

PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN AN ETWINNING PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the contributions of the eTwinning project entitled “Step by Step Foreign Language Learning” to prospective teachers’ foreign language use, digital competence, and intercultural learning experiences. The study was designed as a qualitative case study and conducted with 33 prospective teachers from Türkiye and Italy. The project was implemented through a series of collaborative online activities, including introductory tasks, letter writing, logo design, video production, online meetings, and podcast creation in international groups. Data were obtained from student products developed during the project process and from an end-of-project evaluation form. The data were examined through a descriptive approach, focusing on participants’ reported experiences and the learning processes reflected in the project outputs. The findings suggest that the project provided a supportive environment for using English in more authentic and interactive contexts. Participants reported improvement particularly in speaking, writing, self-confidence in language use, digital skills, collaboration, and engagement in the learning process. The project also appeared to encourage intercultural interaction by bringing together prospective teachers from different countries around shared tasks and communication opportunities. Overall, the study indicates that eTwinning-based practices may offer a meaningful and practice-oriented context for supporting foreign language learning and broader educational competencies in teacher education. It is suggested that similar collaborative digital projects more widely be considered in foreign language teaching and teacher education contexts.

Keywords: Etwinning, foreign language teaching, prospective teachers, digital literacy, intercultural interaction.

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ETWINNING PROJESİ KAPSAMINDA ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENME DENEYİMLERİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, “Adım Adım Yabancı Dil Öğrenimi” başlıklı eTwinning projesinin öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dil kullanımı, dijital yeterlikleri ve kültürlerarası öğrenme deneyimleri üzerindeki katkılarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, nitel bir durum çalışması olarak tasarlanmış ve Türkiye ile İtalya’dan 33 öğretmen adayının katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Proje, tanışma etkinlikleri, mektup yazma, logo tasarımı, video üretimi, çevrim içi toplantılar ve uluslararası gruplar hâlinde yürütülen podcast oluşturma gibi iş birlikli çevrim içi etkinlikler aracılığıyla uygulanmıştır. Veriler, proje sürecinde öğrenciler tarafından geliştirilen ürünlerden ve proje sonunda uygulanan değerlendirme formundan elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, katılımcıların deneyimlerine ve proje çıktılarına yansıyan öğrenme süreçlerine odaklanılarak betimsel bir yaklaşımla analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, projenin İngilizcenin daha özgün ve etkileşimli bağlamlarda kullanılmasına olanak tanıyan destekleyici bir öğrenme ortamı sunduğunu göstermektedir. Katılımcılar özellikle konuşma, yazma, dil kullanımına yönelik öz güven, dijital beceriler, iş birliği ve öğrenme sürecine katılım alanlarında gelişim bildirmiştir. Projenin ayrıca farklı ülkelerden öğretmen adaylarını ortak görevler ve iletişim fırsatları etrafında bir araya getirerek kültürlerarası etkileşimi teşvik ettiği görülmektedir. Genel olarak çalışma, eTwinning temelli uygulamaların öğretmen eğitiminde yabancı dil öğrenimini ve daha geniş kapsamlı eğitimsel yeterlikleri desteklemek açısından anlamlı ve uygulamaya dayalı bir öğrenme bağlamı sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, benzer iş birlikli dijital projelerin yabancı dil öğretimi ve öğretmen eğitimi bağlamlarında daha yaygın biçimde değerlendirilmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etwinning, yabancı dil öğretimi, öğretmen adayları, dijital okuryazarlık, kültürlerarası etkileşim

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, traditionally grammar-focused approaches in foreign language teaching have become increasingly more communicative and student- centered. As a result of this transition, creating learning environments where students can use language in real-life contexts have become notably more effective, and therefore, more productive. In this light, eTwinning projects are noteworthy for bringing students from different countries together in a digital environment, not only offering authentic communication opportunity, but sharing them as well.

The literature indicates that eTwinning projects improve students' language skills, increase their motivation, and support their intercultural interaction (Dooly, 2017). In addition, the constructivist learning approach increases the permanence of learning by encouraging active student participation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Although foreign language teaching holds an important place in education today, most especially in teacher-training programs, prospective teachers experience various difficulties in using the language in the classroom actively and effectively. In traditional teaching approaches, students predominately follow grammar-focused learning processes. This approach, however, does not adequately develop their skills in using the language in real communication environments. In this somewhat limited context, prospective teachers' English comprehension and production skills, as well as their self-confidence in using the language, remain incomplete. Tomorrow's foreign language

teachers, however, are expected not only to possess language skills but also those skills which especially pertain to the 21st century: digital competencies, collaborative skills and intercultural awareness.

The question whether international collaborative digital platforms like eTwinning offer an alternative learning environment for improving prospective teachers' foreign language skills has become an important research topic. Specifically, does the contribution of such projects aid in improving students' English comprehension and production skills, increase their confidence in using the language and fully improve their digital skills? More simply stated, do students' interest in the total learning process are key problem areas that need to be examined?

Theoretical Framework

Rooted in the work of Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Dell Hymens and Stephen Krashen, this framework explains how social collaboration, active learning, authentic language, and attention to emotions can all work towards the same aim while adapting to today's interconnected world. These theories are particularly relevant to this research because they highlight the way in which prospective teachers can be motivated and more actively involved in their learning by working collaboratively and using English in an authentic social context.

The concept proposed by Vygotsky suggests yet another important consideration to be made in light of English language teaching. Vygotsky's theory implies that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and cultural context. As language plays a central communicative role, teaching should, therefore, emphasize interaction and collaboration. Teachers may act as facilitators by using *scaffolding* to assist learners and gradually withdraw support as their students' competence increases. Classroom practices such as group work, dialogue, and culturally relevant activities enhance meaningful learning and open the students' mind towards new cultures (Vygotsky, 1978).

Jean Piaget shares Vygotsky view of learning as an active process in which students construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. He proposed that cognitive development occurs in stages, and that teaching should match the learner's developmental level through inquiry learning and hands-on activities. Encouraging students to explore and solve problems independently is also a key element in Piaget's approach to learning. Thus, education should focus on fostering thinking skills rather than simply transmitting information (Piaget, 1952). Mirroring such a learning framework towards prospective teachers allows them to experience active discovery learning before using it in their own classroom.

The use of authentic communicative language approach facilitates the implementation of a highly dependable context framework. In fact, *the Communicative Approach*, a concept associated with Dell Hymes and often referred to as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), is a language teaching method that emphasizes the ability to communicate in real-life situations. It focuses on developing learners' communicative competence which includes not only grammatical accuracy but also the appropriate use of language in social contexts. Accordingly, teaching should prioritize interaction and real communication rather than rote memorization of rules (Hymes, 1972). As an example, students

might practice ordering food in a restaurant, perhaps role-playing a conversation between a customer and a waiter. Another example is initiating discussions where learners group to work on a common project solving problems together by using the target language.

When speaking about language learning, it is also necessary to mention the *Natural Approach*, developed by Stephen Krashen as it is always up to date with the scientific and psychological educational field. Central to this approach is the *Input Hypothesis*, often expressed as “ $i+1$ ”, which explains that learners acquire language most effectively when they are exposed to input that is slightly above their current level of proficiency. The “ i ” represents the learner’s current knowledge, while “ $+1$ ” refers to the next stage of linguistic development (Krashen, 1982). This input should be understandable but still contains new elements to promote learning. Over time, students develop fluency through listening and understanding before producing language. Mere listening will not be useful as teachers need to be facilitators and communicators in order to make listening comprehensible. Images, miming, making errors to stimulate listening, referring to today’s world are all mediation strategies which can assist students’ comprehension.

Much related to the input $+1$ theory, is the *Silent Period*, a stage in second language acquisition described by Stephen Krashen in his Natural Approach theory. During this phase, learners may not speak much or may not speak at all in the new language, but they are actively listening and building understanding through exposure to comprehensible input. This period is considered natural and important, especially for beginners, as it allows learners to develop vocabulary and language patterns without pressure. According to Krashen, this learning stage is natural, and teacher should not force students to overcome it. In fact, the correlated *Affective Filter Hypothesis* by Krashen suggests that emotions such as anxiety or low motivation can jeopardize learning. For this reason, teachers should create a low-stress, supportive environment to facilitate acquisition. Emotional factors such as lack of self-confidence and stress can influence how well a learner acquires a new language. When the affective filter is high (e.g., high anxiety or low motivation), it blocks or reduces language input from being effectively processed. When the filter is low (e.g., relaxed and motivated learners), language acquisition happens more easily.

Attention to emotions while learning a second language can be improved through supportive and meaningful correction strategies. According to Stephen Krashen, errors should not always be directly corrected during communication, as this may increase anxiety. Instead, techniques such as rephrasing and delayed feedback help learners notice mistakes without interrupting fluency. Providing positive reinforcement encourages confidence and keeps motivation high. Putting students’ motivation at the top of the list, gradually guides prospective teachers towards engaging their students in active and authentic context – dependable work.

Together, these theories highlight learning as an involved, social, and developmental process shaped by interaction, cognitive construction, and meaningful exposure to language. Vygotsky emphasizes social mediation and scaffolding, while Piaget focuses on cognitive development through

active exploration. The communicative approach and Krashen's input hypothesis further stress the importance of authentic communication and comprehensible input in language acquisition. This integrated framework provides the conceptual basis for understanding and analyzing the learning process in this study in which digital applications permit their combination allowing international collaboration and the related learning skills to be developed.

This theoretical framework, also, incorporates gamification, storytelling, and Total Physical Response (TPR) to enhance language learning in the classroom and exploration among future teachers. *Gamification* involves applying game elements such as points, rewards, and challenges to increase student motivation and engagement (Arnold, 2014), often through digital tools. *Storytelling* supports meaningful learning by presenting language in a contextualized and narrative form that aids comprehension and memory (Gallagher, 2011). *TPR*, developed by James Asher, promotes language acquisition through physical movement and action-based responses (Bui, 2018). Together, these approaches create an interactive, engaging, and student-centered learning environment.

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to explore prospective teachers' experiences within an eTwinning-based collaborative project, with a particular focus on their perceived development in foreign language use, digital competence, and intercultural interaction. In line with this aim, the study seeks to answer the following research question: *"How do prospective teachers perceive their experiences in an eTwinning-based collaborative project in relation to foreign language use, digital competence, intercultural interaction, and engagement?"*

2. METHOD

This section provides information regarding the research model, population and sample, development of the measurement tool, and data collection and analysis.

2.1. Research Model

This study was designed as a qualitative case study supported by descriptive quantitative summaries. A case study design was considered appropriate because the research focused on prospective teachers' experiences within the bounded context of a specific eTwinning project entitled "Step by Step Foreign Language Learning". The study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of how participants perceived their foreign language use, digital competence, intercultural interaction, and engagement throughout the project process.

Although the study was primarily qualitative in nature, descriptive quantitative summaries were also used to present participants' responses to the closed-ended items in the end-of-project evaluation questionnaire. These summaries were limited to frequencies and percentages and were used to support the qualitative interpretation of participants' experiences rather than to test statistical relationships or make generalizable claims. The qualitative data obtained from participants' written responses and student-generated project products were analysed through descriptive analysis, in which data are

organized, summarized, and interpreted according to predetermined themes in order to present the findings in a clear and systematic way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). This approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the systematic presentation and interpretation of the data within the context of the case under investigation and allowed the findings to be supported with direct quotations where relevant (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2.2. Participants

The participants of the study were selected through convenience sampling, as they were prospective teachers who voluntarily took part in the eTwinning project implemented within the participating teacher education programmes. The study group consisted of 33 prospective teachers from Türkiye and Italy. All participants were enrolled in teacher education programmes at Balıkesir University, Mersin University and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Their participation in the project was based on voluntary involvement in course-related international collaborative activities. Convenience sampling was considered appropriate because the study focused on a specific group of prospective teachers who had direct experience with the eTwinning project under investigation. The participants were therefore able to provide relevant information about the project process, including their perceived foreign language use, digital competence, intercultural interaction, and engagement.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through an end-of-project evaluation questionnaire and student-generated project products. The evaluation questionnaire was administered at the end of the eTwinning project to examine participants' perceptions of their experiences throughout the process. It included both closed-ended and open-ended items. The closed-ended items focused on participants' perceived development in English comprehension, English production, self-confidence, digital skills, engagement, and willingness to participate in similar projects in the future. The open-ended items allowed participants to express their views more freely regarding the contributions of the project, the challenges they encountered, and the overall learning value of the experience. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers in line with the aims of the study and the structure of the project activities. Its content was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research focus. In addition to the questionnaire, student-generated products, such as introductory letters, university introduction videos, collaborative digital outputs, and podcasts, were used as complementary data sources. These products provided contextual evidence of participants' engagement in foreign language use, digital production, online collaboration, and intercultural interaction during the project process.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis process included both descriptive quantitative summaries and qualitative descriptive analysis. Responses to the closed-ended questionnaire items were summarized using frequencies and percentages. These descriptive statistics were used to provide an overall picture of participants' perceived development and engagement, rather than to test statistical relationships or make generalizable claims. Qualitative data obtained from participants' written responses and student-

generated project products were analyzed through descriptive analysis. The analysis was guided by predetermined thematic categories aligned with the focus of the study: foreign language development, affective outcomes, engagement, digital competence, intercultural learning, and future orientation. During the analysis process, participants' written responses were read carefully, recurring patterns were identified, and relevant statements were organized under the appropriate thematic categories. Student-generated products were also examined as complementary evidence in order to better understand how participants engaged with English, digital tools, and international collaboration throughout the project. Direct quotations from participants' written feedback were used where appropriate to illustrate the findings.

2.5. Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Data triangulation was achieved by using multiple data sources, including the evaluation questionnaire, participants' written feedback, and student-generated project products. The use of different data sources made it possible to examine whether similar patterns appeared across participants' self-reported perceptions and the products developed during the project process. In addition, the analysis was conducted systematically by organizing the data under clearly defined thematic categories aligned with the research focus. Recurring patterns were examined across participants' responses, and direct quotations were included where relevant to support the interpretation of the findings. These procedures contributed to the credibility and dependability of the study by making the analytic process more transparent and by grounding the findings in participants' own responses.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the research before data collection. The end-of-project evaluation questionnaire was completed on a voluntary basis, and participants' responses were used only for academic research purposes. No identifying personal information was included in the analysis or reporting process. All data were handled confidentially, and participants were represented through codes in the presentation of qualitative findings. Student-generated products were examined only in relation to the aims of the study and were reported without revealing participants' identities. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

2.7. Implementation Process

The project was carried out through a structured and phased implementation process aimed at fostering communication, collaboration, and foreign language use in an international digital learning environment. In the initial phase, introductory activities were conducted via Padlet to introduce the faculty members and enable students to become familiar with one another. This was followed by an English letter writing activity in which students introduced themselves and initiated intercultural communication by sharing aspects of their cultural backgrounds. In the subsequent phase, students were invited to design a common project logo, during which AI supported visual tools were incorporated into

the process. Students also prepared short videos introducing their universities, and these videos were shared with international groups to support interaction and cultural exchange. In addition, synchronous online meetings were organized via Google Meet, where students engaged in discussions and communication activities in English. During these meetings, tools such as Kahoot were used to support the process and monitor students' comprehension. A central component of the project was the podcast activity, in which students worked in international groups to collaboratively produce English podcasts on various themes, including city introduction, daily life, teaching methods, storytelling, and Total Physical Response (TPR). This stage provided participants with opportunities to engage in collaborative production and to use English in more meaningful and interactive contexts. The project was considered relevant to participants because it was closely related to their prospective professional roles as future teachers. In the final phase, students' feedback on the overall project process was collected through an evaluation form in order to better understand their experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings obtained from prospective teachers who participated in the eTwinning-based project, in line with the aims of the study. The data are examined through a combination of descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis, providing a multidimensional perspective on participants' perceived development in language skills, digital competence, affective outcomes, and overall project experience. The findings are structured by presenting quantitative results through tables and supporting them with qualitative insights.

Data obtained from 33 prospective teachers indicate that the eTwinning-based project was generally perceived as supportive in terms of language use, digital competence, and engagement in the learning process.

Table 1. Participants' Perceived Development Across Key Areas

Area	Limited n (%)	Moderate n (%)	High n (%)
English comprehension	7 (21.2)	18 (54.6)	8 (24.2)
English production	6 (18.2)	14 (42.4)	13 (39.4)
Self-confidence	2 (6.5)	22 (71.0)	7 (22.5)
Digital skills	4 (12.1)	17 (51.5)	12 (36.4)

Table 1 presents participants' perceived development across four key areas: English comprehension, English production, self-confidence, and digital skills. The findings show that participants generally reported moderate or high levels of perceived development across these areas. This pattern suggests that the eTwinning-based project was perceived as supportive not only for language-related development but also for broader competencies such as self-confidence and digital skills.

In terms of English comprehension, 18 participants (54.6%) reported a moderate level of perceived development, while 8 participants (24.2%) reported a high level. English production showed a relatively higher proportion of high perceived development, with 13 participants (39.4%) indicating high improvement. This finding suggests that production-oriented activities, such as letter writing, video preparation, online meetings, and podcast creation, may have provided participants with visible opportunities to practise English actively.

For self-confidence, the valid responses indicated that 22 participants (71.0%) perceived their development at a moderate level, while 7 participants (22.5%) reported high perceived development.

This finding suggests that the project may have contributed to participants' confidence in using English within a supportive and collaborative environment. Regarding digital skills, 17 participants (51.5%) reported moderate development, and 12 participants (36.4%) reported high development, indicating that the use of digital tools and online collaborative platforms was perceived as beneficial for participants' digital competence.

Overall, the findings in Table 1 suggest that the project was perceived as contributing to participants' development in multiple areas, particularly English production, self-confidence, and digital skills.

Table 2. Engagement and Future Participation

Variable	Category	n (%)
Engagement	Very engaging	24 (72.7)
	Somewhat engaging	9 (27.3)
Future participation	Very willing	15 (46.9)
	Somewhat willing	17 (53.1)

Table 2 presents participants' engagement in the project and their willingness to participate in similar initiatives in the future. Regarding engagement, 24 participants (72.7%) described the project as very engaging, while 9 participants (27.3%) described it as somewhat engaging. This indicates that all valid responses reflected a positive level of engagement with the project process.

With respect to future participation, 15 participants (46.9%) stated that they were very willing to participate in similar projects, while 17 participants (53.1%) reported that they were somewhat willing. This distribution suggests that participants generally held a positive orientation toward future involvement in eTwinning or similar collaborative international projects.

Taken together, the findings in Table 2 suggest that the project was perceived as engaging and that it may have encouraged participants to consider future participation in comparable project-based and internationally collaborative learning environments.

Table 3. Qualitative Coding Framework Based On Participants' Feedback

Category	Theme	Code	Participant (K)	Example Statement
Language Development	Improvement in comprehension	Understanding different accents	K5	"I was able to understand my peers better during meetings, especially when they spoke slowly."
	Improvement in production	Increased speaking practice	K12	"Speaking in English during the meetings helped me express myself more comfortably."
	Writing skills	Structured written expression	K8	"Writing letters helped me organize my ideas better in English."
Affective Outcomes	Self-confidence	Reduced anxiety	K3	"At first I was nervous, but later I felt more confident when speaking English."
	Motivation	Enjoyment of learning	K17	"The activities were enjoyable, so I felt more motivated to participate."
Engagement	Active participation	Interest in tasks	K9	"Preparing videos and podcasts made the process more interesting for me."
Digital Competence	Use of digital tools	Learning new tools	K21	"I learned how to use different digital tools like video editing and online platforms."
	Collaboration	Online teamwork skills	K14	"Working with international groups improved my collaboration skills."
Intercultural Learning	Cultural awareness	Exposure to different cultures	K6	"I learned about different cultures and daily life in other countries."
Future Orientation	Willingness to participate	Interest in future projects	K25	"I would definitely like to join similar international projects again."

Table 3 presents the qualitative coding framework developed based on participants' written feedback and provides a more detailed understanding of the multidimensional nature of the findings. The analysis showed that participants' experiences were organized under six interrelated categories: language development, affective outcomes, engagement, digital competence, intercultural learning, and future orientation. These categories suggest that the eTwinning-based learning experience was perceived not only in relation to language development but also in terms of affective, social, digital, and intercultural dimensions. Supporting the descriptive findings, the qualitative analysis indicated that participants' experiences during the project were structured around recurring patterns. Within the category of language development, participants referred to perceived improvements in both comprehension and production skills. Codes such as understanding different accents, increased speaking practice, and structured written expression suggest that language use occurred within an authentic, communication-oriented, and practice-based context. Participants' statements further illustrate how they experienced English use through interaction, written production, and collaborative tasks.

The category of affective outcomes suggests that the project may have contributed positively to participants' emotional engagement with language use. Participants referred to reduced anxiety, increased self-confidence, enjoyment, and motivation during the process. These findings indicate that the project was perceived as a supportive and encouraging environment for using English in communication-based activities.

Findings related to engagement indicate that participants were actively involved in the learning process. In particular, production-oriented activities such as video and podcast creation appeared to increase participants' interest and sense of participation. This suggests that participants were not positioned only as recipients of information but also as contributors to the learning process.

The category of digital competence highlights participants' perceived development in using digital tools and participating in technology-enhanced learning environments. Working in international groups also appeared to support their online collaboration and communication skills. These findings suggest that digital learning environments may support not only technical skills but also collaborative learning processes when they are integrated into meaningful project-based activities.

Under the category of intercultural learning, participants reported increased awareness of cultural differences and gained insights into different cultural contexts. Interaction with peers from Türkiye and Italy enabled participants to compare daily life practices and broaden their perspectives, contributing to their perceived intercultural learning. Finally, the category of future orientation indicates that participants expressed willingness to engage in similar international projects in the future. This finding suggests that the project may have fostered a positive orientation toward international collaboration in teacher education. Overall, the qualitative findings presented in Table 3 are consistent with the descriptive results and suggest that the eTwinning-based learning experience was perceived as multidimensional by the participants. Their statements reflect perceived developments in comprehension, self-expression, collaboration, motivation, cultural awareness, digital competence, and self-confidence, thereby providing deeper insight into how the project was experienced.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that eTwinning-based international collaboration can provide a supportive learning environment for prospective teachers' foreign language use, digital competence, and intercultural awareness. In particular, the opportunity to use English in more authentic communication contexts throughout the project, such as letter writing, video production, podcast creation, and online meetings, appears to have supported participants' perceived development in both comprehension and production skills. This finding is consistent with communicative language teaching, which emphasizes that language is learned more effectively when it is used for meaningful communication rather than only through formal instruction (Dooley, 2017; Shadiev & Wang, 2022).

Another important point is the production-oriented structure of the project. Activities such as podcast creation and video preparation placed students in an active role, requiring them to produce

content rather than only consume it. From a constructivist perspective, this is particularly important, as learning is shaped through interaction, experience, and meaning-making processes (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, working collaboratively with peers from another country appears to have created opportunities for social learning. Similar findings have been reported in studies on collaborative online international learning environments, which indicate that shared tasks can support both engagement and language development (Hackett et al., 2023; Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2024).

Participants' responses also point to perceived increases in self-confidence when using English. Although the level of perceived improvement varied, most participants reported some positive change. This may be explained by the fact that the project provided repeated opportunities to use English in relatively low-pressure communication settings. From the perspective of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, such supportive environments may reduce anxiety and make language use more accessible for learners (Krashen, 1982). Previous research on telecollaboration similarly suggests that peer interaction in international contexts can reduce language anxiety and support confidence, especially for learners who have limited opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom (Guerrero-Rodriguez, 2023).

The findings also highlight the role of the project in supporting digital competence. Since participants actively used tools such as Padlet, Google Meet, Kahoot, and AI-supported applications, they were involved not only in consuming digital content but also in producing it. This is important in teacher education, where digital literacy is increasingly considered a core professional competence (Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2023). In this sense, the project appears to have offered a more practice-oriented approach to digital skill development compared with the isolated use of technology. Similar patterns have been reported in studies examining eTwinning and related digital collaboration environments (Napal-Fraile et al., 2024).

The intercultural dimension of the project also emerged in participants' reflections. Through interaction with peers from Türkiye and Italy, students reported becoming more aware of different cultural perspectives and everyday practices. This supports previous research suggesting that cross-national collaborative environments such as eTwinning and COIL can foster intercultural competence in more authentic ways than traditional classroom instruction (Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2024; Vinci, 2025).

In addition, the high level of engagement reported by participants is noteworthy. A large proportion of students described the project as highly engaging, which may be related to the interactive and collaborative nature of the activities. From the perspective of affective approaches to language learning, motivation and engagement may contribute to a more supportive learning environment, particularly in contexts where opportunities for authentic language use are limited. Previous eTwinning reports have similarly shown that participation in international projects can enhance both motivation and professional engagement among student teachers (European Schoolnet, 2023).

Overall, the findings suggest that eTwinning can function as a meaningful framework for supporting not only language development but also broader competencies such as collaboration, digital literacy, and intercultural awareness. As highlighted in the literature, technology-enhanced collaborative environments tend to be more effective when they are designed as spaces for interaction and meaning-making rather than simple content delivery tools (Shadiev & Wang, 2022).

Today's students are preparing to participate in an increasingly interconnected global society. This requires the development of digital, linguistic, and intercultural competencies that enable them to communicate and collaborate across cultural contexts (Camilleri, 2016). Developing multilingual and intercultural competence as part of curricular foreign language learning can foster a better understanding of other cultures and raise awareness of plurilingual European society, thereby contributing to a broader sense of shared identity and intercultural understanding (Pakula, 2023).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, it can be suggested that eTwinning and similar collaborative online international learning practices should be more systematically integrated into teacher education programmes and receive greater support from university and school administrations. Embedding such projects into course structures, rather than offering them only as optional activities, may provide more equal access for prospective teachers. In addition, designing these projects to include both meaningful language use and digital content production may better support the development of multiple competencies required in contemporary educational contexts.

For future research, it would be useful to examine similar projects with larger and more diverse samples and to include longer-term designs in order to better understand the sustainability of participants' perceived gains. In addition, combining qualitative insights with more structured assessment tools may provide a more comprehensive understanding of learning outcomes.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

ETWINNING PROJESİ KAPSAMINDA ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENME DENEYİMLERİ

GİRİŞ

Son yıllarda yabancı dil öğretiminde geleneksel, dil bilgisi odaklı yaklaşımlardan iletişim temelli ve öğrenci merkezli yaklaşımlara doğru önemli bir dönüşüm yaşanmaktadır. Bu dönüşüm doğrultusunda, öğrencilerin dili gerçek yaşam bağlamlarında kullanabilecekleri öğrenme ortamlarının oluşturulması önem kazanmıştır. Bu bağlamda eTwinning projeleri, farklı ülkelerden öğrencileri dijital ortamda bir araya getirerek özgün iletişim fırsatları sunması açısından dikkat çekmektedir.

Alan yazın incelendiğinde, eTwinning temelli uygulamaların öğrencilerin dil becerlerini geliştirdiği, motivasyonlarını artırdığı ve kültürlerarası etkileşimi desteklediği görülmektedir. Bununla birlikte öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dili etkili ve aktif biçimde kullanma konusunda çeşitli güçlükler yaşadığı bilinmektedir. Bu durum, öğretmen eğitiminde yalnızca dil bilgisi değil; iletişim, dijital yeterlik ve kültürlerarası farkındalık gibi 21. yüzyıl becerilerini destekleyen öğrenme ortamlarının gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda araştırmanın Problem cümlesi şu şekildedir:

eTwinning temelli iş birlikli bir projeye katılan öğretmen adaylarının, yabancı dil kullanımı, dijital yeterlik, kültürlerarası etkileşim ve katılım bağlamındaki deneyimlerine ilişkin algıları nasıldır?

YÖNTEM

Bu bölümde araştırmanın modeline, evren ve örneklemine, ölçme aracının geliştirilmesine, verilerin toplanması ve çözümlenmesine ilişkin bilgilere yer verilmiştir.

Araştırmanın Modeli

Bu çalışma, betimsel nicel özetlerle desteklenen nitel bir durum çalışması olarak tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmada durum çalışması deseninin tercih edilmesinin nedeni, araştırmanın “Adım Adım Yabancı Dil Öğrenimi” başlıklı belirli bir eTwinning projesi bağlamında öğretmen adaylarının deneyimlerine odaklanmasıdır. Bu çalışma, katılımcıların proje süreci boyunca yabancı dil kullanımı, dijital yeterlik, kültürlerarası etkileşim ve katılıma ilişkin algılarını derinlemesine anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Çalışma Grubu

Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Türkiye ve İtalya’dan eTwinning projesine katılan toplam 33 öğretmen adayı oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılar Balıkesir Üniversitesi, Mersin Üniversitesi ve Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore’de öğrenim görmekte olup araştırmaya gönüllülük esasına göre katılmışlardır.

Veri Toplama Aracı

Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak proje sonunda uygulanan değerlendirme formu ve öğrenciler tarafından oluşturulan proje ürünleri (mektuplar, videolar, podcastler vb.) kullanılmıştır. Değerlendirme formu hem kapalı uçlu hem de açık uçlu sorulardan oluşmaktadır.

Verilerin Toplanması

Araştırma verileri, eTwinning projesinin tamamlanmasının ardından çevrim içi ortamda toplanmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak hazırlanan proje sonu değerlendirme formu, Google Forms aracılığıyla katılımcılara iletilmiş ve gönüllülük esasına dayalı olarak doldurulmuştur. Form, kapalı ve açık uçlu sorulardan oluşmaktadır.

Bunun yanı sıra, öğrenciler tarafından proje süresince oluşturulan mektup, video ve podcast gibi ürünler de veri kaynağı olarak kullanılmıştır. Tüm veri toplama süreci etik ilkelere uygun olarak yürütülmüş ve verilerin yalnızca bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılacağı katılımcılara bildirilmiştir.

Verilerin Analizi

Kapalı uçlu sorulardan elde edilen veriler frekans ve yüzde değerleri kullanılarak betimsel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Açık uçlu sorular ve öğrenci ürünlerinden elde edilen nitel veriler ise betimsel analiz yöntemi ile incelenmiştir. Veriler; dil gelişimi, duyuşsal çıktılar, katılım, dijital yeterlik ve kültürlerarası öğrenme temaları altında organize edilmiştir.

BULGULAR

Araştırma bulguları, öğretmen adaylarının eTwinning temelli proje sürecini genel olarak dil kullanımı, dijital yeterlik ve katılım açısından destekleyici bir öğrenme ortamı olarak algıladıklarını göstermektedir. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu İngilizce anlama, üretim, öz güven ve dijital beceriler açısından orta ve yüksek düzeyde gelişim bildirmiştir. Özellikle üretim becerileri (konuşma ve yazma) ve dijital yeterliklerde dikkat çekici bir gelişim gözlemlenmiştir. Öz güven alanında sınırlı gelişim oranının oldukça düşük olması, projenin duyuşsal boyutta önemli katkılar sağladığını göstermektedir.

Katılım düzeyine ilişkin bulgular, katılımcıların tamamının projeyi ilgi çekici bulduğunu ve büyük çoğunluğunun projeye yüksek düzeyde katılım gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Benzer şekilde, katılımcıların neredeyse tamamı gelecekte benzer projelere katılma konusunda istekli olduklarını ifade etmiştir.

Nitel bulgular ise bu sonuçları desteklemekte ve katılımcıların deneyimlerinin çok boyutlu olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Katılımcılar, farklı aksanları anlama, konuşma pratiği kazanma, yazılı ifadeyi geliştirme, öz güven artışı, motivasyon, iş birliği becerileri ve kültürlerarası farkındalık gibi alanlarda gelişim yaşadıklarını ifade etmiştir. Ayrıca, uluslararası gruplarla çalışma deneyiminin hem dil kullanımını hem de kültürlerarası etkileşimi desteklediği görülmüştür.

TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Araştırma bulguları, eTwinning temelli uluslararası iş birliği projelerinin öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dil becerileri, dijital yeterlikleri ve kültürlerarası farkındalıkları üzerinde

olumlu etkiler oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Özellikle dilin gerçek iletişim bağlamlarında kullanılması, öğrenmenin daha anlamlı ve kalıcı olmasını sağlamaktadır.

Proje kapsamında gerçekleştirilen üretim odaklı etkinlikler (video, podcast vb.), öğrencilerin öğrenme sürecinde aktif rol almalarına olanak tanımış ve yapılandırmacı öğrenme yaklaşımını desteklemiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, uluslararası iş birlikleri öğrencilerin iletişim ve iş birliği becerilerini geliştirmiştir.

Elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda, eTwinning ve benzeri uluslararası iş birliğine dayalı uygulamaların öğretmen eğitim programlarına daha sistematik biçimde entegre edilmesi önerilmektedir. Ayrıca, gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalarda daha geniş örneklemelerle ve uzun süreli uygulamalarla bu tür projelerin etkilerinin incelenmesi önerilmektedir.