version of the findings.

4.1 Methods of analysis

I entered the analysis process with a big amount of data and with an aim to make a comprehensible description of my findings. Finding an appropriate way to interpret and analyze the collected material as well as present the findings in an organized, way was challenging. Cresswell (2013) describes the process of analysis to "involve organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 179). His visual model made of this process, *the data analysis spiral* (Cresswell 2007, 2013), conceptualizes a larger picture of all the steps in the data analysis process. The model is presented in figure 4.1.

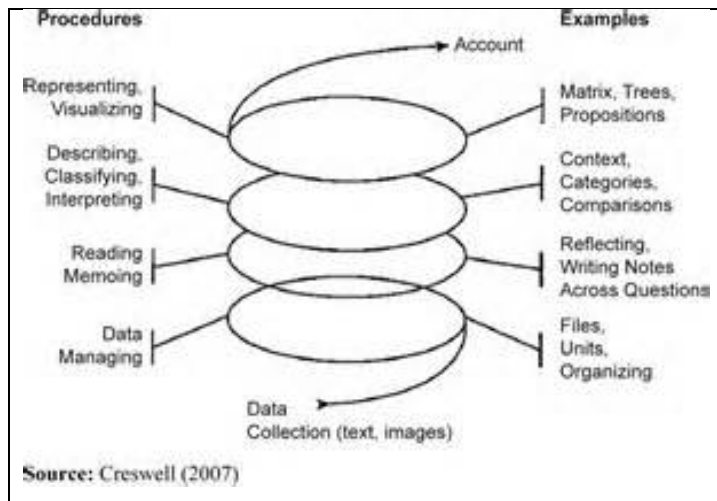


Figure 4.1: The Data Analysis Spiral (Cresswell, 2007)

The analysis spiral by Cresswell (2013), represents a *general* analysis procedure, however I have used a *modified* version and adapted the analysis steps to support me in the process of analysis. As Huberman and Miles (1994) states: “Data analysis is not off-the-shelf; rather, it is custom-built, revised, and choreographed” (cited in Cresswell, 2013, p. 182). With support from this quote, I altered and modified the model. I made use of some additional steps in the analysis process, while not making use of others. The analysis model visualizes the process of constantly moving in circles when conducting research rather than using a fixed linear approach Postholm (2010). During the process of analysis it was helpful to keep in mind the different steps in the analysis spiral as a guide, especially as a starting point.

There are many different approaches to an analysis and various data analysis procedures used within each of the approaches. This study has a phenomenological approach. For example I will not start presenting my findings with a personal description of *my* experiences with the phenomenon, because my main focus is on the *participants’ experiences and reflections* with the phenomenon. To structure and analyze the data in this study I have made use of a modified version of the model mentioned.

In phenomenological analysis it is common to focus on analyses of the content of the *meaning* expressed by the informants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The researcher is then preoccupied with the content of the data and what the participants express during inquiry and interview. They explain that the process of analysis involves looking at common themes and establishing categories, which implies that the material is coded into categories. When the statements are reduced to categories, they can be structured into tables (ibid.).

In this study I have made a *theme based analysis* (Postholm, 2010, s. 173) with the purpose of bringing out the *meaning* expressed by the participants. Cresswell (2013, p. 194) posits the importance of finding statements in the data about how individuals experience the topic. To provide for this I have therefore included verbatim quotes and thick descriptions in the presentation of the findings.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Even if this is a qualitative study, I also used counting to organize the collected data in two ways. Firstly, when structuring the answers from the closed questions in the questionnaire, which gave me an overview of the material. Secondly when establishing the categories for analysis, I counted the number of passages from the participants associated with each code. According to Moustakas (1994) counting and reporting numbers of codes are more used in quantitative studies, and convey a more quantitative orientation which is not used in models where all the codes have the same value. Huberman & Miles (1994, in Cresswell, 2012), however, describes that researchers often make preliminary counts of data codes to determine how frequently codes appear in the database. I counted the codes because it provided an indicator of frequency and allowed me to see what was typical in the material. This also gave me a good overview of the material before conducting the interviews. I have also displayed some of the material in tables, which is also a more typical “quantitative” form.

4.2.1 Identifying codes and establishing categories and themes

The data gathered was voluminous, and the first step was to organize the material into computer files. Since the survey was not digital I had to gather the answers manually.

I started with looking at all the gathered data; all the answers from the questionnaires, the reflection logs, the memos from conducting the interviews, the description of the interviewees, the transcriptions with verbatim sentences and my field notes. This organization of the data gave me a first impression and a valuable overview of the whole database. Then started the process of “breaking” into parts (Johannessen, Tufte, & Christoffersen, 2010)

The next step was to start the coding process to identify categories. Categories consist of several codes and more overall themes which are broader units of information gathered to form a common idea (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). I coded the data by splitting all the material into small units of information, which I named. Hence I wrote down all the codes, classified them into categories within the main themes. I read and re-read the codes several times, and from this process I got about 35 tentative categories which I placed within the main themes.

This amount had to be reduced because of the limitations of this thesis, so I went through the material several times again and consolidated several of the categories. I then ended up with six categories related to intercultural competence and seven related to authentic communication. All established related to each main theme. Finally all the data in the study were once again categorized and analyzed according to the established categories and themes to check again if they were compatible. During the analysis I read and re-read all the material several times keeping a focus on data relevant for my research questions. As described in the *hermeneutical* tradition (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2013, p. 238), I constantly moved between parts and the whole of my data material using the hermeneutical circle providing me a deeper understanding of the material. I altered between looking at each individual part of data reflecting upon what impression this gave me about the data as a whole as well as looking at the data as a whole.

Categories can arise from theory, the researcher's knowledge or from empirical data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). They explain that an issue in the analysis process is whether to use *prefigured* categories or *emergent* categories. Crabtree and Miller (1992, in Cresswell 2013) claim that using prefigured categories rather than opening up for the codes to reflect the views of the participants, can serve to limit the analysis.

Postholm (2010) states that *inductive* analysis means that the code, categories and themes of analysis emerge from the data material rather than being imposed on them previous to data collection and analysis, which is referred to as *deductive* analysis. Deductive categories are established from the researchers pre-understanding, background, and knowledge about theory and formulated research questions and might function as a filter the researcher experience the material through (ibid.). She stresses the importance that it is important to be open towards what emerges from the material and that an interaction between inductive analysis and deductive analysis is common.

In this study the main themes, *authentic communication and the intercultural competence* were somewhat prefigured from the themes addressed in the interviews, questionnaire and reflection logs. However I decided to be open towards the codes emerging from the material, also those who did not 'fit' the main themes, hence all the *categories* were established after data analysis. Within the main themes categories were established as a combination between deductive and inductive analyses. Some of them were established from the codes, some from

my pre-understanding while others from theory. Those established from my knowledge and pre-understanding are most likely influenced from my background as a language teacher.

So far I have described how the process of creating the categories was carried out. Next I am going to present examples of the relation between some units of the codes and the categories. To open up for transparency I have included description of how I abstracted out the codes and developed the categories belonging to the main themes. This is presented in tables of the categories including examples from the “codes”.

4.3 The main themes with categories

The main themes were addressed in the questionnaires, reflection logs and interviews in slightly different ways, because they form the basis for my whole study and are a part of the research questions. To obtain a good visual summary of the main themes with belonging categories, they are presented in tables. To offer transparency in the process, all the tables include one example of a code (a citation from one of the participants) related to each category. Further examples and quotes are included in description of the findings under each main theme as well as in the portraits.

4.3.1 Categories related to the theme authenticity in foreign language learning

Seven categories were established, related to the participants’ reflections about the theme. These categories are shown in the table 4.1. Authenticity was addressed mainly in the interviews and the questionnaires. Theory about authenticity was useful to establish the categories, even if the establishment was based upon the data material. Some of the categories emerged from theory such as *authentic communication*, while others from the data material such as *increased effort*. *Learning language with others* was established with reference to socio-cultural theory, described in chapter 2.

| Category | Description |
|---|---|
| Authentic communication | Authentic communication is related to authentic use of the language in real communication situations in Twin Space related to the tasks in the project. |
| Learning the language with others | Authentic communication is related to the importance of peers, the language is used with real means of interacting with youths. |
| Authenticity between the sender and the recipient | Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between something made by and for other language learners, for a real purpose. And it has to do with appropriate response. |
| Genuine language learning material | Authentic learning material is related to providing the language learner with meaningful and real language learning. The tasks and material is |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| | produced with intention of sharing this with others. |
| Authentic language classroom | In an authentic learning environment activities provide for practically and authentic language learning situations where the students learn to use their whole register of communication skills. This contributes to an authenticity of the social interaction situations, and you “bring the real world” into the classroom. |
| Increased effort | Learning the language together creates personal and authentic language learning situations, which enhances the students’ motivation to improve the shared work. Motivation for Lifelong Learning |
| International dimension | Collaborating with students from other European countries do the language learning more relevant and real. |

Table 4.1: Categories for the theme “authentic communication”

Table 4.2 demonstrates citations (referred to as the codes in section 4.2.1), from the participants related to the categories. The quotes are taken from the interviews and the open questions in the questionnaire.

| The theme “authentic comunicacion” | |
|---|--|
| Category | Examples of statements selected from the participants |
| Authentic communication | <i>In the eTwinning project I feel that we learn the real Spanish that we need in the world to be able to communicate with others. To actually use the language made the learning more practical and relevant.</i> |
| Learning the language with others | <i>I am social and like to get to know new people, so I became extra motivated from learning together with others, and I got to check that my Spanish actually worked.</i> |
| Authenticity between the sender and the recipient | <i>I was very excited to check my blog for comments in TwinSpace, and to see if I understood the answer. I spent a lot of time phrasing the comments I posted on others work.</i> |
| Genuine language learning material | <i>It was very interesting to read and translated the blog posts in Twin Space about how the French students celebrate Christmas, instead of finding the information in a course book.</i> |
| Authentic Language Classroom | <i>In the eTwinning project we spoke and wrote to other young people from France and another big city in Norway. It felt like we really got to know them and the Spanish class became more meaningful, because they also were a part of the project.</i> |
| Increased effort | <i>Suddenly I was really motivated to write longer texts in Spanish about my life, and find words to understand what the others wrote. My interest became bigger to improve the language when I spoke and the texts, because I did not want any mistakes when the partner students should see my work.</i> |
| International dimension | <i>Suddenly I had contact outside our school, all the way to France, in Spanish! It was great fun to get to see pictures and learn about the way of life and our differences in Twin Space.</i> |

Table 4.2: Example of citations for the theme “authentic communication”

4.3.2 Categories related to the theme Intercultural competence

Six categories were established to the theme intercultural competence, shown in table 4.2. Some of them emerged from theoretical framework described by Byram (1997) described in chapter 2, such *intercultural awareness, stereotypes, curiosity about otherness* And those which did not, such as *the intercultural classroom* emerged from the empirical data.

| Categories of the theme “Intercultural competence” | |
|--|--|
| Category | Description |
| Intercultural awareness | Intercultural awareness is related to the knowledge about your culture and the other, and the ability to see things from both sides. . Learning to adapt to different cultural norms. |
| Intercultural communication | Intercultural competence is related to intercultural communication in practice. To interact effectively with people from other cultures is to know what language is appropriate to use. |
| Curiosity about otherness | Intercultural competence is related to developing a relationship between the learners’ own culture and the other, and being curious about the similarities and differences. |
| Intercultural classroom | A learning environment with focus on intercultural awareness includes intercultural language learning situations where the students use target language with students from other cultures and learn to see things from both sides. |
| Stereotypes | Intercultural competence relates to avoiding stereotyping, by seeing the other students as individuals and not as a part of a whole culture. |
| Motivation for Lifelong Learning | Related to a motivation for continuing the language learning through intercultural contact. Learning adapt to different cultural norms and in that way function as European citizens. |

Table 4.3: Categories for the theme “Intercultural competence”

Table 4.4 demonstrates citations (referred to as the codes in section 4.2.1), from the participants related to the categories. The quotes are taken from the interviews and the open questions in the questionnaire.

| The theme “Intercultural competence” | |
|--|--|
| Category | Example of statements selected from all the participants |
| Intercultural awareness | <i>After the eTwinning project I know a whole lot about the traditions, interests and way to live in France. I also saw that all the students, from the three schools liked to do pretty much the same after school.</i> |
| Intercultural communication | <i>We all had to speak clear and loud since we are beginners in Spanish, and to be polite when commenting on their work. For me it was easier to understand the Spanish the Norwegians used, than the French, because they spoke much faster</i> |
| Curiosity about otherness | <i>It was exciting to learn about what the other partner students like/dislike and how they live. Both from the city and from France.</i> |
| Intercultural/ International classroom | <i>I liked to listen to people from other schools at our own age in Spanish. It was like we suddenly had more students in our classroom and learned Spanish together, even if the others were from Norway and France. We used the language to understand about each other’s lives.</i> |
| Stereotypes | <i>I thought the students from the city, and from France did other thing in their spare</i> |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| | <i>time, but when we compared our after school activities, they do much of the same as us.</i> |
| Motivation for Lifelong Learning | <i>I feel that I learned so much Spanish from the project, as well as much information about how the partner students live their lives. I think it is going to be easier to go to other countries and practice language because of this project.</i> |

Table 4.4: Example of citations for the theme “intercultural competence”

4.4 Presentation of the findings

With the main themes and the respective categories established I will now present the findings related to the participants’ understanding and reflections around the research questions. I will do that in various ways. Section 4.4.1 includes student portraits based on the five interviews and the reflection logs. The portraits are designed with the main themes in mind. Next the findings related to the theme *authentic communication and intercultural competence* from the portraits are presented. In section 4.5 follows a descriptive, thematic presentation of the findings from the analysis based on the questionnaire. As in the presentation of the findings from the portraits, these findings are also presented in accordance with the main themes.

Because of the amount of data some of it is presented in forms of tables. Citations from the participants are included to allow for transparency as well as to give examples, in both variants. To use both a descriptive thematic presentation and presentations through portraits allows for both looking at the individual learner as well as the whole group. This triangulation contributes to shed light on the research questions from different angles, and capture a more holistic description of the phenomenon eTwinning.

Through the analysis of the material various general findings appeared which do not sort under any of the categories within the main themes. Because several of these findings also contribute to the understanding of how the participants reflect upon the potential of eTwinning, I will comment on some of them, after describing findings related to the main themes.

4.4.1 Individual portraits of the interviewees

Sometimes it can be easy to forget that the interview tells a story (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). To take care of the initial stories told by the interviewees, I chose to make narratives from the transcriptions. So, to help me present some of the material I have made individual portraits of the five interviewees. A narrative approach to the interview analysis, going back to the original story told by the interviewee, may prevent getting lost in the jungle of transcripts. (ibid.). Since the questionnaire was answered anonymously, the portraits are based on the

transcriptions and summaries from the interviews and the reflections. In the portraits I have included descriptions relevant for the established themes and categories and focused on material which can shed light of the research questions. I chose to include all five because the interviewees represent significantly different “types” with respect to proficiency, preferred learning methods and ways they reflect upon the language learning potential from the eTwinning project.

Analyzing the data into categories and themes create a rather abstract picture of the group of the participants. To include portraits of the participants is done to provide for a more complete presentation of how the participants experienced and reflected on the potential for language learning from the eTwinning project. This also contributes to a more “authentic” impression of the context and the young learners, participating in the study. I could have chosen to make ideal types instead where you take elements and form a type, but I chose portrait to give a more authentic insight into the young language learners’ experience. I found that the participants’ experiences with eTwinning were so interestingly different that I decided to present all the portraits to provide a further insight into the research arena.

“Amanda”

I loved that the eTwinning project challenged me to improve my Spanish. To receive comments on my first presentation in TwinSpace was simply thrilling. (Amanda)

She stated that she thought it might be easier to go abroad and to have intercultural contact, after having practiced *intercultural communication* in the eTwinning project

Amanda is a highly proficient student who enjoys using eTwinning. In Spanish class she normally prefers to practice the language orally. Amanda is hard working and her motivation is related to receiving good grades. She is a strong positive force in the group and open minded to new methods of foreign language learning. Amanda has expressed her enthusiasm for using eTwinning in Spanish throughout the whole project period, having intercultural contact. She is confident in sharing her work and demonstrates an enormous will to improve her work. In particular Amanda likes the extra challenge which comes from showing her work to the others. She states that it gives a whole new meaning to the subject when Spanish is used together with other learners. For her this leads to a desire of writing extendedly and enriched texts so that she and the others can learn from them. She expresses that the increased intercultural contact made her reflect more on different cultures. She likes working with both

her first, second and third language, and plans to travel and continue studying languages. Amanda is determined to continue studying Spanish, and expresses that now she knows how to do that using ICT with youths from other countries. As Amanda said: “The most important benefit from participating in this project is that I have extended my Spanish vocabulary, and met friends for life.”

“Jakob”

To be in contact with real people in TwinSpace made a big difference and I truly liked to try out new work methods in my computer other than our course book. I even used Spanish in my spare time, and this is very unlike me. (Jakob)

Jakob is at an average level of proficiency. In particular he emphasizes the social possibilities from the eTwinning project as well as opportunities for more computer work. With increased effort he might easily improve his grade, but he can be reluctant to work at times and does not put in any extra. Jakob is not so preoccupied with his products containing errors, as he points out: “Everybody makes mistakes”. But, he is blessed with an intuition for languages, so even if he does not put in any extra, his products turn out satisfying. The combination of using ICT to be social and communicate with others, leads to an increased effort in his language learning. The increased will to work with his Spanish does not show much in the compulsory activities, but rather when commenting on the work of others. He was one of those having contact with students from the project on social media in his spare time. He repeats that he prefers to Skype and chat online with the others in class. He also expresses a huge motivation for wanting to visit the partner schools. He confirms that learning Spanish with others have improved his language skills. As he said: “The most important for my Spanish learning from participating in this project, is to learn Spanish almost without knowing it, in a real way with interesting people”.

“Albert”

Suddenly I had contact outside our school, all the way to France, in Spanish! It is great fun to get to see pictures and learn about the way of life and our differences in Twin Space. I discovered several other students with the same interests as me. It was a relief to see that the others made mistakes too. (Albert)

Albert is a below average level student who became increasingly positive towards eTwinning during the project. He struggles with learning a third language but still is very hard working

and does all his homework as well as a lot of preparations before presentations and tests. He is always positive towards the presented activity in class and prefers variation and practical activities. Albert has not travelled before and lives quite far from the center. Albert is very excited about the opportunity to communicate with young people from a big city in Norway and with youths from France. He is very interested in the cultural similarities and differences between both the Norwegian and French partners in the project. However he is quite insecure about the eTwinning project beforehand and especially the part with sharing his written and oral work on Twin Space. He worries about doing mistakes and pronouncing the words wrongly. Albert needs much assistance from the teacher and from collaboration with class mates, before posting any products. He is quite proud when posting his first presentation, and excited when he gets his first comments to his texts and pictures. After hearing the presentations from the others he whispered to me: “I am so revealed because the others make mistakes too, and almost everybody speaks Spanish differently”. It is a part of the story that Albert improves his grade during 10th grade and becomes one of the most eager in checking Twin Space for new messages. Albert explains: “The most important profit from participating in this project is that I experience that my Spanish actually works, even if I think it is difficult. I have also improved my grade!”

“William”

It is always motivating to work with computers, but I like other tasks better than eTwinning. I am not so interested in how other people learn Spanish or to learn about what other young people in Europe do in their spare time and holidays. (William)

William is at an average level of proficiency, and do not favor eTwinning at all. He is not a “language person” as he said he preferred more “traditional” teaching methods including explanations from the teacher from Power Points and the use of course books. He likes to learn about facts and new themes and this increased his effort regarding topics related to culture in the project. Han can be taken as a reserved person and is not found of collaborative tasks. He was quite skeptical to the eTwinning project beforehand and the skepticism lasts. He is very conscious to get good grades so he fulfills the products as to the demands. He does not like to share his work and is not occupied with checking for comments on his. However William likes to work with his computer and write texts about the themes. He is happy when the class “went back to normal”. William stated: “The most important advantage from participating in this project is that I used a lot of different digital tools and kept my grade”.

“Emma”

I was suddenly aware of the fact that I might want to use my Spanish for real after graduating, and I think the eTwinning exercises helped me to practice language for real. This was an exciting and totally new way to learn Spanish. (Emma)

Emma is a highly proficient student who looks at eTwinning in a positive way. She is positive towards foreign language learning, and works persistently at all times. She is shy and reluctant to speak Spanish aloud in class because she feels embarrassed. Emma certainly knows more Spanish than showing off in class. She is very excited when this project is presented, but immediately expresses that she does not want to share any voice recordings or have any roles in the films. This change during the process and through cooperating with “Amanda” and the fact that she is highly proficient in Spanish, her products turn out excellent. She displays a lot more of her language skills, especially the oral skills, than before. She also notices that the others also make mistakes, and that everybody has different pronunciation. She confirms that recording her voice and having lines in the film were not so scary at all, after discovering that all the others also had different pronunciation. Emma” states that she now knows a lot about the culture, life and traditions of the partners, and that she has thought more about the traditions in her own family too after participating. She grows a lot from this project, improves her grade, and gets to show more of her skills. And because of her excellent products, she gets many positive comments on her work. Emma said: “The most important benefit from participating in this project has been to become more courageous in showing my oral language skills, and that Spanish means more to me now.”

4.4.2 Findings related to the theme *authentic communication* from the portraits

The first additional research question in this study was: *How can authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project impact the students’ foreign language learning?* The question was set out to investigate how the respondents reflect upon the importance of authenticity in their foreign language learning. It was interesting for the study to find out how the participants reflect around potential of practicing their Spanish in authentic communication situations in an eTwinning project. As mentioned, this section contains findings only from the portraits. Section 4.6.1 will present findings related to this theme from the questionnaire.

I found that some of the interviewees gave few reasons when asked about the importance of *authentic communication* in their Spanish learning, while other gave several. I have included

examples related to the theme from all the interviewees in this section. The names of the categories are written in italics, within the sentences which they occur.

“Emma”, who is a highly proficient student states that she felt that the opportunity of *authentic communication* provided in the eTwinning project challenged her to improve her Spanish in order to communicate with the partner students, especially her oral skills. Because of all the positive comments she got on her work, *related to the category authenticity between the sender and the recipient*, she got confidence to show more of her language skills

Jakob is at an average level of proficiency and a very social student, and pointed at learning Spanish together with other youths while getting to know them, made him practice more Spanish than before. So the most important for his Spanish learning from the eTwinning project was the social bit of *learning the language with others*. The combination of using ICT to be social in *authentic communication* led to an *increased effort* in his language learning. He was very eager to know much about the French partner students, and said that he became more motivated to work with Spanish because of this, which can be related to the *international dimension*.

William is at an average level in Spanish. He was the least interested in the eTwinning project. He stated that the most important advantage from participating in the eTwinning project was that he used a lot of digital tools and the best part was working with the authentic text material on his computer, which sorts under the category *genuine language learning material*.

“Albert”, who is a below average level, was so relieved to see that his Spanish worked in *authentic communication* with the others. He pointed out that from *learning the language with others*; he saw that the others made mistakes too. Albert was thrilled about having contact outside school, and all the way to France, and felt the language learning became more real with the *international dimension*.

“Amanda” is a highly proficient student. For her the authenticity is associated with *learning the language with others*. All the nice comments show got have improved her confidence regarding Spanish significantly She also said this made her work more with her shared products and texts, *increasing her effort*. The *authentic communication* during the project has extended her vocabulary. She was very interesting in sharing text about various topics with the partners, which corresponds with the category *genuine language learning material*. I

noticed that four of the five interviewees evaluated it as beneficial to include *authentic communication* situations in their language learning. Further, four out of five thought that *learning the language with others* through *authentic communication* is valuable for their Spanish learning. The same four expressed that sharing work and having real recipients for their products, which relates to the category *authenticity between the sender and the recipient*, was important. All, except William considered using *genuine language learning material* in the Spanish lesson as beneficial for the language learning. Four participants pointed at when learning Spanish with people from other schools and other countries contributed to creating an authentic learning environment which made the language learning more meaningful. Again the same four interviewees explained that learning Spanish with others in authentic communication situations made them want to put a lot more into their work. Emma, Jakob, Albert and Amanda, all underline that they were preoccupied with not do mistakes in their texts or voice recording, and therefore worked a lot to improve their work. Table 4.5 is made as a comparison of the interviewee’ reflections on the theme authenticity. In the section above I haven’t repeated all the statements from each interviewee regarding the different categories which sort under the theme authenticity. But the table can be crosschecked with the portraits.

| The interviewees’ reflection on the theme “authenticity in foreign language learning” | | | | | |
|---|---------|-------|--------|---------|------|
| Category | Aman da | Jakob | Albert | William | Emma |
| Authentic communication | x | x | x | | x |
| Learning the language with others | x | x | x | | x |
| Authenticity between the sender and the recipient when sharing | x | x | x | | x |
| Using genuine language learning material | x | x | x | x | x |
| Participating in the authentic Language Classroom | x | x | x | | x |
| Increased will to work with language | x | x | x | | x |
| International dimension | | x | x | | x |

Table 4.5: The interviewees’ reflection on the theme “authentic communication”

4.4.3 Findings related to the theme *intercultural competence* from the portraits

The second additional research question outlined in this study was: “How can participating in an eTwinning project increase the students’ intercultural competence?” The question was set out to investigate upon how the respondents’ reflect upon the possibilities of increased knowledge about the other culture as well as their own through this project. It was interesting for the study to find out how the participants reflect upon the potential of foreign language

learning from practicing their Spanish with students from other cultures. When simultaneously learning about their culture and teaching the others about theirs. And if participating in this eTwinning project may lead to intercultural competence and intercultural awareness with the participants.

All the 6 students from school 1 expressed excitement about getting to know the students they were going to learn Spanish with, which demonstrates *curiosity of otherness*. Many of them wrote about their expectations to learn about the culture, lives, spare time activities and traditions beforehand in the reflection logs.

“Emma” states that she now knows a lot about the culture, life and traditions of the fellow students, and that she has thought more about the traditions in her own family after participating, which is associated with *intercultural competence* and *awareness*. All the knowledge she gained about her partner students, increased her ability to see them as individuals and not as a part of a whole French culture, which is a step towards fighting *stereotypes*.

“Albert” points out at the importance of adapting his Spanish language when communicating in Twin Space. He was interested in the difference between the Norwegian accent in Spanish and the French accent in Spanish. He also underlined the importance of speaking loud, clear and slow during the voice recording. “We are all beginners in Spanish”, as he said. To know how to use your language appropriately shows *intercultural awareness*. He was also highly interested in cultural similarities and differences between both the Norwegian and French partners in the project (*curiosity about otherness*).

For “Jakob” which is a very social student, it was truly exciting to have real contact with other Spanish learners his age. He was truly interested in knowing more or less everything about the others, which led to a significantly increased effort in the lessons. The *curiosity about otherness* he showed, led to an increased interest of having *intercultural communication* in Spanish.

“Albert” thinks that participating in the eTwinning project with focus on other cultures as well as our own was new and exciting for him. He was the one that expressed most excitement and *curiosity about the others* in their reflection logs written before the project. He had big eyes when we received the first presentations with voice recording from France. 4 of the other participants fit this description. He was surprised about similarities and differences between

him and the partner students during the whole project, and got to adjust some *stereotypes* he expressed beforehand.

For “William”, who was not particularly interested in the eTwinning project, working with *stereotypes* was a theme he reported as being interesting. He likes to learn about facts and new themes and this increased his effort regarding topics related to culture in the project.

“Amanda” expressed that the increased intercultural contact made her reflect more about different cultures and languages (*intercultural awareness*) She liked working with both her first, second and third language, and plans to travel and continue studying languages. She stated that she thought it might be easier to go abroad and to have intercultural contact, after having practiced *intercultural communication* in the eTwinning project. Table 4.6 provides for an overview from the interviewed participants.

| The interviewees’ reflection on the theme “intercultural competence” | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|--------|---------|------|
| Category | Amanda | Jakob | Albert | William | Emma |
| Intercultural awareness | x | x | x | x | x |
| Intercultural communication competence | x | x | x | | x |
| Being curious about otherness | | x | x | | |
| The Intercultural classroom | x | x | x | | x |
| Stereotypes | x | x | x | x | x |
| Lifelong Learning | x | | | | x |

Table 4.6: The interviewees’ reflection on the theme “intercultural competence”

4.5 Presentation of findings from the questionnaires

The findings related to the main themes described in this section are based on the participants’ answers to the open and closed questions in the questionnaire. Citations from the participants are added to give examples and allow for transparency. The interviewed participants have pseudo names, while the participants from school 1 are referred to as participant 1 to 6, and the participants from school 2 to number 7-22. Because the questionnaire was answered anonymously I do not have the possibility to cross-check the transcripts from the interview with findings from the interviews which I see in retrospect, could have been quite interesting.

4.5.1 Findings related to the theme *authentic communication* from the questionnaires

In the question: “What makes you want to work with the Spanish language in class?” Several of the participants gave answers which can be related to authenticity in the language learning in different ways.

Authentic communication

Participant No. 11 says that it is important to work with the language he needs in real life, while participant No. 2 states that practicing the Spanish you need if you are to meet a Spanish speaking, is important for the effort in class. Many participants state that doing other activities than the exercises in the course book, makes it more interesting to learn the language. When asked about what they liked best with the eTwinning project, several of the participants point at the same reasons as mentioned above. Participant No. 7 says: “The best part was to use real Spanish and to see how much the other knew”, while No 9 states: “It is more exciting to learn Spanish in the eTwinning project, much more realistic”. Participant No. 11 says that: We got to use our Spanish in a whole new way, when writing to other young people and trying to understand their texts”. So using the language in authentic situations means something.

Learning the language with others

Several of the participants point at advantages from *learning the language together*. Participant No. 16 talks about the advantages from getting to know the others through communicating for real, and that they also communicate on Facebook, while No. 10 underlines the importance of helping each other to learn new vocabulary. So learning the language with real means of interacting with others seems to be important.

Authenticity between the sender and the recipient

In one of the questions, the respondents were asked to explain what it means to them having real receivers to their products, e.g. sharing texts and voice recordings with others. As many as 19 of the 22 participants, reported increased effort to work with the products, as a result from this. Almost all felt a bit embarrassed when recording their first presentations.

Genuine language learning material

As for the interviewees some of the other participants also expressed that practicing more “real” Spanish during the eTwinning project has increased their desire to continue working with the language after graduating. Some mentioned that they see the potential from practicing the language outside school using the internet, while others who plan to study Spanish see this as an extra opportunity to meet real Spanish.

Increased effort

Participant No. 5 and No. 14 says they put down significantly more work in their products because they do not want to do mistakes when the others are going to see their work. Other examples from the statements are: “I worked a lot with all the blog posts because I wanted the others to learn Spanish correctly”, “I wrote longer texts and edited the pictures more, because I wanted to be as good as them” and “I wanted to seem serious so I corrected all my work, and asked my teacher”.

4.5.2 Findings related to the theme *intercultural competence* from the questionnaires

Intercultural awareness

When asked about what they learned from the project with their student partners, many students demonstrate their ability to see each others’ culture from both sides. Participant No. 11 says that” we have learned so much about the lives, interests and traditions about the other schools, and it was very interesting to see how alike the leisure activities are and how different our pronunciation in Spanish was from the French students”.

Intercultural communication

Several of the students mention that they desire to have direct intercultural contact and visit the partner school, especially the one in France.

Curiosity about otherness

The curiosity for otherness and for learning about other cultures was the theme in question No. 13 in the questionnaire. All participants, except one, confirmed their interest in learning about the culture of other young people in Europe. The participants also gave examples of what they were curious about: “The differences”, “how alike we are”, “about their hometown

and school life”, “what they do from waking up to falling asleep”, “if they are good at speaking Spanish”, “their taste in music and clothes!”

Stereotypes

When asked about what they learned from the project with their student partners several students’ point at similarities and differences between the 3 partner schools. Because we worked with stereotyping before the project, some of the participants mention this, and one participant stated: I learned that the French students do a variety of activities after school, not only sun bathing, and they do not only listen to French music. Their Christmas dinner on the other hand, was totally different from ours. None of them had heard of our tradition for lutefisk.

4.6 Other findings

After the analysis of the two main themes from my research questions some findings appeared which do not sort under any of the categories. I will comment on some of them which I find relevant to shed light on the research question in the study. Because of the limitations of this study these findings will only mentioned briefly.

In my main research question I asked about the potential eTwinning has to assist the students foreign language learning in general, while in my additional research questions limited my research to authenticity and the intercultural competence. These themes are now covered for, and in this section I want to present some the other findings regarding eTwinning in foreign language learning. It is impossible to cover for all the findings and I chose to focus on eTwinning as an all-embracing activity. As visualized in the table below, displaying the answers from parts of question 7, almost all the participants touch upon using many of the basic skills as an advantage with eTwinning. I used a Likert scale with answer alternatives.

Table 4: A distribution of the number of the participants, from question 7

| Question 7 | I strongly agree | I agree | I partly agree | I disagree |
|---|------------------|---------|----------------|------------|
| An eTwinning project makes it possible to work with several key competences at the same time. Hence a work method where I can use the language to practice my written skills, oral skills, reading skills, and digital skills | 16 | 4 | 1 | 1 |

Table 4.7: A distribution of the number of the participants, from question 7 (extract)

From all the data material collected in this study, several of the reflections from the participants regarding the benefits from the eTwinning project were related to the basic skills in the subject. So in addition to presenting categories to the two additional research questions in my theses, I chose to make a similar table to present some of the findings regarding the more overall research question as well. I have organized the basic skills as categories here to make an overview. Table 4.5 demonstrates citations from *one* of the participants related to the categories. The quotes are taken from the interview with Emma.

| eTwinning in Foreign Language Learning | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| Category | Subcategory | Description | Citations from Emma |
| Basic skills | Sub category | | |
| | Oral skills | Practicing oral skills in the eTwinning project | The most important benefit from participating in this project has been to become more courageous in showing my oral language skills. You practice your intonation and pronunciation when making recordings. |
| | Written skills | Practicing written skills in the eTwinning project | I practice my writing skills when I am editing my texts. We wrote a lot of texts concerning various topics to the other partners in the project. |
| | Reading skills | Practicing reading skills in the eTwinning project | The partner students wrote numerous different texts during the project, and I practiced my reading skills when interpreting them. The most challenging was in chat, when I had to translate and write back at the same time. |
| | Digital skills | Practicing digital skills by using various digital tools in the eTwinning project | I practice my digital skills when I was using all the different tools in TwinSpace. |

Table 4.9: The categories for the theme “eTwinning in foreign language learning, basic skills”

From another part of question 7, the participants were restricted to predefined categories. I used a Likert scale with answer alternatives. The table shows a distribution of the number of respondents.

| Question 7 | I strongly agree | I agree | I partly agree | I disagree |
|---|------------------|---------|----------------|------------|
| Using eTwinning creates variation in my foreign language learning | 17 | 2 | 3 | |
| eTwinning is a practical working method | 16 | 4 | 2 | |

Table 4.8: A distribution of the number of the participants, from question 7 (extract)

I found that 20 of 22 participants state that they prefer Spanish lesson with a considerable amount of *variation* contrary to more traditional work methods. Instead of doing exercises in the course book they preferred more practical language learning activities. Several of them state that the eTwinning project promotes a varied language learning an advantage. The participants relate this variation to the authenticity and to the intercultural dimension, as well as the fact that the students use a variety of digital tools when working with eTwinning. Almost all the participants pointed at eTwinning being a practical and realistic language learning method.

4.7 Chapter summary

The material in this study was collected using a variety of tools. A theme-based analysis has been used and the presentation was organized around the main themes, *authentic communication, intercultural competence, and eTwinning in foreign language learning*. Descriptions of the categories and examples of the process have been offered. The categories were established after the data collection, even if some emerged from the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2. The triangulated material from interviews, questionnaires, reflection logs and field notes have been presented in a descriptive thematic analysis in different ways. The findings from the portraits were described first, followed by a presentation of the findings from the questionnaires. Both these presentations embraced only the themes authenticity and intercultural competence. When presenting findings related to eTwinning in foreign language learning, citations and examples from all data material were used. Chapter 5 will present a summary of all the findings related to all the main themes, and discuss them in the light of the theories presented in Chapter 2.

5. Theoretical discussion

In chapter 4, the findings from this study were presented. This chapter will present the main points from the findings described in chapter 4 and include them in a theoretical discussion. This chapter will discuss the findings in more detail and explore whether or not they are consistent with presented theories. The main themes for discussion in this chapter are closely linked to the research questions and will be discussed related to the theoretical approaches outlined in chapter 2. Some places where I consider it relevant, I have also added some perspectives from my own experiences, to contribute to the theoretical discussion. The chapter is divided into sub-chapters and each part discusses some of the findings related to how an eTwinning project can affect students' foreign language learning. The focus is on the students' meta-reflections regarding the potential for foreign language learning from the eTwinning project in the study.

I will start by outlining a summary of the overall finding presented in chapter 4. The first topic, in section 5.2, consists of a discussion with focus on eTwinning and authenticity in foreign language learning. Learning language together will also be commented on in the light of the socio-cultural approach. In section 5.3 the discussion will focus on the possibilities for intercultural competence and intercultural awareness from the eTwinning project. Section 5.4 discusses eTwinning as an all-embracing activity for foreign language learning, which also includes the digital dimension. Section 5.5 focuses on eTwinning and the international dimension in foreign language learning. These approaches cover my study's research questions as well as the overall findings summarized in section 5.1. Finally, section 5.6 adds a short summary of chapter 5. My whole study will be concluded in chapter 6.

5.1 Overall findings

In chapter 4, I presented quite *thick descriptions* of the findings. To present the collected data material in thick descriptive analyses might facilitate naturalistic generalisations, and for that reason increase the significance of the findings (Postholm, 2010). Nevertheless, the presentation of the findings in section 5.1 is arranged in a summarized form. The findings are a result from an analysis and triangulation of the all the data material, consisting of the participants' reflections from the interviews, reflection logs and questionnaires. This study found that:

- There are not many significant differences between school 1 and 2 on how the students reflect upon the potentials an eTwinning project has to assist their foreign language learning.
- However some differences between school 1 and 2 are found connected to how they reflect on the use of technology. Many participants from school 2 value the increased access to technology through the eTwinning project as beneficial for their language learning, while only one of the participants from school 1 mention that aspect.
- There is a high degree of consciousness on the fact that using the language in real and authentic communication situations with other language learners is beneficial for the learning outcome. The eTwinning Platform is regarded a useful and safe virtual room which allows for this communication to take place.
- Authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project is by the participants considered to be beneficial for their foreign language learning in various ways.
- Real world relevance is considered to make learning more meaningful so that the learners become more engaged. The language learning is regarded meaningful when used for real purposes.
- Learning language in the real world context instead of the book context is highly appreciated.
- Language learning is related to using the language actively in the process, and an eTwinning is considered a useful way of sharing and receiving knowledge with other language learners on TwinSpace.
- Learning the language with others is regarded highly valuable for their Spanish learning, related to a more practical and relevant way of language learning.
- Sharing work and having real recipients for the oral and written products leads to increased effort and from that enlarged vocabulary.
- Learning language together scaffolds the weaker students and motivates the stronger students.
- Intercultural collaboration in an eTwinning project is considered to increase the participants' intercultural competence.
- There is a correlation between the intercultural contact during the eTwinning project and increased intercultural competence. Still, the question whether this also concern intercultural awareness remains.

- Practicing Spanish with people from other schools and other countries is considered beneficial for gaining knowledge about other cultures as well as their own.
- There is a high grade of understanding on the fact that the cultural similarities are greater than expected according to the partner students' spare-time activities and traditions.
- eTwinning is considered to be an efficient foreign language learning tool because it embraces many parts of the subject, which makes it possible to develop many skills simultaneously and hence learn Spanish more effectively.
- An eTwinning project is understood as a beneficial way to obtain many goals and fulfills several learning objectives in Spanish.
- eTwinning is perceived as a suitable tool to practice and improve oral skills by some. On the other hand, many participants were embarrassed to hear their own voice in recordings and were reluctant to share their productions in Twin Space.
- There is a high grade of consciousness on the fact that an eTwinning project allows for practicing several skills in the subject as a result of using a variation of working methods.
- The variation from the eTwinning project is related to both the authenticity and the intercultural dimension, as well as the use of different ICT tools.
- The opinion is that eTwinning is a well-suited tool to practice and develop communicative competence, as to know how to use the target language in appropriate ways.
- Getting to know the partner students motivated many of the participants to keep in touch and hence continue the language learning outside school.
- A central aspect when looking at the participants' reflections on how eTwinning can assist their language learning appears to be linked to the international dimension in the project. Collaborating with youths in another European country seems to make the language learning more meaningful and relevant.

Some of these findings will be commented on in this chapter, while others in chapter 6. The discussion in this chapter will also include connections to relevant theoretical framings described in chapter 2 as well as my personal comments.

5.2 eTwinning and authenticity in foreign language learning

In documents and the curriculum for foreign language learning the importance of bringing authenticity into the language classroom is stressed. One of the objectives in the subject curriculum in foreign languages states: “Use communication technology to cooperate with others, and to find and interact with authentic language” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, p. 4).

The growing focus on culture and foreign language communication using digital tools makes many language teachers looking for better ways to use *authentic* materials in the language classroom. The eTwinning project in this study was initiated with a purpose to offer a real authenticity in the Spanish learning. The aim is that the language becomes a real thing, not just a set of exercises in the course book. One main goal was that the students’ attitudes towards foreign language learning become more positive as they experience success in actually communicating with other youths on the topics in life that concerns them.

My first additional research question outlined in my study (cf. section 1.2.1) is related to how the participants reflect upon benefits from authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project, and how this might influence their foreign language learning. I rely on Gilmore (2007) who points out that authentic learning activities and the opportunity they provide for engagement and meaningfulness are often cited as beneficial. My study shows that the participants conceive the authentic communication from an eTwinning project as beneficial for their language learning in various ways.

5.2.2 Authentic language learning material

The participants pointed at language learning being more meaningful when used for real purposes, with a more practical and relevant way of working with Spanish. Widdowson (1978) says genuineness applies to texts used in the classroom. He states further that authenticity is only present if the (genuine) texts are used in normal communication situations (ibid.). From this the oral and written material produced during the eTwinning project can be referred to as genuine and authentic material. When using genuine learning material the texts are made with an intention of sharing this with others.

A recent Norwegian study confirms these findings. Tuva Bjørkvold (2012) looked into how authentic and genuine text material used in authentic communication situations affected her class. She found in her report “Nysgjerrigpermetoden” (2012) that having real recipients for their products as well as writing texts in a non-school genre motivated her students. Guariento and Morley (2001) make a similar point saying that authentic materials in language learning

increases the students' motivation for learning as it exposes them to the real language. Statements from my respondents also support this. Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom. This requires the language patterns being put into practice in real life situations, as through an eTwinning project.

A majority of the participants point out both from the questionnaire and the interviews, that having real recipients for the oral and written products lead to increased effort in Spanish class. Student "Jakob" stated that it made a big difference for him that he learned Spanish together with other young people and that this increased his effort in language learning significantly. "Emma" makes a similar point when explaining about all the comments she got on her work from the partner students. This felt important and made her also check the TwinSpace after school.

This means the participants appreciate the real world relevance and several of them support this and explain that communicating directly with other youths made the language learning more meaningful, and because of that; them more engaged in class. Many of them mentioned that putting aside the course book and learn Spanish in the real world context instead was highly appreciated.

5.2.3 Learning language through communication with others

Scaffolding and the zone of the proximal development are linked with a socio-cultural view on how learning takes place (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is a result of interaction with the social context in which the learning takes place. The learning takes place in the social environment the students are part of, and is influenced by that, here the eTwinning Platform.

Almost all the participants reported that having real receivers to their productions influenced their effort. Learning the language with others is in other words regarded highly valuable for their Spanish learning. They explained that the thought of writing real texts to real receivers made them put considerably more work into the products. Participant 9, from the questionnaire, said he puts significantly more effort into the oral and written products. He wrote: "I want to be taken as seriously, and do not want them to find a lot of mistakes." Participant 13 was also concerned about errors: "I made my recordings numerous of times, to improve my pronunciation".

When receiving the presentations from the partner schools with pictures and voice recordings, the participants compared the pronunciation and the texts with their own work. As a result, the majority influenced their effort when making their presentations. This is related to the zone of the proximal development, they adjust their amount of work to the same standard as their partners in the project. Amanda confirms that hearing the other students' voice recordings, made her learn more Spanish because she listened closely again and again, to understand everything. She pointed out the social dimension in the eTwinning project, learning language with others, as important to own language learning. This is in line with the Socio-cultural theory presented in section 2.3. To share their product in TwinSpace with the partner students contribute to knowledge building and increased foreign language learning.

A survey made in a Norwegian lower secondary school, after participating in an eTwinning project supports the socio-cultural view that learning takes place in the social environment the students are a part of. Anita Normann (2012) looked into how an eTwinning project might affect the language learning, in a survey carried out in 9th grade studying French as a foreign language. She explains in her report "Det viktigste er å lære sammen med andre" that the findings shows that learning language together with others was the most important for the majority of students (Normann, 2012). She states in her article that from a teachers point of view, how important it is for the students to work with a real target group, and that they felt it much more natural to use the target language in such authentic communication situations (ibid.). This supports the findings from this study where the participants also empathized that learning language together was one of the most important advantages with the project.

An interesting aspect from the findings is that eTwinning seem to scaffold the weaker students and motivates the stronger students. Interviewee Albert, for instance, who is a below level student used the other's products on Twin Space as models and inspiration. "I experienced that my Spanish actually works, even if I find it difficult, he stated. He was dependent on a lot of support from the teacher as well as his peers. He reached the zone of proximal development many times during this project, gained academic achievement and improved his grade. On the other side of the scale, Amanda which is a highly proficient student also increased her effort in her Spanish learning and improved her grade. "I loved that the eTwinning project challenged me to improve my Spanish", she said.

5.2.4 The authentic foreign language classroom

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) underline the importance of a supportive teacher. A supportive teacher is important regarding having a clear structure of the learning activities carried out, and to give precise instructions during the process of activity. To be within their zone of proximal development the students have to master the tools used in the project and grasp the guidance from the teacher or their classmates. To continually teach the students how to use new technology competently as learning tools has to do with scaffolding. For my study this means that in order for the students to internalize information and acquire communication skills through an eTwinning project, the collaborative processes must have been implemented in a social setting first. An eTwinning project provides for a setting for the individual learner to be independent on one side, but on the other side dependent on the teacher and the partners in the project. Preferably, the dependency can lead to self-regulating and advanced language learners who internalize information in a collaborative way on an individual level.

The geographical context where this study was carried out is a place where the participants have few chances to interact in the target language after school. One way to overcome this is to involve the class in an online based partnership such as eTwinning, which provides an easy access to authentic language communication. According to Taylor (1994) stresses some critic's complaints about the lack of authenticity in the language classroom and then forget to distinguish and define different kinds of authenticity. Kramsch (1993) supports this and say that it is important to remember that the classroom has its own authenticity. Based on the statements above, I might argue that for my students the classroom became a more authentic place from participating in the eTwinning project.

Based on my participants' reflections it seems that providing authentic communication situations into their language learning is appreciated and effective, and through an eTwinning project the language classroom can become quite *authentic*. The greatest benefits are reported from the social part of learning Spanish together with other youths and that the learners feel that they are learning the 'real' language. From the participants' reflections as well as support from other theories and studies mentioned in section 5.2, I will argue that eTwinning can be recognized as an effective option for supporting the students' foreign language learning. And from a language teachers point of view I will stress the fact that material needs not only to serve an *authentic communicative* purpose, but also to serve the purpose of *language learning*, in order to be authentic to the purposes for which learners find themselves in the language classroom.

5.3 eTwinning and the intercultural dimension in foreign language learning

My second additional research question outlined in this study (cf. section 1.2.1) is related to how the participants reflect upon whether participating in an eTwinning project might influence their intercultural competence. In documents and the curriculum for foreign language learning the importance of bringing interculturality into the language classroom is stressed. The Knowledge Promotion (LK06) specifies “when we learn other languages we gain the ability to come into contact with other people and cultures, and this can increase our understanding of how people live and think” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006, p. 2). One of the objectives in the subject curriculum in foreign languages is: “Compare some aspects of traditions, customs and way of living in the language region in question and in Norway” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006, p. 5). Intercultural competence is also one of the major goals for a life-long education (cf. section 2.1). But even if intercultural competence is mentioned in the curriculum several times, cultural awareness is not.

All the interviewees, except one, appreciated the intercultural experience with the French partner school. In the reflection logs beforehand the participants from school 1 were quite enthusiastic to find out more about the lives of their French peers. Just as they were interested in comparing their spare time activities, traditions and school days with the other Norwegian partner school. The findings related from the participants’ reflections confirm that the intercultural collaboration in the eTwinning project was considered to be meaningful according to their expectations.

Through an eTwinning project the participants learn to become aware of both their own cultural background as well as learning about the target culture. They get practice in seeing both their own culture and the culture of the partner school from different points of view. The ability to see things from both sides, learning to adapt to different cultural norms is defined as intercultural awareness (Byram 1997, Kramsch 1993).

In my study the students were exposed to both another Norwegian culture as well as the French, and the students discovered and pointed out similarities and differences with both. Participant 4 from the questionnaire was surprised over the many similarities in their spare time activities. Almost all the participants pointed out the differences between the French and Norwegian accent in the voice recordings. Emma points out the differences in pronunciation. Participants 2 and 14, from the questionnaire, agrees with her in the French accent in Spanish

being more challenging to understand than the Norwegian, while participant 13 relates this to the speed. Albert points out the similarities in after-school activities while participant 14 points out the French being more restrictive as to photos on TwinSpace. Several of the participants are revealed to see that the other students make similar mistakes in their language learning. When the participants start to be aware of other cultures as well as own, and be able to and removed themselves from the center of the universe one might say they show the ability to decenter Byram (1997). From the participants' reflections mentioned above I will argue several of them show this ability when pointing out differences and similarities between the cultures. As a language teacher I will argue that if the language teaching succeed in developing such a cultural awareness, this might be tremendously useful in fighting stereotypes. It is not enough to only to learn facts related to countries at a national level. Such information may promote stereotypes (Lund, 2008; Dybedahl 2007). In this study the participants dealt with cultural differences at an individual level. They got to know each other personally and several of the reflections show an increase cultural sensitivity for otherness, here the about the partner students.

Vivian Cook (2008) points out that the ultimate aim within communicative language learning is to be able to use the language adequately for communication purposes. Active use of the language is central part. One main goal in the eTwinning project in this study was to active practice the target language in authentic communication situations as much as possible and acquires Spanish by using it.

When the students worked with the different products for the eTwinning project they were exposed to various forms of third language input. Writing about their own culture, listening to their peers, or their own recordings, discussing in online chat, expressing their meaning etc. All the time they are collaborating using the target language. "Emma" commented upon her benefits according to increased intercultural competence from participating in the eTwinning project. She states that she now knows a lot about the culture, life and traditions of the fellow students, and that she has thought more about the traditions in her own family after participating.

When the participants communicated with the partners in the project it is important that they are aware of cultural differences. They need to take into consideration that the other youths might interpret things differently from themselves. Through the eTwinning project the students were often asked to exchange their meanings and state their views around various

topics, e.g. compare topics related to their culture. This constant exercise in using the language in real communication situations, might improve the students communicative competence as well as their intercultural awareness.

If the language learning is to contribute to the international education of young people, it has to seek relationships with other aspects of the curriculum and include intercultural competence among its aims (Byram, 1998) He claims this can be done through appropriate teaching materials. From a language teacher's point of view I think it is challenging to provide the learners with opportunities to interact with people from other countries and cultures and I will claim this material very well can be a intercultural eTwinning project.

Byram claims that intercultural competence consists of five main elements, which he calls *saviors*, presented in section 2.5. From the findings in my study I will claim they the participants demonstrated examples of: curiosity and openness (*savoir être*), the ability to interpret texts from another culture (*savoir comprendre*), knowledge of social groups and their practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country (*saviors*), ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and operate knowledge, attitudes and skills in real-time communication (*savoir apprendre/faire*) and the ability to evaluate critically practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (*savoir s'engager*). As Byram (1998) points out intercultural awareness means more than developing competences, the learner has to engage with values and behaviors through encounters with otherness. Involvement in the Project "Practicamos Español" seem to have increased the students intercultural competence, and in some extent the intercultural awareness as well.

It is likely that when the students have authentic contact with young people their own age during e.g. an eTwinning project, they will increase both their intercultural awareness, as well as the intercultural competence. From the findings I will argue the students have increased their intercultural competence from participating in the eTwinning project. Whether this includes all Byram's *saviors*, demands further research.

5.4 eTwinning as an all-embracing activity in foreign language learning

Students participating in an eTwinning project use a variety of intelligences which maximizes their learning potential (Galvin, 2009). As Galvin here points out, an eTwinning project is based on using a wide range of intelligences and skills. From a language teacher's point of

view it is important to keep in mind that the competence aims for the project aligns with the curriculum in the subject.

The report *Kunnskapsløftet – tung bær å bære* (NIFU²¹ 2009), points out that Norwegian students does not have good enough skills in writing, reading and presenting their knowledge, and that the teachers do not change their teaching according to the intentions. Another report *Læreplanrevisjonen: Hva, hvorfor og hvordan* (Skrivesenteret²² 2013), show that the basic skills tend to be misinterpreted as *elementary skills, instead of fundamental skills*. The basic skills are often referred to as *key competences*. From all the data material collected in this study, a lot of the reflections from the participants regarding the benefits from the eTwinning project were related to the basic skills. Table 4.7 shows an overview related to whether the participants consider an eTwinning project makes it possible to work with several basic skills at the same time, which means a work method where they can use the language to practice written skills, oral skills, reading skills, and digital skills. A majority of the participants found the eTwinning project very beneficial for their language learning because so many competence aims and skills were touched upon at the same time.

Digital skills are also one of the five basic skills in the Knowledge Promotion (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006). A typical trait for the 21th century learning is that the students have continuously access to technology. It might be interesting to look at how digital skills could be improved without focusing on an instrumental use of digital tools, but a stronger emphasis on the communication part of it. My experience is that the students nowadays are so acquainted with a vast number of digital tools, so that an eTwinning project is not where they acquire new knowledge.

It seems like the introduction of ICT in the language classroom tends to increase communication and collaboration among students. The combination of using ICT to be social and communicate with others, might lead to an increased effort in his language learning for some. Heimark (2005) have used internet in foreign language learning to give the students an opportunity to get in contact with the authentic language. She claims that “Internet is an excellent medium to get a more real impression of the target country and to expose the students to the target language in meaningful contexts” (Heimark 2005, p. 21). (Grüters and Langseth, in Otnes (red.) 2009) also reflects upon whether the use of digital technology can

²¹ Nordisk institutt for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning

²² Nasjonalt senter for skriveopplæring og skriveforskning

give additional motivation in learning languages. More research has to be done about ICT use in foreign language learning to give an answer to this.

Using the web based portal students can collaborate using a variety of web based tools and applications. eTwinning provides updating of the teachers and students computer competence. An eTwinning project relays the teachers who acknowledge the importance of educating students for a technology rich society which will benefit them well in the future (Galvin, 2009).

5.5 eTwinning and the international dimension in foreign language learning

As the aims from strategies and documents from Europe also underlines, language is no longer seen as something which only takes place in school, but as a lifelong challenge. In the subject curriculum we can read: “When we learn other languages we gain the ability to come into contact with other people and cultures, and this can increase our understanding of how people live and think” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, p. 2). Foreign language competence makes it possible for the students to participate in international contexts. In a digital world with increasing mobility, communicative competence in languages and intercultural competence might provide greater opportunities in many areas. Competence in a foreign language like Spanish, and insight into other cultures might contribute to a beginning for lifelong learning.

As described in the framework, curriculum, strategy plan and other documents, working with intercultural competence and digital skills in authentic communication situations in the language learning are very central. In the Knowledge Promotion many of the competence aims have an international and global character. The curriculum states that “language competence makes it possible to participate in international contexts” and that “In a world with increasing mobility and digital interaction, competence in several languages and intercultural competence are prerequisites for successful communication and communication and participation in many areas” (Utdanningsdirektoratet.p.2). It is also mentions that «(...) insight in several languages and cultures, contributes to multilingual skills and provide an important basis for lifelong learning» (ibid. p.2) According to strategies as Language Open Doors (2007) the language teaching is supposed to have a communicative and practical approach (Heimark, 2008).

Several of the participants in the study pointed at the international dimension from collaborating with youths in another European country as an advantage with the eTwinning

project. Several participants said this made the language learning more meaningful. As a result many became more engaged in their products knowing they were going to be used in communicating in Spanish with other youths for real.

5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter the findings have been discussed in light from the theory presented in chapter 2. The different perspectives have been related to my research questions. Even if the main focus in this theses have been on the student' reflections, I have contributed to the discussion with some of my experiences as a language teacher, when I saw this as relevant.

6. Conclusion

Chapter 6 will briefly bring it all together and conclude my study. This study was set out to explore the potentials of foreign language learning from participating in an eTwinning project in Spanish class, and to investigate how the participants think this can assist them in their foreign language learning. My study focused on students' reflections on potentials for foreign language learning from eTwinning. I aimed to describe the essence of the participants' experiences and reflections on this matter.

6.1 Research question revisited

One main research question as well as two additional research questions were outlined to investigate the field.

The main research question was:

What are the potentials for foreign language learning when participating in an eTwinning project in lower secondary school, as perceived and expressed by the students?

Two additional research questions were set out as follows:

How can authentic communication carried out in an eTwinning project impact students' foreign language learning, as perceived by the students?

How can participating in an eTwinning project contribute to increased intercultural competence, as perceived by the students?

According to the students' reflections concerning their outcome from the project "Practicamos Español", eTwinning is an excellent tool to develop a wide range of competence aims in the curriculum of foreign languages as well as other competences. From observations in the classroom during the eTwinning project related to this study, the extraordinary engagement the participants in this study demonstrated when they wrote texts to their partner schools, remarkable. Several times they had no interest of taking recess, which is quite unusual for my students. From the student's reflections I will argue that the eTwinning project have potential to assist the students foreign language learning in various ways. To meet the real language in an intercultural project, the variation in work methods, the practical use of ICT, the relevance through authentic communication situations, are just some of the positive aspects the participants pointed at.

One main goal was that the students' attitudes towards foreign language learning should become more positive as they experienced success in actually communicating with other youths on the topics in life that concern them. The findings confirmed this. Their knowledge on their own culture as well as the culture of the partner school increased significantly. The participants got a deeper understanding of another European country and the youths living there. Further they used both new and familiar computer tools and extended their ICT skills. However it is important to underline that this study was based on a "convenient sample», as it only focuses on two Spanish classes over a 10 month period. Further research is required to validate the findings of my research, as it cannot be assumed that the findings can be generalized, only refer to the sample groups involved in this study.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

Several aspects related to the use of eTwinning in foreign language learning are interesting according to further research. My thoughts presented in this study could have been developed further. It would also have been interesting if the French students have contributed as participants in the study. In addition it would have been interesting to conduct a study looking at the teachers' reflections related to benefits from an eTwinning project in the foreign language classroom. For instance three language teachers from different countries participating in an eTwinning project. In the article about International trends in research of foreign language didactics (Haukås & Thue, 2012) it is underlined that there is very little research about digital tools used to collaborate/communicate. I think that a research project on eTwinning where the focus is ICT collaboration in lower secondary school could have been interesting. With the main focus to look at how digital skills could be improved without focusing on an instrumental use of digital tools, but a stronger emphasis on the communication part of it.

6.3 A door out

I have reached the end of my project exploring how an eTwinning project can assist the students' foreign language learning, from the students' point of view. I agree with the students' reflections concerning their outcome from the "Practicamos Español" project that eTwinning as a concept is an excellent tool to develop a wide range of competence aims and other skills. From my first encounter with eTwinning it has added a new dimension to my language teaching. I have aimed to demonstrate that the research questions I have chosen to explore are important and relevant in foreign language learning in Norway today. I hope that my research can contribute to give teachers like myself a broader understanding of how the

language learners experience and evaluate the outcome from an eTwinning project, and I hope that other teachers will take inspiration from my research and start collaborating on projects of their own.

All the participants in this study have pointed out a variety of learning potential from eTwinning activities. Based on this I will argue that eTwinning has a role to play in the foreign language classroom. The excitement of being able to use a foreign language to communicate in authentic situations, sharing ideas and perspectives, while working to understand and appreciate our differences, seem to be the same for “Amanda” in Spanish class nowadays as for my class back in the 80s. I hope that in the language classroom an eTwinning project might feel like a door out to the real world for the students.

I would like to end my study with the words of “Amanda” reflecting upon her learning potential from the eTwinning project: “Finally I got to practice my Spanish for real!”

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Appendix 1: Letter from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services with permission to collect data for the study

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfagres gate
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 51
rsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Anita Normann
Program for lærerutdanning NTNU
Låven, Dragvoll gård
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 25.03.2014

Vår ref: 38174 / 3 / MB

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 15.03.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 38174 | <i>eTwinning in Foreign Language teaching</i> |
| <i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i> | <i>NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i> |
| <i>Daglig ansvarlig</i> | <i>Anita Normann</i> |
| <i>Student</i> | <i>Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland</i> |

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.06.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Marianne Bøe

Kontaktperson: Marianne Bøe tlf: 55 58 25 83

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland livvvi@online.no

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices

OSLO NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11 nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07 kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@svt.uio.no

Appendix 2: Letter of information and parental consent

Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland
Lærer xxxxxx skole

E-post: livvvi@online.no
Tlf: 99562908

xxxxxx, 23.01.2014

Til foreldre/foresatte for elever på 10. trinn som har spansk tilvalgsfag:

Forespørsel om innsamling av data til mastergradsforskning

I forbindelse med at jeg skriver en oppgave på mastergradsnivå i faget didaktikk for engelsk og fremmedspråk ved NTNU, skal jeg dette skoleåret gjennomføre min mastergradsforskning. Forskningen vil ha følgende tema: *The use of eTwinning in foreign language learning*. Jeg er spesielt interessert i å finne ut hvordan elevene selv ser på bruken av eTwinning i fremmedspråkopplæringa, og hvordan de reflekterer rundt eget læringsutbytte når de jobber med digitale medier.

Forskningsarbeidet vil basere seg på kvalitativ metode, og jeg ønsker å bruke et spørreskjema som en del av mitt datagrunnlag.

Alle opplysninger som kommer fram spørreskjemaene er konfidensielle, og elevene vil bli anonymisert i den endelige masterteksten. All innsamlet data vil bli slettet når prosjektet er fullført.

Rektor er orientert om mitt arbeid, og har gitt sitt samtykke til innhenting av data. I tillegg er prosjektet meldt inn til Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste (NSD) i henhold til retningslinjer for forskningsetikk og personvern. Min veileder på Program for Lærerutdanning ved NTNU er Anita Normann (Tlf: XXXXX).

På bakgrunn av dette ber jeg altså om tillatelse til:

- å gjennomføre en spørreundersøkelse om elevenes forhold til bruk av eTwinning som et læringsverktøy i spansk.

Jeg vil understreke at det er frivillig å delta, og at man kan trekke seg fra prosjektet uten å oppgi noen grunn til det. Dersom man velger å trekke seg, vil allerede innhentede opplysninger slettes.

Ta gjerne kontakt hvis noe er uklart.

Vennlig hilsen

.....
Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland

Svarslipp – returneres lærer

- Jeg/vi gir tillatelse til at vår sønn/datter kan delta i forskningsprosjektet om bruk av eTwinning i spanskfaget.

Forutsetningen for tillatelsen er at informasjonen som framkommer gjennom spørreskjemaet blir behandlet med respekt og blir anonymisert, og at prosjektet ellers følger gjeldende retningslinjer for personvern.

Dersom eleven er under 16 år trengs samtykke fra foreldre/foresatte.

Elevens fulle navn:.....

Sted:.....

Dato:.....

Underskrift av elev:.....

Underskrift av foresatt(e):.....

Vennligst returner svarslippen til lærer så snart som mulig. Takk for hjelpen.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Spørreskjema om eTwinning prosjektet «Practicamos Español»
April 2013

Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland

Lærer, xxxxx skole og mastergradsstudent ved Program for lærerutdanning/NTNU

Tema for forskningsarbeidet: **Bruk av eTwinning i fremmedspråklæringen**

Til eleven

Dette er spørsmål som skal gi meg informasjon om din forståelse og erfaring med bruk av eTwinning prosjekt i spansktime. Svarene skal brukes som en del av datamaterialet i forbindelse med mitt mastergradsarbeid.

Jeg vil at du tar deg god tid til å lese gjennom spørsmålene før du svarer. Det er viktig at du svarer ærlig på spørsmålene. Ikke tenkt på hva de andre svarer, et er ingen «fasit» her. Jeg ønsker å vite hva du personlig tenker og mener.

Spørreskjemaet besvares anonymt og svarene vil bli slettet etterpå.

Tusen takk for at du deltar!

Hilsen Liv Jorun

BAKGRUNNSINFORMASJON:

Gutt

Jente

Alder: _____

Karakter i spansk: _____

SPØRSMÅL 1:

Hvordan vil du forklare hva læring egentlig er? Hva betyr det å lære noe?

Svar så utfyllende som mulig.

.....
.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 2:

Hvor motivert er du til å jobbe med spansk på skolen? Kryss av.

| Alltid motivert | Stort sett motivert | Sjelden motivert | Aldri motivert |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
| | | | |

Begrunn dette: Hva bidrar mest til at du blir motivert til å yte god innsats i spansken?

.....
.....
SPØRSMÅL 3:

Hvis du fikk velge arbeidsmåtene for ei spanskøkt. Hva ville du velge?

.....

SPØRSMÅL 4:

Hvilken av de følgende eTwinning aktivitetene har du vært med på i år? Sett kryss der du har deltatt.

| | |
|---|---|
| «Practicamos Español» | X |
| Laget og lest inn en lydfil på spansk om deg selv (om hvordan du er kledd/ser ut på bildet) | |
| Hørt på lydklipp og funnet ut hvem som er hvem på bildene av elevene på partnerskolen | |
| Skrevet en presentasjon om deg selv på spansk (alder, utseende, interesser, familie m.m) | |
| Lest partnerelevne sine presentasjoner på TwinSpace | |
| Kommentert andre elevers presentasjoner | |
| Laget en sammensatt tekst om dine juletradisjoner på spansk | |
| Lest om juletradisjonene til partnerklassene | |
| Hørt på lydfiler og sett bilder av juletradisjonene til de andre | |
| Laget en video der du viser klær og kommenterer andres klær på «catwalken» | |
| Hørt på partnerelevne sine lydfiler om klær og moter | |
| Skrevet et blogginnlegg om din hjemby | |
| Laget en sammenligning av våre interesser sammenlignet med de fra partnerskolene | |

SPØRSMÅL 5:

Hva likte du best med eTwinning prosjektet?

.....

Hva likte du du dårligst?

.....

Begrunn.....

SPØRSMÅL 6 :

Tenk deg at du skal forklare hva eTwinning prosjektet «Practicamos Español» handler om til noen som ikke kjenner eTwinning. Hva sier du?

.....
.....
.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 7: Hvor godt stemmer disse utsagnene? Sett **ett** kryss for hver linje.

| | Stemmer helt | Stemmer ganske bra | Stemmer litt | Stemmer ikke |
|---|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Jeg behersker godt å arbeide med eTwinning prosjektet | | | | |
| Å bruke eTwinning fører til at jeg lærer spansk bedre | | | | |
| Å bruke eTwinning skaper variasjon i læringsarbeidet mitt | | | | |
| Jeg foretrekker spansktimer med stor variasjon i stedet for timer med et mer kjent og fast opplegg | | | | |
| eTwinning er en morsom arbeidsmåte | | | | |
| eTwinning er en lærerik arbeidsmåte | | | | |
| eTwinning er en praktisk arbeidsmåte | | | | |
| eTwinning er en motiverende arbeidsmåte, som gjør at jeg får lyst å arbeide med faget | | | | |
| Min motivasjon til å lære spansk øker gjennom at vi bruker digitale medier? | | | | |
| Jeg har lært mer om bruk av data som følge av prosjektet | | | | |
| Et eTwinningprosjekt gjør det mulig å jobbe med utvikling av flere ulike basisferdigheter i spansk samtidig. Altså en arbeidsmåte der jeg både kan bruke språket <u>skriftlig</u> og <u>muntlig</u> , <u>lese</u> , <u>lytte</u> og bruke <u>digitale ferdigheter</u> . | | | | |

SPØRSMÅL 8: Hvor godt stemmer disse utsagnene? Sett **ett kryss** for hver linje.

| | Stemmer helt | Stemmer ganske bra | Stemmer litt | Stemmer ikke |
|---|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Jeg liker andre arbeidsmåter bedre enn eTwinning | | | | |
| Jeg misliker å arbeide med eTwinning prosjektet | | | | |
| Å arbeide med eTwinning prosjektet er vanskelig | | | | |
| Jeg liker ikke å høre opptak av min egen stemme | | | | |
| Jeg liker ikke at andre elever skal se/høre på mine produkter på Twin Space | | | | |

SPØRSMÅL 9:

Arbeidet du mest skriftlig, muntlig eller digitalt i prosjektet?

.....

.....

SPØRSMÅL 10:

Hvordan vil du vurdere ditt eget læringsutbytte ved bruk av eTwinning som arbeidsmåte i spansk? Sett **et kryss** under den påstanden som stemmer best.

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Større læringsutbytte enn ved andre arbeidsmåter | 2. Samme læringsutbytte enn ved andre arbeidsmåter | 3. Mindre læringsutbytte enn ved andre arbeidsmåter | 4. Annen type læringsutbytte enn ved andre arbeidsmåter |
| | | | |

For alle: Begrunn svaret ditt.

.....

SPØRSMÅL 11:

Hvordan har eTwinningprosjektet påvirket din motivasjon til å lære spansk?

.....

SPØRSMÅL 12: Hvor godt stemmer påstandene? Sett **ett kryss** på hver rad.

| | Stemmer helt | Stemmer delvis | Stemmer ikke |
|--|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| eTwinning har bidratt til at jeg har fått kontakt med ungdommer i andre deler av verden? | | | |
| For meg oppleves det som mer nyttig å bruke spansken i kontakt med <i>andre ungdommer</i> enn å jobbe på andre måter og med andre aktiviteter i faget | | | |
| For meg oppleves det som mer nyttig å jobbe på <i>andre måter</i> og med andre aktiviteter i faget enn å bruke spansken i kontakt med andre ungdommer | | | |
| For meg oppleves det som <i>like nyttig</i> enten vi bruker spansken i kontakt med andre ungdommer eller vi jobber på andre måter og med andre aktiviteter i faget | | | |
| Jeg tenker mer over egen kultur etter at jeg har lært mer om partnerelevne sin kultur (interesser, levesett, tradisjoner, holdninger) | | | |
| Det er viktig at partnerelevne er på omtrent samme nivå i spansk | | | |
| Jeg liker å bruke spansken «utenfor» klasserommet | | | |
| Det virker det lettere å ta kontakt med andre europeiske ungdommer nå | | | |
| Internasjonal kontakt med andre elever i Europa har økt interessen min for å lære meg språk | | | |
| Prosjektet har økt min interesse for å reise ut i verden | | | |
| Jeg kan tenke meg å holde kontakten med noen av elevene fra prosjektet | | | |
| Jeg føler man kan delta mer aktivt i verden om man behersker et fremmedspråk bedre | | | |

SPØRSMÅL 13: Er du interessert i å lære om dagliglivet til andre ungdommer i Europa?

Ja: Hva vil du helst vite?

.....

Nei: Hvorfor ikke?

.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 14:

Nevn noe du har lært om elevene fra våre partnerskoler? (Land, sted, alder, interesser, tradisjoner).

.....
.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 15:

Var det forskjell på å forstå tekstene/lydfilene fra partnerelevne fra Frankrike kontra Norge?

.....

SPØRSMÅL 16:

Hva betyr det for ditt arbeid i eTwinning prosjektet at de produktene du utarbeider (tekster, lydfiler osv.) skal leses/lyttes til av ukjente ungdommer og lærere på de to partnerskolene våre? Legger du mer eller mindre innsats i produktene? Forklar.

.....
.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 17:

Hva synes du om at de andre elevene i prosjektet leser/hører/ser på dine tekster/bilder/filmer?

.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 18:

Det er _____ å bruke spansk i kommunikasjon med ungdommer utenfor klasserommet.

(Fyll inn med ett av disse ordene, eller finn gjerne ett selv). **Motiverende – skummelt – spennende – artig- lærerikt – kjedelig – vanskelig – helt topp – meningsfylt – mer realistisk.**

SPØRSMÅL 19:

Hvilken innvirkning kan det ha på språklæringen at vi bruke digital teknologi til å kommunisere med andre ungdommer på spansk?

.....

SPØRSMÅL 20: Hvor ofte bruker du ulike typer dataprogram eller internett utenom skolesammenheng? Sett **ett kryss** på hver linje.

| | Hver dag | 3-5 ganger i uka | Mindre enn 3 ganger i uka | Aldri |
|--|----------|------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| Spiller dataspill | | | | |
| Søker informasjon på nettet | | | | |
| Kommuniserer via blogg, mail, Facebook, My Space, Instagram, Snapchat e.l. | | | | |
| Lydopptak (stemme og/eller musikk) | | | | |
| Bilredigering | | | | |
| Videoredigering | | | | |
| Dele lyd, video, bilder med andre | | | | |
| Kommuniserer med ungdommer utenfor Norden | | | | |

SPØRSMÅL 21:

Hvordan synes du ev. undervisningen blir mer internasjonal når vi har et slikt prosjekt ut i Europa?

.....

SPØRSMÅL 22:

Kunne du tenkt deg å reise på besøk til elevene i Nantes i Frankrike? Hva hadde vært den største fordelene og ev. ulempene med en slik reise?

.....

SPØRSMÅL 23:

Kunne du tenkt deg å reise på besøk til de andre norske elevene, for å praktisere spansk? Begrunn svaret ditt.

.....

SPØRSMÅL 24:

Har du lyst å fortsette å lære spansk etter ungdomsskolen? Sett **ett kryss**.

- Ja, på egen hånd Ja, studere språket Nei

SPØRSMÅL 25:

Hva har vært det viktigste for deg med å delta i et eTwinningprosjekt? Hvorfor?

.....
.....

SPØRSMÅL 26:

Kunne du tenkt deg å delta i flere eTwinning prosjekt? Ja Nei

Begrunn.

.....

SPØRSMÅL 27:

Kort oppsummert: Beskriv eTwinning med 3 ord:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Muchas gracias ☺

Liv Jorun

Appendix 4: Interview Guide

Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland

Lærer, xxxxx skole og mastergradsstudent ved Program for lærerutdanning/NTNU

April 2014

Intervjuguide for gjennomføring av intervju med elever i spanskklassen på 10. trinn i forbindelse med mastergradsforskning.

Overordnet tema: eTwinning in foreign language learning

Hovedforskningsspørsmål: *Exploring the potentials for foreign language learning when participating in an eTwinning project in in lower secondary school, from students' point of view.*

Fokusområder:

- Fremmedspråklæring, grunnleggende ferdigheter, kompetansemål
- Interkulturell kompetanse
- Autentisk lærings situasjon
- Bruk av digitale verktøy

Informasjon til elevene ved oppstart:

- Presentere opplegget, og si litt om hva samtalen skal handle om og hva intervjuet skal brukes til
- Informere om frivillighet og anonymisering

Oppvarmingsspørsmål:

- Elevenes forhold til spansk som fag generelt.
- Elevenes egen vurdering av sitt faglige nivå i spansk
- Interesse for språk, reising. Ønsker om å besøke spansktalende steder og fortsette med språklæring etter ungdomsskolen
- Elevenes syn på eTwinning som arbeidsmåte i spansk.

Hoveddel - hovedtema

1. Fremmedspråklæring

- a. Hva tenker du at læring i spanskfaget handler om (fremmedspråklæring)?
- b. Hvordan lærer du spansk best? (eventuelle preferanse til arbeidsmåter i faget)

2. eTwinning samarbeid generelt

- a) Beskriv hvordan og hva lærer du gjennom å arbeide med eTwinning prosjektet i spansken?
- b) Hva synes du er fordeler med å arbeide med et eTwinningprosjekt i spanskopplæringa? Begrunn.
- c) Hva er ulemperne? Begrunn.
- d) Ut fra din erfaring: Er det nyttig å bruke eTwinningprosjekt innenfor språkfag?
- e) På hvilken måte har eTwinningprosjektet påvirket din læringslyst i spansk?

3. eTwinningprosjektet «Practicamos Español» som læringsverktøy i spanskfaget

- a) Når du ser på oversikten over oppgavene vi utførte i eTwinning prosjektet Hvilket arbeid opplevde du som mest lærerikt i prosjektet? (ser på lista over aktiviteter).
- b) Når vi ser på kompetansemålenemålene for dette eTwinningprosjektet, har prosjektet hjulpet deg med å nå dem?
- c) Lærte du annerledes av eTwinningprosjektet enn andre arbeidsmåter som benyttes i spansktime?
- d) Hvilke av de grunnleggende ferdighetene arbeider du med i et slikt prosjekt? (å uttrykke seg muntlig, å uttrykke seg skriftlig, å kunne lese, å kunne regne, å kunne bruke digitale verktøy).

4. Bruk av digitale hjelpemidler som læringsverktøy

- a) Liker du å bruke data i timene? Hva med etter skolen?
- b) Hvilken innvirkning på spansk læringen kan det ha at vi bruker digital teknologi til å kommunisere med andre?
- c) Er det mest digitale ferdigheter som trenes i et eTwinning prosjektet eller annen type læring?
- d) Hvorfor tror du mange svarte i spørreundersøkelsen at de liker å bruke data i prosjektet, men at de ikke har lært noe nytt med data?

5. Variasjon og praktiske oppgaver

- a) Hvordan foretrekker du spansktime, forutsigbare med tydelig, oversikt, mer praktiske timer eller annet? Utdyp
- b) Dette er første gang vi har et eTwinningprosjekt.
 - a) Tror du innstasen din blir annerledes neste gang du deltar i noe lignende?
 - b) Blir det like motiverende å delta selv om det da ikke er nytt for deg?
- c) Synes du eTwinningarbeidet bidrar til at spansk blir:
 - a. -mer praktisk? b) -mer variert?

6. Autentisk bruk av spansk

- a) Hvordan har det vært å bruke eTwinning til å kommunisere med andre elever, både i Norge og ut i Europa?
- b) Hva betyr det for ditt arbeid i eTwinning prosjektet at de produktene du lager (tekster, filmer, lydfiler, blogginnlegg osv.) skal leses/lyttes til av ungdommer fra partnerskolene? Legger du mer eller mindre arbeid i dem? Forklar.
- c) Hva synes du om å la de andre elevene i prosjektet lese/se/høre dine tekster/bilder/lydfiler/filmer?
- d) Hva tenker du når du hører/leser feil partnerelevens gjør?
- e) Hvorfor kan det være nyttig å lære spansk sammen med andre?

7. Interkulturell kompetanse

- a. Hvorfor er det viktig å kunne om egen og andres kultur?
- b. Hva har du lært om kulturen til partnerelevne og ev. egen kultur som følge av prosjektet, og etter at vi sammenlignet interesser? Forskjeller/likheter.
- c. Hvordan lærte du om partnerelevens kultur gjennom eTwinning prosjektet?

8. Internasjonalisering

- a) Hva kan være fordel/ulempe med å ha internasjonal kontakt med andre ungdommer i spansktime?
- b) Hvilken betydning kan mer internasjonale timer ha på spansk læringen?

Til slutt:

- Hvordan har du forbedret spansken din gjennom eTwinning arbeidet?
- Hva har vært det aller viktigste for deg med å delta i dette prosjektet?
- Hva annet kan eTwinning lære oss enn språk?

Er det noe mer du har lyst å tilføye i forhold til eTwinningprosjektet?

Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland

Appendix 5: The reflection log

1. August 2013 (før prosjektstart)
2. Mai 2014 (etter prosjektslutt)

¡Hola alumnos!

Du vil bli bedt om å svare på spørsmål i to ulike refleksjonslogger som dreier seg om eTwinning prosjektet «Practicamos Español» som vi skal ha i spansken på 10. trinn i år.

- Spørsmålene i første logg handler mest om hvilke forventninger du har til selve prosjektet, og hva du har lyst til å lære.
- Den andre loggen handler om hvordan du opplevde eTwinning prosjektet og hva du tenker om ditt læringsutbytte i spansken som følge av dette samarbeidet.

Svarene dine skal brukes som en del av mitt materiale i min mastergrads-forskning.

Det er viktig at du svarer så ærlig som mulig. Det du svarer vil ikke påvirke din karakter i spansk eller ditt forhold til meg som lærer.

¡Saludos!
Liv Jorun

1. Logg om dine forventninger til eTwinning prosjektet «Practicamos Español»

- a) Forklar med dine ord hva eTwinning er?
- b) Hva kan være fordelene/utfordringene med bruk av denne læringsplattformen?
- c) Hva kan være utfordringene med bruk av denne læringsplattformen?
- d) Hva ønsker du å samarbeide med de europeiske ungdommene om? Har du forslag til tema?
- e) Hva håper du du kommer til å lære?
- f) Hvordan kan et slikt prosjekt forbedre spanskferdighetene dine?

2. Logg om dine opplevelser og ditt læringsutbytte knyttet til eTwinning prosjektet «Practicamos Español»

- a) Hva var eTwinning samarbeidet? Skriv noen setninger der du forklarer om det svarte til de forventningene du hadde på forhånd eller ikke. Gjerne begrunn svaret ditt.
- b) Hvilke av dine skriftlige og muntlige produkt var du mest fornøyd med?
- c) Hva var det viktigste du lærte i forhold til spansken?
- d) Lærte du noe annet fra prosjektet?
- e) Beskriv fordeler og ulemper med å samarbeide med andre ungdommer på spansk?
- f) Hva synes du gikk bra i prosjektet? Var det noe vi kunne gjort annerledes?

Appendix 6: Print Screen of the eTwinning Desktop of the project «Practicamos Español»

The screenshot shows the eTwinning Desktop interface for the project «Practicamos español». The top navigation bar includes links for HOME, PROFILE, PROJECTS, FIND ETWINNERS, TEACHERS ROOMS, RESOURCES, and HELPDESK. A user profile for Liv Jorun Aarnes Øverland is visible, along with a notification badge for 94 notifications and 3 new messages.

The project page for «Practicamos español» is displayed, showing it was registered on 28.05.2013 and is currently closed. The project description states: "Through eTwinning we will cooperate to exchange information about ourself, our culture and how we live in Norway and France."

Information

- Subjects: Foreign Languages
- Languages: EN - ES
- Pupil's age: 14 - 15
- Tools to be used: Twinspace
- Aims: The aims are to get to know pupils in another European country and to exchange knowledge about each other and cultural differences and similarities. Hopefully, this will also improve their vocabulary and their presentation skills. In addition, they will learn to understand the importance of learning a new language. [hide](#)
- Work process: The project will start in September 2013. 1. Firstly, students will work on a presentation about themselves (name, age, family, interests, spare time, and personal descriptions). Every pupil will give a comment on the presentation of the individual pupil in the other country. 2. During October/November: The importance of clothes and music for young people in your city /country? Music- using expressions like "me gusta/no me gusta" Clothes- learning words for different types of clothing/shoes 3. During November/December: How do you celebrate Christmas in Norway/France? Songs, food, and traditions, typical Christmas weather. 4. January/February: descriptions of our country/cities. Learning adjectives that describe, famous people, buildings, nature, people etc. 5. Mars: holidays. Use the future tense to express what to do in the summer. Ir+3+infinitive of the main verb. [hide](#)
- Expected results: We expect that pupils will to some extent have an understanding for another culture than their own. To meet real pupils will motivate them to keep in touch also after the project is over. They will learn a lot of new words and expressions. [hide](#)

Project partners - 3 partner(s)

- [Redacted] (FOUNDER) collège [Redacted] France
Subjects: Cross Curricular, European Studies, Foreign Languages
Languages: ES
- [Redacted] (FOUNDER) Norway

Twin Space

- Twin Space