Using Photography to Stimulate Children's Sense of Cultural Diversity within International School Twinning

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to define useful conditions for children within primary education to develop greater awareness and understanding of cultural diversity. In order for children to have cultural exchanges, international school twinning practices was considered to be a sensible strategy to underpin this aim. For providing a communicative medium whereby children might have cultural interactions, photography was the other significant mediating resource. In this report, two interventions were described, involving two separate international school twinning projects between Turkey and the UK. The results of Intervention I indicated that despite gentle prompts from a co-participating researcher, and despite an eagerness from the children, there was limited visual sensitivity in reading and interpreting cultural implications in both their own and photographs and those shared between the participating schools. A modest advance towards the conclusion of the first intervention influenced the design of the next intervention.

In Intervention II, a new international school project was established with fewer children and with more time allocated by the schools. Inviting the children to participate in preliminary cultural discussions appeared to create a more effective awareness of the cultural connotations in both their own and the shared photographs. Despite the children's willingness around engaging with images, they remained limited in their reading and production of provocative visual communication. Suggestions are made for strengthening what is judged a worthwhile purpose, with particular emphasis on the need to scaffold the recruitment of semiotic cues in image towards the goal of cross-cultural discussion.

This study found that the children's semiotic reading of images are at a modest level. Considering this exposure of visual images in every aspect of their lives, this study indicates that the children should be provided with more communicative opportunities with images.

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Table of Content

1. INTRODUCTION..... 1

1.1. My Personal Interest..... 1

1.2. Children Developing Cultural Diversity..... 3

1.2.1. Conception of Social and Cultural Identities of Children 4

1.2.2. Developing Cultural Diversity within Educational Context 6

1.2.3. School Twinning and Cultural Diversity 12

1.3. Research Aims 13

2. SCHOOL TWINNING..... 15

2.1. Introduction 15

2.2. An Overview of School Linking 16

2.2.1. The Active Countries Promoting School Linking 17

2.2.2. The Active Agents in Driving School Linking Projects 21

2.3. The Depth and Extent of Schools Linking..... 25

2.4. Common Objectives of School Linking 28

2.4.1. Expertise-Based School Collaboration 31

2.4.2. Geographically-Based School Collaboration 33

2.4.3. Commonality-Based School Collaboration 39

2.4.4. Creativity/Innovation-Based School Collaboration..... 40

2.4.5. Cultural-Based School Collaborations..... 41

2.5. Cultural-Based School Collaborations 42

2.5.1. Early Initiatives: UNESCO's ASPnet 42

2.5.2. UK based International School Twinning Projects 44

2.5.3. Other International Cultural-Based School Linking Initiatives 53

2.5.4. Building Successful International School Partnerships 55

2.6. Digital Technology in School Twinning 62

2.6.1. Pen Pal 64

2.6.2. Telecollaboration 65

2.6.3. Web 2.0 Technologies 67

2.7. Conclusion 75

3. VISUAL COMMUNICATION 79

3.1. A Call for New Forms of Literacy 79

3.1.1. Multiliteracy 80

3.1.2. Multimodality 81

3.1.3. Ubiquity of Images in Schools 83

3.1.4. Students' Engagement with Images through Multimedia Production 86

3.1.5. Visual literacy 88

3.1.6. Social Semiotics 89

3.2. Children's Voices through Images 91

3.2.1. Drawing 94

3.2.2. Photography 96

3.3. Summary 106

3.4. Research Questions 109

4. METHODOLOGY 114

4.1. Research Paradigm 114

4.1.1. Pragmatic Research Paradigm 116

4.2. Design Based Research 118

4.3. Narrative Inquiry Methodology 121

4.3.1. Narrative Construction 124

4.3.2. Narrative Analysis Method 125

4.3.3. Narrative Approach in this Thesis 127

4.4. Observation Research Method 130

4.5. Ethics 135

4.5.1. Ethical Committee Approval 136

4.5.2. Ethical Considerations in Visual Research with Children 138

5. INTERVENTION I 142

5.1. Introduction 142

5.2. Research context 147

5.2.1. Participants 148

5.2.2. The Role of the Participant 151

5.2.3. Research Procedure 154

5.2.4. Data Collection 157

5.2.5. Data Analysis 159

5.3. Findings and Analysis 159

5.3.1. Session 1 161

5.3.2. Session 2 190

5.3.3. Session 3 212

5.3.4. Session 4 228

5.3.5. Teacher's Pedagogical Exploitation of Visual Materials for Curricular Purposes 244

5.3.6. Cultural Interactions on Edmodo 246

5.4. Discussion 247

5.4.1. RQ1(a) How do children interpret the cultural content of photographs? 247

5.4.2. RQ1(b) How do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography along with digital multimodality? 249

5.4.3. RQ2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes? 252

5.4.4. RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes? 253

5.4.5. RQ4: How can effective dissemination of children's collaborative findings and interactions around them be achieved? 254

6. INTERVENTION II 255

6.1. Introduction 255

6.2. Reflections on Intervention I for Shaping Intervention II 255

6.3. Research Context 258

6.3.1. Participants 258

6.3.2. Research Procedure 260

6.3.3. Data Collection 263

6.3.4. Data Analysis 264

6.4. Findings and Analysis 264

6.4.1. My School 264

6.4.2. My School Playground 288

6.4.3. Neighbourhood 302

6.4.4. Transportation 316

6.4.5. Teacher's Pedagogical Exploitation of Visual Materials for Curricular Purposes 329

6.5. Discussion 337

6.5.1. RQ1(a) How do children interpret the cultural content of photographs? 337

6.5.2. RQ1(b) How do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography? 338

6.5.3. RQ 2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes? 340

6.5.4. RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes? 341

7. CONCLUSION 342

7.1. Intervention I 347

7.2. Intervention II 349

7.3. Research Questions 352

RQ1(a): how do children interpret the cultural content of photographs? 352

RQ1(b): how do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography? 353

RQ2: How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes 354

RQ3: How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes? 355

RQ4: How can effective dissemination of children's collaborative findings be achieved? 355

7.4. Lessons for the Project's Foundations 356

7.4.1. Contribution to Knowledge 357

7.5. Lessons for the Project's Execution 358

7.6. Future Directions 358

REFERENCES 360

APPENDIX 376

Section A 376

Section B 378

Section C 379

List of Figures

Figure 5.3-1. A picture of a detached house in the UK....168
Figure 5.3-2. A picture of a street with driveways in the UK....169
Figure 5.3-3. A picture of a terraced houses in the UK....170
Figure 5.3-4. A picture of a pet in the UK....171
Figure 5.3-5. A picture of some local shops in the UK....172
Figure 5.3-6. Pictures of some local shops in the UK....174
Figure 5.3-7. A picture of some rubbish bins in the UK....175
Figure 5.3-8. A picture of a street in the UK....176
Figure 5.3-9. A picture of a street with driveways in the UK....177
Figure 5.3-10. A picture of an apartment in the UK....178
Figure 5.3-11. A picture of several apartment complexes in Turkey....180
Figure 5.3-12. A picture of an old apartment complex in Turkey....182
Figure 5.3-13. A picture of a road with some apartments in Turkey....183
Figure 5.3-14. A picture of a doghouse in Turkey....184
Figure 5.3-15. A picture of a detached house in Turkey....185
Figure 5.3-16. A comparison of the detached houses in the two countries....187
Figure 5.3-17. A comparison of the common accommodation style in the two countries....188
Figure 5.3-18. A comparison of the local shops in the two countries....189
Figure 5.3-19. A picture of an historical bell in the UK....196
Figure 5.3-20. A picture of a playground in the UK....197
Figure 5.3-21. A picture of a memorial in the UK....198
Figure 5.3-22. A picture of cricket match in the UK....201
Figure 5.3-23. Pictures of a park in the UK....202
Figure 5.3-24. Pictures of some trains in the UK....203
Figure 5.3-25. A picture of a canal in the UK....204

Figure 5.3-26. A picture of some shops and a theme park in the UK.....205
Figure 5.3-27. A picture of city walls in Turkey.....206
Figure 5.3-28. A picture of a city surrounded by old walls in Turkey.....207
Figure 5.3-29. A picture of an historical mosque in Turkey.....208
Figure 5.3-30. A picture of an historical church in Turkey.....209
Figure 5.3-31. A picture of an overgrown fruit in Turkey.....210
Figure 5.3-32. A picture of a school classroom in the UK.....220
Figure 5.3-33. A picture of a school library in the UK.....221
Figure 5.3-34. A picture of a school hall for performing music in the UK.....222
Figure 5.3-35. A picture of a school display in the UK.....223
Figure 5.3-36. A picture of a school display in the UK.....224
Figure 5.3-37. A picture of a school display for English learning in the UK.....225
Figure 5.3-38. A picture of a school art work displays in the UK.....225
Figure 5.3-39. A picture of a bench in a school playground in the UK.....226
Figure 5.3-40. A picture of a school playground in the UK.....227
Figure 5.3-41. Some pictures of a school setting in the UK.....232
Figure 5.3-42. Some pictures of school subjects in the UK.....233
Figure 5.3-43. Picture of some school halls in the UK.....234
Figure 5.3-44. Some school musical instruments in the UK.....235
Figure 5.3-45. A school display in the UK.....236
Figure 5.3-46. A school display showing a school play in the UK.....237
Figure 5.3-47. Some school displays for children's work in the UK.....238
Figure 5.3-48. Some picture of school values in the UK.....239
Figure 5.3-49. A picture of a school classroom in Turkey.....240
Figure 5.3-50. A school corridor in Turkey.....242
Figure 5.3-51. A school playground in Turkey.....243

Figure 6.3-1. A picture of a school reading corner in the UK 274

Figure 6.3-2. A picture of a school library in the UK 275

Figure 6.3-3. A picture of a groups children studying in a school in the UK.....276

Figure 6.3-4. A picture of a school open plan in the UK 277

Figure 6.3-5. A picture of a child playing musical instrument in a school in the UK 278

Figure 6.3-6. A picture of a school musical instruments in the UK.....279

Figure 6.3-7. A picture of a couple of child and school animals in the UK 280

Figure 6.3-8. A picture of some school animals in the UK 280

Figure 6.3-9. A picture of a school science display in the UK 281

Figure 6.3-10. A picture of a school literacy display in the UK 282

Figure 6.3-11. A picture of a school corridor in Turkey 283

Figure 6.3-12. A picture of a classroom in Turkey 284

Figure 6.3-13. A picture of a classroom in Turkey 285

Figure 6.3-14. A picture of a classroom in Turkey 287

Figure 6.3-15. A picture of a couple of children holding an animal in a school playground in the UK.....294

Figure 6.3-16. A picture of several children playing in a school playground in the UK.....295

Figure 6.3-17. A picture of girls playing basketball in a school playground in the UK 296

Figure 6.3-18. A picture of a couple of children resting in a quiet area in a school playground in the UK.....297

Figure 6.3-19. A picture of several children and a school reception in Turkey 298

Figure 6.3-20. A picture of a school playground with children in Turkey.....299

Figure 6.3-21. A picture of a school playground in Turkey 301

Figure 6.3-22. A picture of a street with some street signs in the UK.....309

Figure 6.3-23. A picture of a park and a cyclist in the UK.....310

Figure 6.3-24. A picture of a trampoline in a garden and an alley in the UK 311

Figure 6.3-25. A picture of terrased street in the UK 312

Figure 6.3-26. A picture of several houses in Turkey.....313
Figure 6.3-27. A picture of a street and gardens in Turkey 315
Figure 6.3-28. A picture of several students taking a local bus in the UK 323
Figure 6.3-29. A picture of a group of children cycling in the UK.....324
Figure 6.3-30. A picture of a school service in Turkey 326
Figure 6.3-31. A picture of a group of children cycling in Turkey.....327
Figure 6.3-32. A picture of some local transportation in Turkey.....328
Figure 6.3-33. A picture of a school corridor in Turkey 332
Figure 6.3-34. Pictures of a comparison of two streets in Turkey and the UK.....334

List of Tables

Table 2.5-1 modified from (Bourn & Hunt, 2011, p. 28) 46

Table 3.2-1 modified from Thomson (2008, p. 13).....93

Table 5.3-1. Pictures of a detached house and a doghouse in Turkey.....162

Table 5.3-2. Pictures of apartment complexes in Turkey.....162

Table 5.3-3. Pictures of some apartments in Turkey.....163

Table 5.3-4. Pictures of rubbish bins, local shops and a detached house in the UK 163

Table 5.3-5. Pictures of an apartment in the UK 164

Table 5.3-6. Pictures of houses with front gardens in the UK.....164

Table 5.3-7. Pictures of some houses with parking space in the UK.....165

Table 5.3-8. Pictures of some streets in the UK.....165

Table 5.3-9. Pictures of various kinds of houses in the UK.....166

Table 5.3-10. Pictures of a pet, a park and an ordinary pavement in the UK 166

Table 5.3-11.Pictures of historical places in the city 192

Table 5.3-12. Pictures of the walls and the famous fruit in the city.....193

Table 5.3-13. Pictures of some monuments in the town 193

Table 5.3-14. Pictures of railway service in the town.....194

Table 5.3-15. Pictures of some parks in the town 194

Table 5.3-16. Pictures of historical structures in the town 195

Table 5.3-17. Pictures of a cricket match, some cadets and a popular shop 195

Table 5.3-18. Digital multimodal products of the town generated by the children 200

Table 5.3-19. Pictures of the school setting in the UK.....215

Table 5.3-20. Picture of music culture in the school in the UK 216

Table 5.3-21. Pictures of school displays in the school in the UK.....217

Table 5.3-22. Pictures of the classroom setting in the school in the UK.....218

Table 5.3-23. Pictures of the school playground in the school in the UK.....218

Table 5.3-24. Pictures of some values in the school in the UK.....219

Table 5.3-25. Pictures of a classroom and school playground in a school in Turkey 230

Table 5.3-26. Digital multimodal products reflecting the school culture generated by the children 231

Table 6.3-1. Pictures of school corridors in the school in Turkey.....265

Table 6.3-2. Pictures of classrooms from schools in Turkey 266

Table 6.3-3. Pictures of some school displays in the school in Turkey.....266

Table 6.3-4. Pictures of the studying areas in the school in the UK.....267

Table 6.3-5. Pictures of the reading areas in the school in the UK 267

Table 6.3-6. Pictures of music in the school in the UK 268

Table 6.3-7. Pictures of some displays in the school in the UK 268

Table 6.3-8. Pictures of animals in the school in the UK.....269

Table 6.3-9. Pictures of the playground of the school in Turkey.....289

Table 6.3-10. Pictures of the reception and the quiet area in the school in Turkey 289

Table 6.3-11. Pictures of the playground games in the school in Turkey 290

Table 6.3-12. Pictures of children playing sports in the school in the UK.....290

Table 6.3-13. Pictures of school playground games in the school in the UK 291

*Table 6.3-14. Pictures of animals and quiet area in the playground of the school in the UK*291

Table 6.3-15. Pictures of streets in the town in Turkey.....303

Table 6.3-16. Pictures of gardens and houses in the town in Turkey 304

Table 6.3-17. Pictures of streets in the town in the UK.....304

Table 6.3-18. Pictures of some gardens in the town in the UK......305

Table 6.3-19. Two pictures of local shops and a park in the town in the UK.....305

Table 6.3-20. Pictures of a minibus and a school service in the town in Turkey.....317

Table 6.3-21. Pictures of a taxi and some cyclists in the town in Turkey.....318

Table 6.3-22. Pictures of buses in the town in the UK 318

Table 6.3-23. Pictures of railway services in the town in the UK 319

Table 6.3-24. Pictures of taxis and some cyclists in the town in the UK 319

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.My Personal Interest

To start this thesis, I will explain how my interest in its concerns grew out of personal experience. Then, in the main part of this chapter, I will outline the research traditions that provide an academic basis for following that interest. This PhD is the final point of an educational journey that has taken place in a variety of geographically distanced locations, encompassing a range of distinctive cultural contexts. So, I have encountered several unique cultures during this journey. My adaptation to the cultural diversity within my educational journey has turned into a central interest at this present stage.

During the two first phases of my educational journey, I attended the primary and secondary schools in my small town. Despite the intense period of studying for the central examination to enrol in a university during my last year at secondary school, thinking of where I would be next year was always occupying my mind. Coming from a small town located in the southeast of Turkey, studying at a university in one of the big cities in the western part of the country was my primary goal. One reason behind my motive was the modern life in some western cities in Turkey that I had always perceived through people and media. In the end, I enrolled in a university to become an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) teacher in the city of Izmir, located in western part of Turkey. Not only being the second most modern city, Izmir has also a unique culture of its own that makes it considered a major European city in Turkey.

I encountered several issues in adapting to the city during my first two years. One major issue underlying my frustration was my unfamiliarity with the cultural practices, beliefs and values of this place. In addition, my lack of experience in encountering different cultures played a significant role, since I had lived in my small and conservative town throughout my life, without travelling or becoming exposed to different cultural contexts. In spite of my initial struggles in adjusting to the new cultural context, I managed to adapt to the culture and had great experiences during 5 years of my study at the city.

After teaching for two years, I acquired a scholarship to do a Masters and PhD abroad. Studying abroad had always been a dream for me and I accepted the scholarship without further doubts. Despite forewarnings from friends and family members regarding the difficulties in studying abroad, my previous experiences in encountering and adjusting to the culture in Izmir led me to be confident about adjusting to possible new cultural contexts abroad.

My experience in studying overseas began with enrolling at a language school at the University of Alabama, USA. Just as with Izmir, I was excited about living here. Yet I faced several cultural issues after I arrived. Although I was more open and interested in experiencing culture in the USA, my English proficiency was limited and this was the main obstacle within my social and cultural interactions.

After I moved to the UK, I encountered less cultural challenges: having established experiences in encountering new social and cultural contexts, as well as overcoming the language barrier helped me in adjusting to the culture of the UK.

My experiences living in culturally distinctive places throughout my educational journey inspired me to consider a study on cultural diversity. In particular, growing up in a small conservative community and the lack of interactions with new cultural contexts have played a significant role in my struggles at the beginning of my undergraduate study. It seemed that interacting and encountering new cultural contexts during childhood might lead others, like me, to develop an understanding of cultural diversity and have an easier adaptation when encountering different cultural contexts. One way of introducing new cultural contexts to children is through education, particularly at an age when they can be ready to understand as well as celebrate cultural differences.

To develop the central interests of the present study, the rest of this chapter begins with an exploration of children acquiring cultural diversity. Within that, the development of social and cultural identities during childhood will be explored in order to consider the possible age period for children to start considering cultural diversity and identity. In addition, the nature and significance of acquiring cultural diversity within an educational context will be a matter for investigation. The chapter ends with research aims based on an appropriate pedagogical approach, consisting of an educational practice and applicable educational tools. These aims will be developed into specific research questions in subsequent chapters.

1.2.Children Developing Cultural Diversity

It is assumed that children's experiencing and encountering of new cultural contexts might lead them to develop an understanding of cultural diversity and so equip them to have an easier adaptation to new cultural contexts in later stages of their lives. The underlying notion in this assumption is that acquiring cultural diversity is centrally about social, and cultural identities which are formed primarily during childhood. In that respect, cultivating cultural

diversity during childhood might be more effective than for adults, whose social and cultural identities may prove less flexible. The social and cultural identities of children should be at a satisfactory level for children to comprehend diversity. Therefore, the conception of social and cultural identities evident during childhood should be considered here, in order to identify a suitable age group of children for this thesis.

1.2.1. Conception of Social and Cultural Identities of Children

Studies focusing on the stages in which children develop social identities indicate that their formation goes through substantial changes during childhood. From 3 to 6 years, the main focus in a conception of social identities refers to physical characteristics, such as skin colour, clothing, hair length etc. (Quintana, 1998) while children between 6 to 10 years begin to acquire group-related customs such as food and activity preferences. Sani and Bennett (2004) highlighted the tendency of children to conceive identities in behavioural terms, particularly during mid-childhood, such as boys playing football and other gender-correlated cultural practices. The final major stage of social identity formation in childhood occurs between 10 to 14 years, in which broader associations, such as status variances between groups and commonly apprehended stereotypes about them are acknowledged by children (Bennett, 2011). Barrett and Oppenheimer (2011) stated that children beyond 10 years old embrace broader beliefs about the characteristic physical components, clothing, customs, psychological and personality qualities of a wide range of national groups. Similarly, as an abstract concept, Barrett, Lyons, & del Valle, 2004 stated that national identity turns salient for children over 10 years old. These studies indicate how the conception of social and cultural identities of 10 to 14 year-old children is more abstract than in the early and mid-childhood

years. This implies that children between 10 to 14 years are more likely to be ready to engage in richer cross-cultural reflections and interactions.

Despite that, Svirydzenka, Sani, and Bennett (2010) revealed substantial differences between the conception of 10-year-old children and adults regarding the 'groupness' of groups. While social interactions, relationships and shared activities towards a common goal underpin the understanding of groupness for children, adults focus on more abstract features such as the psychological significance of the group for its members. The study indicated an ongoing development regarding the conception of social and cultural identities of 10-year-old children in order to achieve firm and solid social and cultural identities as adults (Svirydzenka et al., 2010). Having interactions with other cultural contexts during the evolution of social and cultural identities at a given age might lead to richer cultural understandings upon which children might build social and cultural identities with an essence of cultural diversity. Indeed, in a study investigating the variation of cultural interactions, Peiser (2015) indicated that children in the 12 to 13-year age group developed more cultural similarities and differences and were friendlier and more open to their counterparts than students engaging in similar projects in a Higher Education context.

The above studies indicate that children beyond 10 years old are more likely to develop social and cultural identities based on more abstract features. One implication of this for interventions is that children over 10 years are more suitable for comprehending cultural diversity. Apart from identifying an applicable age group, the possible ways in which students can acquire cultural diversity particularly through educational context need specific exploration.

1.2.2. Developing Cultural Diversity within Educational Context

However, prior to exploring possible pedagogical approaches for children to acquire cultural diversity within formal educational contexts, the constituents of cultural diversity, alongside its significance in societies, need to be addressed. Barrett et al. (2004) stated that personal interactions turn into 'intercultural encounters' when the cultural differences among people are made salient. Moreover, the rapid development of digital technology and a tendency towards globalisation have provided people with opportunities to have far more direct and indirect interactions with people from different language and cultural backgrounds. Yet such opportunities have come with new challenges (Fantini, 2009). So, having intercultural encounters as well as communicating and understanding people from various cultural backgrounds has become a central requirement for productive participation in today's societies (Deardorff, 2011). For example, in facing major social, economic and political integration among European countries, the Council of Europe published a White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: 'Living Together as Equals in Dignity' in which the need for individuals to build several relevant personal capabilities was proposed, in order to effectively participate in intercultural encounters (Europe, 2008). Barrett, Huber, and Reynolds (2014) termed the capabilities that individuals are recommended to gain as 'intercultural competence'.

Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003, p. 422) referred to intercultural competence as "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" while Barrett (2011, p. 7) identified intercultural competence as a set of "attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills" in respecting others, responding effectively when communicating with others, forming a positive and constructive relationship with others as well as understanding one's own cultural associations through the cultural differences of others. In addition to intercultural

competence, Fantini (2009) revealed that 'biculturalism', 'multiculturalism', 'communicative competence', 'cross-cultural adaptation' and 'cross-cultural awareness' are among several other terms adopted in the literature. Although 'cross-cultural adaptation' seems to be a more plausible phrase to reflect my personal experience in adapting to several distinctive cultural contexts, 'cross-cultural awareness' as well as 'cultural diversity' are more likely to be the central interest of this study. Acquiring cultural awareness or cultural diversity requires individuals to have an ability for understanding and comprehending other cultural contexts while reflecting on their own cultural affiliation through others. Gaining cultural awareness or cultural diversity can lead such individuals to engage in positive and rich personal interactions in different cultural contexts.

Deardorff (2011) stated that the development of cultural diversity is a lifelong process requiring communication and interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Barrett et al. (2014) emphasised that individuals do not always acquire cultural diversity spontaneously, particularly through cultural interactions that take place under unsuitable conditions, such as poor communication or explicit stereotypes. Byram (2009) pointed out that the complexity and the importance of cultural diversity in today's societies needs to be reflected in an intercultural perspective within formal education. Although a cross-curriculum approach has been suggested in adopting cultural diversity in education, a more central role is found within several subjects, such as history, geography, foreign languages, and media studies (Barrett et al., 2014; Byram, 2009). Moreover, geography and particularly foreign language learning are often treated as subjects that allow students in primary level to acquire cultural diversity.

1.2.2.1. Geography

Barrett et al. (2014) suggested that teachers can play a role for students to develop attitudes, knowledge and understandings of different geographic locations through social science areas, such as history and geography. On the other hand, Scoffham (2017) claimed that geography is the most suitable subject in primary education in which students can confidently gain knowledge and understanding of other countries and cultures. In justifying that, Scoffham (2017, p. 1) referred to a Department for Education (DfE) document which stated the aims of the national curriculum of geography as to ensure all students "develop contextual knowledge of the location of globally significant places – both terrestrial and marine – including their defining physical and human characteristics". In highlighting the significance of geography in learning about other cultures, Scoffham (2017) stated that cultural biases, stereotypes, and misconceptions regarding other countries are often rigid but that they can be tackled during teaching and learning about other countries through the subject of geography. Also, Catling (2014) suggested that paying more attention to ethno-geographical identities and out-of-classroom experiences of children as well as the voices of other children around the world can lead to rich understanding of wider cultures and societies. Since the subject of geography is an early source for children to perceive information and build an understanding of a wide range of countries, it can prompt children to embrace cultural diversity in primary level of education.

1.2.2.2. Foreign Language Learning

As the association between culture and language has been widely recognised (Risager, 2006), learning a language requires not only knowledge and skills in grammar, but also the ability of practising the language in 'appropriate ways' for social and cultural interactions (Byram,

Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). The cultural aspect of language allows foreign language learners to engage in cultural underpinnings of the targeted language, a relationship which can be explored in developing awareness of cultural diversity. Indeed, Porto and Byram (2015) proposed that as a significant objective of foreign language learning, the ability of communication in the targeted language provides teachers and learners with an opportunity for cultivating cultural diversity. Byram et al. (2002) suggested that the inclusion of vocabulary, such as relating to human rights, equality and stereotypes can lead to greater cultural awareness of own and others. Apart from vocabulary, the use of visual representations, such as images from the cultural context of the targeted language, can be taken advantage of by teachers and students for developing cultural diversity (Barrett et al., 2014; Byram et al., 2002). Despite the fact that the foreign language learning curriculum inherits a wide range of cultural aspects of the targeted language, teachers play a crucial role in highlighting those cultural elements for students to become aware of.

1.2.2.3. Teachers

Barrett et al. (2014) referred to teachers as 'facilitators' who are primarily responsible for planning and pursuing the development of cultural diversity in formal education. Since 'knowledge' of other cultures is an important part of cultural diversity (Barrett et al., 2014), one aspect of the role of teachers is to emphasise the cultural elements available in various subjects like geography and foreign language learning. Apart from explicit knowledge of other cultures, developing an understanding of the world from the other's perspectives as well as a perception regarding the ways of how one's own culture appears to others are also significant aspects of cultural diversity (Byram et al., 2002). In allowing students to perceive these two components of cultural diversity, Conway and Richards (2016) pointed out that the ability of

reflecting on one's own culture is required and commented on how it can be facilitated by teachers.

Conway and Richards (2016) carried out research focusing on the intercultural dimension in language learning and the role of teachers in providing students with contingencies for developing cultural reflection. The findings of an initial nationwide survey with language teachers showed positive results regarding embedding cultural diversity and reflection in their classrooms. However, the findings from interviews with foreign language teachers indicated that the majority of the teachers considered reflection to be learners detecting similarities and differences between different cultural contexts. Moreover, they were wary of encouraging students to reflect on some cultural aspects which they regarded to be potentially challenging for students. The difficulty in relation to teachers scaffolding of students to promote reflection of one's own culture has been observed in several other studies. Studies conducted with English teachers in Argentina (Salcedo & Sacchi, 2014) and English teachers in Finland, and Sweden (Larzén-Östermark, 2008) indicated that teachers' promoting cultural reflection were often lacking appropriate depth and strategy, despite their claim of providing necessary pedagogy. In considering the difficulties of teachers in promoting students to acquire cultural diversity, Byram (2014) suggested that cultural diversity should be integrated into the pedagogy of language teaching through courses and training programmes for both pre-service and in-service teachers. The role of teachers is to scaffold students in going beyond explicit cultural similarities, and differences available within curriculum areas like geography, and foreign language learning, in order for students to acquire cultural diversity.

This section has endeavoured to provide a brief exploration of a literature relating to cultivating cultural diversity for children. It has allowed some exploration of an interest that has arisen from my personal experience of encountering several culturally distinctive locations – and how the understanding of such experiences can be systematised within educational contexts. It was evident that children over 10-years embody a degree of abstract social and cultural identities allowing them to adequately assimilate important aspects of cultural diversity. While developing cultural diversity requires a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills in interaction with people from other cultural backgrounds. A growing interest towards promoting individuals to acquire cultural diversity in societies has led to pedagogical investigations of how cultural diversity might be integrated into formal educational setting.

In addition to suggestions of adopting a cross-curriculum approach, several curriculum subjects like geography and foreign language learning were identified as hosts for student reflection, because of the inherent intercultural dimension in their concerns. However, having a cross-cultural dimension within the curriculum was observed to not necessarily lead children to acquire cultural diversity, as teachers were required to take responsibility for scaffolding students to develop cultural awareness. In conclusion, cultural diversity can be cultivated for 10-year-old and over age group of children in primary level through curriculum activities, particularly geography and foreign language learning, all with the availability of scaffolding by teachers.

On the other hand, acquiring cultural diversity in non-educational settings occurs through spontaneous social and cultural interactions between individuals from different cultural contexts (Barrett et al., 2014). In fact, it is social and cultural encounters with others that can

indicate whether cultural diversity is acquired or not (Byram et al., 2002). From this point of view, the integration of cultural diversity into the curriculum should also be enriched by allowing children to have social and cultural interactions with children from different cultural contexts. Therefore, cultivating cultural diversity for children in formal educational setting requires a cross-cultural dimension in the curriculum to be scaffold by teachers as well as supplemented with social and cultural interactions with others.

While the integration of cultural diversity into the curriculum alongside guidance from teachers can be maintained through suitable provision, allowing children to have social and cultural interactions with others suggests an association with another school. Promoting geographically and culturally distanced schools to have social and pedagogical exchanges has been referred as 'School Twinning'. Having proposed school twinning as a catalyst for children acquiring cultural diversity particularly through social and cultural interactions between children from different schools, a brief exploration of school twinning is taking place in next section.

1.2.3. School Twinning and Cultural Diversity

'School Twinning' refers to two or more schools working together such that the twinning aspect is related to having common objectives rather than being "twins" in the strong sense of being identical schools. In fact, the underlying notion of school twinning is based on a degree of asymmetry - in order to open up a space for schools to explore rich social and educational interactions. Within this space, school twinning provides schools with opportunities for teachers and students to have a wide range of collaborative activities with their counterparts. Through collaborative activities, teachers and students have social, cultural and educational interactions with other teachers and students from different

geographical and cultural backgrounds. One major aspect of collaboration between schools is occupied by curriculum activities which can be utilised for cultural diversity for teachers and students to exploit.

School twinning embodies social and educational interactions between teachers and students from different geographical and cultural contexts through a curriculum, with a possible perspective of cultural diversity. This makes school twinning an ideal strategy for allowing students to acquire awareness of cultural diversity in schools. Therefore, this thesis will adopt school twinning as the central approach in exploring how children might develop an understanding of cultural diversity. The research aims of this study are thus shaped accordingly.

1.3.Research Aims

The aim of this thesis is to provide teachers and students in the primary level of education with a convenient approach in order for students to acquire a stronger sense of cultural diversity. In doing this, children over 10-years-old are considered because the literature has indicated that this age group have a satisfactory level of understanding social and cultural identities as abstractions, as well as being more open to engaging in new cultural contexts. In addition, the curriculum is considered as a vehicle for introducing cultural diversity to students with an active role of teachers. In order to supplement the development of cultural diversity awareness within social and cultural interaction with others from different geographical and cultural backgrounds, school twinning will be adopted as a context. Therefore, this study seeks to allow students at primary level to develop an understanding of cultural diversity through curriculum activities within the scope of school twinning.

Since school twinning is considered as the main context for communication; the concept deserves to be thoroughly investigated in order to develop an appropriate research model to be adopted for cultivation of cultural awareness alongside the curriculum for children in primary school. The following chapter will therefore address the need of conceptualising school twinning.

2. SCHOOL TWINNING

2.1.Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the aim of this study is to stimulate cultural diversity among children and school twinning can be a strategy to accomplish this aim. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate school twinning practice in education in all aspects in order to ascertain an appropriate school twinning model for this study. Although school twinning has been increasingly popular in numerous countries, particularly throughout the last two decades, there has been a great complexity and a variety of practices within the domain. Therefore, identifying and adopting a school twinning model that would suit the aim of this study requires a broad consideration of a wide range of school twinning forms and models in education.

What is School Twinning?

'School Twinning' refers to two or more schools working together and the twinning aspect is related to having common objectives rather than being "twins" in the sense of being identical schools. In spite of the fact that school twinning is perceived as a far reaching term, calling attention to particularly the social and cultural interactions between schools from geographically and culturally diverse backgrounds, it reflects only one aspect of a greater domain. The main domain covers all sorts of social and educational exchanges through collaboration among schools. So that in referring to this broad domain, 'School Linking' and 'School Collaboration' are adopted, as the core concept embraces a wide range of collaborative efforts between schools.

The chapter begins with an overview of school linking in which a broad picture of common locations as well as drivers of school linking are drawn. Thereafter, the ways that schools are working together are investigated to explore the degree of collaboration within the school linking domain. After that, common objectives of school linking are documented through a typology of school linking practice. As the central aim of this thesis, distinctive school linking projects relying on cultural awareness and diversity are brought into view and the section ends with several suggestions in relation to building successful international school twinning projects. The final part of the chapter will be concerned with the significance of Information and Communication technologies (ICT) within international school twinning initiatives.

2.2.An Overview of School Linking

As Armstrong (2015, p. 3) summarised in a review of the school linking literature, "The landscape of inter-school collaboration is complex, encompassing a wide range of different types of collaborative activity both formal and informal (sometimes a combination of both) and involving schools of different phases and types". Moreover, such diversity has been reflected through the adoption of a wide range of terms referring to various forms and models of school linking practice in education. Atkinson, Springate, Johnson, and Halsey (2007) and Armstrong (2015) have indicated in their reviews of school linking literature that 'clusters', 'collaboratives', 'collegiate', 'confederations', 'consortia', 'federations', 'networks', 'partnerships', 'school families', 'twinned schools' are the emerging terms frequently referred to within the domain of school linking. However, Armstrong (2015) argued that these terms not are clear-cut and they are often are intersecting one with another while intensifying the complexity of the school linking landscape.

Despite the fact that the school linking terms have a multifaceted nature, the fundamental factors that have led to the rise of these terms should be the matter of investigation here. At the point when the ascent of the common terms of school linking is considered, it could be argued that the majority of the terms have become apparent after the interest on school linking projects at national level - as Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman, and West (2011) pointed out a new trend among several countries with regard to improving educational standards through promoting collaboration among schools. Moreover, incentives of school collaboration and networks have become apparent in several cultural contexts ranging from Europe to Australasia and North America (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). However, the extent of the school collaborations and networks highly depends on cultural context and while some countries like the UK have developed policies in this regard, some have just began experimenting with school collaboration at a national level.

2.2.1. The Active Countries Promoting School Linking

At a country level, Chapman (2008) stated that the UK has profoundly invested in initiating and managing school linking projects and it can be considered as the leading country, particularly since the turn of the millennium. As two early major initiatives, Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities (EiC) have been launched to enhance educational achievement and endorse social inclusion in deprived areas (Power & Gewirtz, 2001). The main objective of EiC was to offer a range of provision for pupils within a framework of school linking. Kendall et al. (2005) conducted research on the initiative and revealed that while the analysis of the qualitative data indicated that pupils have improved positive attitude and motivation, the quantitative data revealed that pupils, particularly in disadvantaged schools, have greater attainment in Mathematics by the end of Key Stage 3.

Another major school linking model that emerged in the UK is 'School Federations' after the launch of 37 pilot school federations in 2002. The significant aspect of federations is that schools could have formal or informal shared governance, but this varies from federation to federation (Chapman et al., 2010). In a study carried out on the pilot federations, Lindsay (2007) suggested a typology to identify and report the diversity of the governance within federations and the governance of federations were conveyed as 'Hard Governance' and 'Soft Governance' with 'Statutory' and 'Non-Statutory' formats. Although 93% of headteachers claimed that their federation have been successful in raising achievement of pupils, the study has not indicated any significant difference between schools in the Federation Programme and non-programme schools.

One of the latest facets of school linking in the UK is the 'Teaching Schools' initiative in which the best performing schools evaluated as outstanding by Ofsted are encouraged to support poor performing schools (Armstrong, 2015). The teaching schools are provided with additional funding to lead school-based initial teacher training, support professional development and improvement efforts of other schools (Chapman, 2013). In addition to these initiatives, several other school linking projects have been initiated by the UK government, such as, 'Beacon Schools', 'Diversity Pathfinders', some 'School Collegiate', 'Clusters' and 'Hubs'. Some of these initiatives are to be thoroughly discussed in further sections.

While the provided examples are promoting school collaboration in national level, the UK has also been the leading country in initiating and managing school linking projects in international level. As Cara and Bourn (2013) stated in their study on school linking projects between Europa and Africa, the UK is the most active country regarding school linking particularly through school linking projects with Global South countries consisting of

developing or undeveloped post-colonial countries in Asia and Africa. Cook (2012) pointed out the membership of Commonwealth and European Union as two main dynamics behind the influence of the UK on the domain of international school twinning.

'Link Community Development'[1] is a school partnerships project between schools in the UK and some African countries (countries that have post-colonial ties with the UK) to increase cultural awareness, develop global citizenship as well as maintain sustainable school development. In addition to Link Community Development initiative, the UK has embraced several other international school linking projects, such as Connecting classroom, Global School Partnerships, Global Gateway and the International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet). These international level school linking projects are to be analysed in a further section with broad consideration.

Apart from the UK, several other countries have initiated school linking projects to encourage schools to collaborate around educational practices. As one of the earliest schools linking projects at a national level, the Netherlands has initiated the 'Senior Secondary Education School Network'. In investigating this project, Veugelers and Zijlstra (2002) stated that the project aimed to stimulate communication and promote the share of good educational practice among schools through collaboration between teachers.

School linking projects have also gained interest in North America. Both the USA and Canada have established several school linking programmes in this regard. As Rees (1998) revealed, small schools in Ontario were asked to be part of school clusters due to budgetary cuts and the characteristics of the clusters consisting of two schools and sharing one principal. Another

[1] http://www.lcdinternational.org/school-linking

school linking project in Canada was the 'Network of Performance Based Schools' (Katz et al., 2008).

Katz et al. (2008) further noted that Organic Schools, The National Writing Project, Consortium for Educational Change, the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative are some of the school linking projects in the USA. Apart from those projects, private and public school partnerships are also the case in the USA as Smith and Wohlstetter (2006) generated a typology through charter school partnerships.

Apart from within individual countries, there have been several school partnership programmes between countries in Europe. Established in 1997, the 'European Schoolnet[2]' project has worked with 30 countries within Europe to increase cultural interaction and collaboration among schools. Similarly, eTwinning[3] project was launched in 2005 by providing schools with a virtual platform called 'TwinSpace' to allow schools to have store and share content, communicate and collaborate regardless of interference, safety and privacy concerns.

When the contexts in which school linking projects take place are reviewed, it is apparent that there are a range of agents taking responsibility for initiating and leading the school linking projects. The role of the driving agents is significant since not only the aim of the collaboration, but also the form of collaboration between schools are identified through that role. Therefore, the common agents actively involved in leading school linking initiatives should be a matter of exploration in comprehending the school linking landscape.

[2] http://www.eun.org/about
[3] https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/about.htm

2.2.2. The Active Agents in Driving School Linking Projects

2.2.2.1. National Governments

Chapman (2015) emphasised that the governmental interest in the UK towards school linking has become apparent with the policies applied in the late 1990s as a strategy exclusively to improve educational standards. In particular, networking and collaboration have been considered as an answer for schools in challenging circumstances (Ainscow, Muijs, & West, 2006). Through school networks, it is believed that schools can bring together their resources and enhance the arrangements of professional development (Lieberman, 2000).

In referring to one aspect of the investment of several governments in school linking, Chapman (2013) pointed out the dismantlement of central educational systems that has led to the rise of 'independent state funded schools' (ISFS), such as academies in the UK, charter schools in the United States and free schools in Sweden. The rise of academies in the UK was based on the provision of schools in challenging urban contexts and school collaboration has turned out to be fundamental to change endeavours for academies (Ainscow & Howes, 2007; Chapman, 2013). Chapman et al. (2010, p. 54) have pointed out that "the 2002 Education Act in England made it possible for governing bodies to change their organisation's structural configurations to support school-to-school collaboration in order to support efforts to raise attainment, promote inclusion, and stimulate innovation beyond what had been possible in the past". The 2002 Education Act has led to formal arrangements within school linking projects in the UK.

Aside from that, Muijs et al. (2011) highlighted several key issues concerning rural schools, such as lack of resources, limited aspiration towards higher education and training staff that can be overcome through school linking projects in rural areas. One aspect of the deployment

of school linking in rural areas has been preventing the closure of small schools (Jones, 2006). Moreover, the model of school linking in rural areas tends to be through rural school clusters and such school clusters have been observed in the UK (Ribchester & Edwards, 1998; Thorpe & Williams, 2002).

The interest of government in the UK has not only been through school linking in national level, but also in international level. As a governmental department the Department for International Development (DFID) has been influential in establishing, managing and funding school linking projects with Global South countries. While DFID provides funding, British Council directly involves in school linking projects. The role of British Council has been initiating and managing school partnership programmes with other countries.

Apart from governments and governmental agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have also been engaged with school linking projects. Moreover, the role of NGOs has been influential particularly in initiating and managing school linking projects in international level.

2.2.2.2. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

As one of the earliest school linking programmes, UNESCO established the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) in 1953 to promote human rights, peace and protection of environment within schools all over the world (UNESCO, 2003b). The goal of ASPnet was to reduce cultural hostilities that have risen with World War II. Several other NGOs have also initiated school linking projects that encouraged schools to work together aiming to reduce cultural barriers. Due to the plentiful of NGOs in school partnerships, only some of them are briefly taken place and they will be thoroughly analysed with the rest in further sections.

As a charity organisation based in the UK, 'Link Community Development' has facilitated school partnerships between schools in the UK and some African countries (countries that have post-colonial ties with the UK) to increase cultural awareness, develop global citizenship as well as maintain sustainable school development. Despite not directly initiating school linking projects, OXFAM has encouraged schools in the UK to have partnerships with schools in African countries as well. In doing this, OXFAM has published a school partnership guide for schools to have robust school linking practices aiming a wide range of positive cultural and educational outcomes for students (OXFAM, 2007). The guide suggested the following steps for a successful international school linking project;

1. *Establish a team and get the support of others*
2. *Conduct a Global Citizenship audit.*
3. *Develop an action plan.*
4. *Provide training and support (p. 15).*

The USA based Global SchoolNet[4] is another NGOs that enabled schools from different countries to have collaborative activities. Founded in 1984, the mission of Global SchoolNet was to facilitate educators and students to engage in worldwide projects to improve science, math and literacy skills. In addition to core courses, the project also valued communication skills, teamwork to enact a multicultural awareness among staff as well as students.

There are some small scale NGOs, such as the African Revival and Afri-Twin promoting school partnerships. African Revival[5] has been establishing school partnerships between schools in

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_SchoolNet
[5]http://africanrevival.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/African-Revival-Schools-Linking-Programme-Introduction.pdf

several African countries and the UK for last 10 years. The main aim of the project has been increasing understanding of pupils and teachers on global issues. Being formed in 2001, Afri-Twin[6] has encouraged schools in South Africa to collaborate with schools in the UK. The objectives of the programme have been sharing knowledge, cultures and experiences with others.

In addition to NGOs, some religious organisations also have shown interest in schools linking programmes to increase religious tolerance within schools. As a significant cultural phenomenon, living in a conservative society without interaction with other religions may lead to intolerance. To tackle such religious intolerances, numerous religious organisations have established school linking projects to enable students from different religious backgrounds to have social interactions. Among those religious organisations, the UK based 'Face to Faith'[7] initiative within the Tony Blair Foundation involved in school linking programmes to break down religious and cultural barriers. Starfish Malawi[8] and Smile International[9] are some examples religious based school linking initiatives to be investigated in further sections.

As it has been reviewed here, there is a great complexity within the domain of school linking due to a wide range of different forms and models aiming to a variety of objectives. As Atkinson et al. (2007) indicated in their earlier review of school linking, there is also a variety of school linking models targeting similar educational objectives in different countries. While some school linking projects demand a great degree of collaboration, some require merely

[6] http://www.afritwin.net/about.html
[7] http://cperrier.edublogs.org/2014/02/08/face-to-faith-the-best-global-education-instructional-practiceprogram-your-school-should-have/comment-page-1/
[8] http://starfishmalawi.com/who-we-are/
[9] http://smileinternational.org/smile-in-action/educating/

exchange of resources. Moreover, in a study carried out on 'school federations' as a form of school linking practice observed in the UK, Chapman (2015) revealed that there are structural differences within the same school linking models, through a variety of practices taking place in real contexts. The complications within the practices of the various forms of school linking domain has also been reflected into the ways that schools are collaborating with each other in various models of school linking.

Apart from that, there have been differences within organisational structure between governmental driven school linking initiatives and NGO driven ones. While school linking projects as a part of a governmental agenda have been carried out through formal arrangements through policies, even through joint governance as in some 'school federations', schools have had informal levels of engagement in NGO-led school linking programmes. Therefore, the ways that schools are collaborating together can have a great degree of variation and that should be investigated in order to have a broader understanding of the domain of school linking.

2.3.The Depth and Extent of Schools Linking

The notions underlying schools' motives to involve in school linking practice are to stimulate exchange and to share cultural understandings, as well as educational practices with each other, so that these schools can grasp new cultural or educational experiences. In other words, schools are expected to have a sense of collaboration regarding social or educational interactions within school linking practice. As Leonard and Leonard (2001) stated, identifying the collaboration within school linking might not be an easy task due to the lack of clarity regarding the roles of the schools within school linking models.

In an attempt at describing the extent and the depth of collaboration in the school linking domain, Hanford, Houck, Iler, and Morgan (1997) stated that not all school linking projects maintain a decent collaboration and the degree of collaboration varies. To clarify this complication, Hanford et al. (1997) suggested a typology in a study investigating the collaboration between private and public schools. In doing this, Hanford et al. (1997) applied Himmelman (1992)'s typology of 'multisector collaboration' into school linking. This typology takes the commitment of organisations within communities and classifies school linking as Networking, Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration.

- Networking: The exchange occurs through mutual benefit within the most informal inter-school links. The schools join to a pre-established network with a relatively lower level of commitment.
- Coordination: In addition to exchange, there is also a common goal for mutual benefit of schools to achieve in more organisational involvement. The purposes of coordination are probably the best generated when the schools have common decision regarding their intended consequences upon being affected by the proposed changes.
- Cooperation: Apart from more commitment within organisational level, there may be legal arrangements among schools. Schools exchange information, develop activities and share resources for mutual benefit towards a common goal. Shared resources can include knowledge, staffing, physical property and finances.
- Collaboration: Schools exchange information, alter activities and share resources to enhance the capacity of other schools for mutual benefit. The enthusiasm of enhancing the capacity of other schools may lead to more risks, responsibilities and

rewards and this brings an opportunity for collaboration to go beyond organisational activity.

In a similar approach, Shinners (2001) proposed a typology based on a framework constructed by Mattessich and Monsey (1992) on school linking between independent and state schools. The typology suggests a three level of collaboration model for school linking, namely cooperation, coordination and collaboration.

- Cooperation: Schools have an informal relationship without a well-defined mission, structure or planning effort. The schools involve in exchange of information regardless comprising of own authority and having any risk while the schools have separate resources as the improvements.
- Coordination: There is a more formal organisation among schools with an understanding of well-suited missions. A degree of planning and division of roles alongside maintained communication channel are essential. While there is an increased risk for all schools, the rewards are equally recognised.
- Collaboration: All schools embrace a more durable and pervasive relationship with commitment to a new structure towards a common goal. Comprehensive planning as well as communication is required. There is a greater risk since each school puts own resources and reputation. Resources are pooled as the rewards are shared.

When the typologies suggested by Hanford et al. (1997) and Shinners (2001) are evaluated, the degree of collaboration is grounded on the organisational involvement of schools. On the other hand, the collaborative activities that schools are involved in should also be a matter of consideration. In their study of 'inter-school collaboration', Atkinson et al. (2007, p. 10) constructed a typology taking 'a range of variables of the collaborative relationship' into

account within individual collaborations. The proposed typology (Atkinson et al., 2007, p. 11) is based on organisation, penetration and joint investment/vision.

- Organisation: *How far do organisational structures support the collaborative working?*
- Penetration: *How deeply into the fabric of the school does the collaboration penetrate?*
- Joint investment: *To what extent do partner organisations share a vision and aspirations for the collaboration?*

Within this typology, collaboration between schools are evaluated not only through the involvement of schools at an organisational level, but also the penetration of schools as well as the shared vision and motivation. So, Atkinson et al. (2007)'s typology has a deeper analysis of school collaboration in determining the collaborative relationship in school linking. In this case, the ways that schools are participating and contributing the collaborative activities are significant in understanding the degree of collaboration among schools. Whether educational or social, it is the objectives of school linking practices that shapes the collaborative activities in school linking. Therefore, common objectives of school linking should be investigated in order to have a comprehensive understanding of school linking domain.

2.4.Common Objectives of School Linking

In referring to the objectives of early school linking projects in education, Gouseti (2013a) argued that the tradition of school linking has emerged from the purpose of promoting cultural interactions between schools from culturally and geographically diverse backgrounds. So that the social objectives of school linking practices can be drawn back to

dissemination of the cultural diversity between geographically and culturally distanced schools.

On the other hand, school linking has been grasped by national governments as a means of improving educational practice for the last two decades and it is the educational objectives of school linking that have become the mainstream. The common educational objectives of government-driven school linking have been curriculum development (Chapman & Muijs, 2014; Ribchester & Edwards, 1998; Woods et al., 2006), teachers' professional training (Chapman & Allen, 2006; Stoll, 2015; Varga-Atkins, O'Brien, Burton, Campbell, & Qualter, 2010), increasing attainment of students (Chapman & Muijs, 2013; Sammons, Mujtaba, Earl, & Gu, 2007; Woods et al., 2006), and sharing good practice (Chapman, Collins, Sammons, Armstrong, & Muijs, 2009; Stoll, 2015) resources, leadership and financial efficiency in schools (Woods, Armstrong, Bragg, Collins, & Pearson, 2010).

The increasing interest of organisations and governments in school linking to accomplish these common educational objectives has led to school linking deploying and maintaining more versatile roles within a variety of forms and models. As stated in previous sections, several terms have emerged to address the diversity of models, such as clusters', 'collaboratives', 'collegiate', 'confederations', 'consortia', 'federations', 'networks', 'partnerships', 'school families', 'twinned schools' (Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2007). Investigating the impact of school linking in delivering the common educational objectives might be impractical since these terms lie on a slippery ground in the literature and they often intersecting with each other (Armstrong, 2015). Instead of going through all the terms with all the complex nature, having a structure among the terms can lead to a richer investigation of the impact of school linking on the common objectives.

In particular, the role of teachers and students in participating and contributing the collaborative activities can be discovered within a classification, because the role of teachers and students within common school linking models are the primary concern of this thesis. The aim is to investigate the role of teacher and students in collaborative activities based on the common objectives within a taxonomy of school linking models. Atkinson et al. (2007) suggested a typology of school linking based *'the aims of and the overarching rationale for collaboration'* particularly for UK-based school linking programmes with the recognition of complexity and difficulty of having a depth analysis of school linking programmes. Although the existing school linking models within this typology has changed, the aim and the rationale of school collaboration has remained on the similar level.

Atkinson (2007) suggested five models of school linking;

- **Expertise-based collaborations**: The aim is to promote schools with a particular expertise and who would pass this proficiency on to the other schools. The main focus is the exchange of expertise among schools. (e.g. Specialist Schools, Beacon Schools, Diversity Pathfinders);
- **Geographically-based collaborations**: links schools within a specific area in order to assist particular educational or other needs like budgetary (e.g. federations, collegiate and school clusters);
- **Commonality-based collaborations**: promotes schools sharing similar characteristics or similar circumstances to work together to address common issues or challenges (e.g. small rural primary school clusters/consortia),

- **Creativity/innovation-based collaborations**: The main aim is not only sharing expertise but also focusing on innovation and developing new practices among schools (e.g. NLCs).
- **Cultural-based collaborations**: Culturally diverse schools are linked together with a reasonable amount of cultural exchange and towards breaking down barriers and stereotypes (e.g. inter-faith and multi-cultural collaborations; international twinning);

2.4.1. Expertise-Based School Collaboration

The main rationale of this type of school linking is the notion that schools can improve their professional knowledge and practice through exchange in school partnership. Beacon Schools and Diversity Pathfinders are some of the school linking examples that fit to expertise-based school linking.

2.4.1.1. Beacon Schools

As an early governmental school linking initiative, 'Beacon Schools' project "as centres of excellence committed to raising standards" was launched by Department for Education and Employment in England and Wales (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 1). The form of the project was to set a partnership between funded Beacon Schools that recognised as outstanding and non-Beacon Schools that believed as low performing. Through the partnerships, the project mainly focused on formative roles of in identifying, stimulating and disseminating good practice in fundamental areas of education, such as leadership, teaching and thorough monitoring of students.

Rudd, Holland, Sanders, Massey, and White (2004) carried out a final evaluation report on Beacon Schools. The study indicated that the majority of schools claimed to observe an

improvement over academic standards despite initial thoughts regarding difficulties in evaluating the academic impact of the project as well as lack of significant data. The study also revealed that exchanges between schools have been more successful than dissemination and the study emphasised the impact of mutual respect, dialogue and collaboration particularly in face to face meeting among teachers. As pointed out in both pilot (Rudd et al., 2000) and the final study (Rudd et al., 2004), the teachers have been significantly involved in the study and the study claimed that teachers have become more aware and reflective regarding teaching practices in the project.

Although the students' have not been involved in the mainstream partnership, the final study claimed that the students have benefited from activities like school visits and common sports activities. Running from 1998 to 2004, the Beacon Schools project was significant at the time and opened a path for various school partnerships currently taking place in the UK (Smith, 2015).

2.4.1.2. Diversity Pathfinders

The Diversity Pathfinder (DP) Project was initiated in 2001 with six local education authorities (LEAs) based on the idea of increasing specialisation and diversity among secondary schools through school collaboration. With the collective expertise, it is aimed that the teaching and learning opportunities particularly through curriculum development would be enriched to address the individual needs and preferences of students, so that educational standards would be improved (Woods et al., 2006). Moreover, the DP project has played a role in developing the appropriate policy regarding school collaboration in greater scale, as Woods et al. (2006) claimed that the underpinning notion of establishing the DP project with a limited

number of schools was to reflect on experiences and to develop the policy towards more prominent scale.

Woods et al. (2006) carried out an evaluation report throughout the DPP project. The study indicated that prior competition, hierarchy and geographical distance between schools played a negative role in collaboration among schools while advocacy and facilitation by LEA alongside funding and prior experience of collaboration had positive impact. The findings of the students' survey revealed that the experiences of the students with the enriched curriculum choices and the demeanour of the students towards collaborative engagement with students from other schools did not change during the DPP. Despite the fact that the involved LEAs have showed improvement regarding the attainment of the students, Woods et al. (2006) stated that the increase in the attainments was attributable to only two LEAs out of eight participating to DPP with doubts over the direct influence of DPP on the improvements. Moreover, there has not been improvement in relation to the attainment of the students in the core subjects of English and Maths.

As examples of expertise-based school collaboration, Beacon Schools and Diversity Pathfinders can be considered early forms of school collaboration, since the projects focused solely on the exchange of educational practice. After this, we can consider a new form of school linking in which schools in a particular area have been encouraged to work together.

2.4.2. Geographically-Based School Collaboration

The school linking models promoting schools in a certain area to collaborate together is an interest of geographically-based school collaboration. Schools can work together towards various educational objectives, such as the development of teaching and learning practices,

or curriculum and leadership themes through formal or informal attachments in the same local area. While informal collaboration has been encouraged by Local Educational Authorities (LEAs), formal arrangements have been carried out by incentives from central government in the UK context (Chapman, 2015). While 'School Federations' have been more through central governmental attempts, 'Collegiate Schools' have been formed by LEAs.

2.4.2.1. School Federations

Federation emerged as a term to reflect a variety of collaborative relationships among schools in more formal and structured governance that is formed by governmental policies and it was the Education Act in 2002 that made it possible for schools to have more formal school collaboration through a single governing body among schools in England (Chapman, 2013). Upon the Education Act (2002), 37 "pilot" federations were launched to collaborate around a wide range of educational objectives including improving attainment of student and inclusion (Lindsay, 2007).

Chapman and Muijs (2013) stated some of key characteristics of federations:

- Schools share a single governing body that is promoted under statutory regulations
- Schools share mutual goals that are formalised under certain protocol
- Schools have their own budgets, but they can share it in some areas and the joint governing body can have budgetary decisions on behalf of schools.
- Schools can share a single head teacher with other schools through common management

Although federations are provided with opportunities for having joint governance, the engagement between schools within federations can vary with availability of shared committees, governing bodies, leadership, staff and resources (Armstrong, 2015). In fact there is a great complexity in relation to the governance of federations that has been investigated in two studies conducted by Lindsay (2007) and Chapman and Muijs (2014).

Carrying out one of the earliest studies on federations, Lindsay (2007) suggested a typology that captures and classifies the degree of formality regarding the arrangements between schools within federations. The typology defines federations as:

- Hard Governance Federations: Established under the Education Act (2002) and all school embrace a single governing body.

- Soft Governance Federations: Established under the Education Act (2002), all schools retain their own governing body while providing delegates to a joint governance/strategic committee.

- Soft Federation: As non-statutory collaboration that can be established regardless of following regulations, the federation is governed through a committee without schools providing delegated powers. All schools retain their own governing body with a power on executing decisions and plans recommended by the joint committee.

- Informal/Loose Collaboration: As non-statutory collaboration that can be established regardless following regulations, all schools retain own governing body. The schools work together towards common goals through informal agreements.

As Armstrong (2015) pointed out, the typology was constructed in the early stages of federations and may not reflect all forms of federations that have evolved in later stages. In including the latest variety of federations with a sample of 28 federations, Chapman and Muijs (2014) conducted a study exploring the fundamental features as well as the impact of federations. The study proposed a typology of federations as:

- Cross-phase federations: Federations embracing schools from different phases (e.g., primary and secondary school).
- Performance federations: Federations associating high performing schools and low performing schools.
- Size federations: Federations embracing very small schools or a very small school and a medium-sized school.
- Mainstreaming federations: Federations associating 'special schools' and mainstream schools.
- Faith federations: Federations embracing schools of the same denomination.
- Academy federations: Federations embracing academies sharing the same sponsor within a federation.

In the study conducted on the pilot federations, Lindsay (2007) indicated that over 90% of headteachers found federations to be successful in raising the achievement of pupils. The headteachers also shared that their federations have led them to reach goals in inclusion, and 'Gifted and Talented' education, as well as improving the attitude and entitlement of pupils. However, the study has not obtained any statistically significant difference in terms of pupil

achievement in Key Stage2, Key Stage3 or Key Stage4 between schools that have been participating in a federation and schools that have not been involved with any federations. It should be noted that the study has not provided any data related to the involvement of pupils in collaborative activities between schools, so involvement of the pupils in collaboration between schools has been limited.

Chapman and Muijs (2014) have also carried out research on federations, particularly focusing on the impact of federations on student outcomes. In order to measure the impact of federation on student outcomes, the research identified a set of characteristics, such as phase, type of school, gender intake, prior attainment, free school meal entitlement, ethnicity special educational need provision: all in order to be able to find the best matched non-federated schools to compare with federated schools. The sample of the study was 122 federations within 50 Local Educational Authorities with 264 non-federated schools. The findings of the study indicated evidence in relation to positive impact of federations on attainment of students in the years following federation. Moreover, the study showed the impact of federation on outcomes is greater in schools in performance federations with the majority of the improvement detected in high performing schools in contrast to low performing ones. Also, the effect of federation on student outcomes in formal federations (hard federations) have been greater than the schools in more informal federations (soft federations).

Federations occupy a significant place in governmental driven school linking in the UK as a more formal school linking has become available through the Education Act (2002) with the emergence of federations. Another transformation that has occurred during this period has been the rise of Academy schools in the UK. Chapman (2013) pointed out that despite

beginning as federation, the term 'chain' has been leaning towards replacing 'federations', since a significant number of schools (previously operated under federation) have converted to Multi Academy Trusts (MAT). Federations has become a term to describe collaboration between schools that have not adapted academies (Armstrong, 2015).

2.4.2.2. School Collegiates

Another school linking model that promotes schools to have collaborative relationships within a geographical area is 'School Colegiates': conceived in order to address local needs, particularly for secondary schools. Rutherford and Jackson (2006) described the aim of school collegiate as; *'to raise standards of teaching and learning through professional development based on collegiate approaches to working together, with the strongest supporting the weakest, to establish a collegiate intranet and to build a corporate identity*.' As a significant example, six Collegiate Academies are introduced by Birmingham LEA as in response to Diversity Pathfinder initiative building on governmental strategy of improving educational standards. The LEA was also inspired by the long term success of a partnership of Catholic schools in forming the collegiate.

Although heads of the schools were having regular meetings as collegiate committees, it was the school-based coordinators, collegiate-based coordinators and Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) facilitating operations within school collegiates on a daily basis (Rutherford & Jackson, 2006). The responsibility of the coordinators was developing and running programmes in relation to the professional development of teachers as well as other staff. The coordinators were also organising academic events alongside social ones for students and teachers of diverse schools that were not possible prior to collegiate. Moreover, the schools within collegiates were provided with collective support, such as lending teacher, use of ASTs,

delivering curriculum to the needs of individual students. The ASTs were employed by Birmingham LEAs for subjects like mathematics, science and technology.

Research conducted on the Birmingham Collegiate Academies, (Rutherford & Jackson, 2006) revealed that schools have indicated a significant improvement in GCSE results. They further stated that delivering professional development programmes as well as linking students for viable teaching groups for less popular subjects were considerably more efficient and economic. Despite differences in performances among six collegiate academies in Birmingham, the study suggested that they were successful in responding the governmental aims of increasing educational standards through school collaboration.

2.4.3. Commonality-Based School Collaboration

Commonality-based school collaboration mainly covers collaboration between schools that are sharing similar characteristics or experiencing similar challenging circumstances. So, there is not any asymmetry among schools based on the idea that schools can share educational as well as other resources to overcome common challenges.

2.4.3.1. Rural School Clusters

Another school linking model that has been occasionally employed by several countries is 'Small Rural Clusters' in which schools are working together to overcome several characteristic challenges in rural areas. As Muijs et al. (2011) pointed out, lack of resources, training staff, all alongside feelings of isolation are common issues for rural schools that can be tackled through school collaboration. Jones (2006) considered school collaboration as an answer to the danger of closure, which is a major concern among rural schools. The examples

of small rural clusters have been observed in the UK (Ribchester & Edwards, 1998; Thorpe & Williams, 2002) and New Zealand (Ell & Meissel, 2011).

Ribchester and Edwards (1998) conducted research on rural school clusters with the participation of 84 clusters across England and Wales. Morover, the clusters were mostly between primary schools, because the distance between secondary schools was a significant obtstacle. The study revealed that the schools have mostly benefited from an improved learning experience for pupils through a more diverse curriulum range, as well as a facilitated environment for the training of teachers. The study also revealed that the common needs between schools have led to emergence of joint projects, joint curriculum planning and development, as well as sharing of resources and teachers in some cases.

2.4.4. Creativity/Innovation-Based School Collaboration

This form of school collaboration relied on schools collaborating together to improve the quality of teaching and learning. So, this form of school collaboration focuses on schools working together to answer rapidly changing educational practice and embrace innovation through school networks. Networked learning Community Schools can be considered as a most suitable example of this form of school linking.

2.4.4.1. Networked Learning Community Schools

Established in early 2000s, the National College initiated the Networked Learning Communities (NLC) programme which was developed and managed by the Networked Learning Group, a division of the National College of School Leadership. Chapman (2008) stated the central proposition of NLCs as 'schools to become professional learning communities'.

Sammons et al. (2007) have carried out an analysis based on comparing the assessment and examination data in schools within NLC programme to the results of students in the national average from 2003 to 2005. Despite an increase in English results in KS3, there has not been any significant evidence regarding narrowing the attainment gap with national results. Armstrong (2015) argued that expecting significant improvement in attainment of students would not be realistic within the period of time that the research was conducted. Chapman et al. (2014) also carried out a research NLC and revealed that teachers have benefited from NLC as it has contributed to the widening of the range of teachers' teaching methods particularly in school experiencing challenging circumstances.

2.4.5. Cultural-Based School Collaborations

Cultural-based school collaboration covers school linking projects initiated to promote cultural interactions between culturally diverse schools in order to break down cultural barriers as well as stereotypes. Moreover, school linking projects aiming to increase cultural diversity associate schools predominantly from different countries as 'International School Twinning' or 'Partnerships' and it relies on a historical tradition in education (Gouseti, 2013b). Despite that, this tradition has not been reflected in the mainstream of the literature since the school linking literature has mainly been concerned with school collaboration as a means of improving educational practice through governmental initiatives. The majority of documentation regarding cultural-based school collaborations rests on the evaluation reports of international school twinning projects. Since the main aim of this study is to promote cultural diversity through school linking, cultural-based school collaboration will be investigated in all dimensions in the following section.

2.5.Cultural-Based School Collaborations

As stated earlier, the emergence of schools working together has been rooted in the idea that geographically and culturally distanced schools can associate towards the aim of disseminating and increasing cross-cultural awareness within schools (Gouseti, 2013b). However, institutions from different countries interacting to decrease cultural obstacles among societies existed prior to schools working together. As Vion (2002) highlighted, the adopted strategy in Europe to tackle cultural conflicts between societies in post WWII era was twinning cities, towns and institutions. Similarly, Jayne, Hubbard, and Bell (2011) pointed out the significance of establishing communication channels among institutions from different countries in claiming that communication and collaboration can lead to a decline in cultural hostilities. Schweisfurth (2005) considered education as a key area to enact social changes in emphasising school linking attempts by UNESCO to disseminate human rights and peace across the Globe. As one of the earliest school linking project aimed to enact cultural diversity through school linking in international level.

2.5.1. Early Initiatives: UNESCO's ASPnet

UNESCO has established one of the earliest international school twinning projects in order to disseminate human rights and peace across the Globe through schools (UNESCO, 2003b). UNESCO has established the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) in 1953 to promote human rights, cross cultural understanding, and peace and protection of the environment within international schools (Schweisfurth, 2005). ASPnet has relied on one of UNESCO's core aims which is to diminish the cultural and social destruction of war on societies in the post war era and education is considered to play a fundamental role in changing societies

(UNESCO, 2003a). In this respect, the project was one of earliest and successful international programs intended to create a positive impact in schools and society.

The organisational structure of the ASPnet was managed through the headquarters in Paris with availability of national coordinators for every involved country. ASPnet begun with 33 schools from 15 countries and the initial aims were to develop teaching methods and materials to cover human rights in general. The number of schools has reached 7,400 schools from diverse geographical, cultural, economic and political backgrounds at all levels of formal education at the moment. Not only the number of school and countries, but also the scope of the intended social changes have expanded (UNESCO, 2003b). Davies (2008) claimed that world concerns, sustainable educational development, peace-human rights and intercultural learning have become the required themes for schools to commit to in order to join the network.

As the main aim was to promote human rights, cultural awareness and protection of nature, the core strategy was to consider schools as social laboratories in which UNESCO generated projects, materials and activities to take place (Davies, 2008). With this idea, it was hoped that social and educational practices can be developed and spread to participant schools through ASPnet. On the other hand, such social and educational changes may require a direct interaction between teachers and students from different schools which is a very limited feature of the project due to the low availability of digital technologies and the lack of an ICT perspective. Instead, UNESCO developed a human rights focused curriculum and disseminated it across the schools participating in the project (Schweisfurth, 2005), so there was not any direct interaction between the schools. Despite the lack of collaboration among

schools, the schools were supplemented with activities and projects within curricula that would allow students to have an understanding of human rights.

Also, language has been an issue, since the distributed materials have been provided in very few languages and there have been errors in translations. In particular, Schweisfurth (2005) revealed in his report that the translation of cultural materials has led to some misunderstanding across schools from diverse cultural areas. Despite these challenges, the evaluation report on ASPnet claimed that students' awareness in relation to cultural diversity, and human rights has increased through the development of curriculum activities. The major hindrance within the ASPnet has been the lack of interaction between schools as their mere responsibility has been delivering the disseminated curriculum activities - apart from letter exchanges in some cases.

Apart from UNESCO, several other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as well as governmental departments have payed attention to schools working together as a means of enabling schools from different cultural contexts to have cultural exchanges, particularly to reduce cultural stereotypes. As it was mentioned earlier, the UK has been influential in initiating and managing international school partnerships particularly with Global South Countries, namely developing or undeveloped post-colonial countries in Asia and Africa.

2.5.2. UK based International School Twinning Projects

When the number and effectiveness of international school twinning projects are taken into account, the role of the United Kingdom is undisputable. Cook (2012) stated that being a part of a Commonwealth consisting of 54 countries across six continents - as well as the European Union with membership of 27 countries - are the two main factors underpinning the influence

of the UK on the domain of international school twinning. Recognising the unique position of the UK in the world through active participation of the Commonwealth, European Union and United Nations, as well as being linked with the USA by language, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) believed that education was considered as crucial in being "confident, outward-looking, culturally enriched, knowledge-based society and a leading edge economy" in responding rapidly to a changing global world.

Having those international ties alongside the aim of integrating into the global world have led to a necessity regarding the emergence and development of multiple perspectives within a variety of faiths, cultures and languages. DfES (2004) revealed a strategy suggesting schools in the UK to have international school partnerships with no less than one institution at the same level from another country by 2010, so that new generations are prepared to live and work in a worldwide economy (DfES, 2004). Moreover, this strategy has led to a progressive approach in which international school twinning projects like Rafi.ki and Global School Partnerships emerged and promoted (Cook, 2012).

The DFID, and the British Council, alongside several UK based charities, have been involved in a number of international school twinning projects. Moreover, as Bourn and Hunt (2011 p.10) revealed: "there has been major drive by governments to encourage all schools to develop some form of international link and this initiative has had considerable public funding support". The interest of governments in the UK towards international school partnerships has been slightly reinforced through explicit governmental policies (Bourn & Hunt, 2011), despite clear legislative policies towards school partnerships within the country (Chapman, 2013) in the same period of time. However, there has been a substantial number of international school twinning projects established for schools in the UK to participate in.

International School Partnerships available across the UK
Achievers International, British Council - e.g. Comenius, Connecting Classrooms, E-Twinning, International Schools Award, BBC World Class, Childreach International - My school, my voice, Development Direct Global Partnerships, Eden Project - Gardens for Life, Global School Partnerships, Intuitive Media, The Japan Society, Link Community Development, Link Ethiopia, The Motse Project, One World Link, Pahar Trust Rafi.ki, Sabre Trust, Sound Affects, UK-German Connection and UKOWLA

Table 2.5-1 modified from (Bourn & Hunt, 2011, p. 28)

Due to availability of many projects, only some of these international school twinning initiatives are going to be analysed.

2.5.2.1. Connecting Classrooms Programme

Connecting Classroom was a mutually supported initiative by the British Council and the Department for International Development aiming to promote students to develop various skills that would allow them to adopt both a local and global economy and life. The programme consisted of two phases; the first phase was from 2012 to 2015 while the second one runs from 2015 to 2018, spreading across over 30 countries around the world. The programme was initiated as a result of UK government motivating schools to have international partnerships.

The objectives of the Connecting Classroom were to integrate the core skills into the curriculum along with teachers' professional development and widening students' global

awareness through international partnerships[10]. Moreover, schools have been grouped through clusters in every country, so the schools have had collaboration at both national and international level. The stated core skills are;

- Digital literacy
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Creativity and imagination
- Student leadership
- Collaboration and communication
- Citizenship

In interacting with international schools, the Connecting Classroom scheme emphasizes the use of the recent digital technologies in schools. To serve this point, the programme encourages students to interact with students from other schools through web-conferencing, to access the latest digital technology and software, to participate online discussion groups and forums, while it stimulates teachers to develop their professional skills in order to equip students to develop literacy and ICT skills as well as to learn more about the global world (Kirtley & Ritchie, 2013).

Kirtley and Ritchie (2013) carried out an external evaluation report on school partnerships between schools from the UK and schools from twenty two countries in Europe within the Connecting Classroom programme. The significance of the report was on focusing the

[10] https://www.britishcouncil.org/partner/international-collaboration/track-record/connecting-classrooms

involvement of students with the collaborative activities taking place among schools. The students have shared their thoughts through interviews and particularly workshops in which students had an opportunity to express their experiences without the presence of any teacher or staff in some countries. The findings indicated that the students valued the opportunity of having an active contribution to not only leading and managing the projects within school partnership, but also committing to the development of their schools. This was also reflected in interviews as one student shared that;

> *Student voice is not always valuable in important issues, as grown-ups think that we are not adult enough, but we will always try to convey our ideas to heads of the school. I think that this is the difference the project has made: now we will try and try, although before this experience we would never have even thought about this possibility.*

(Kirtley & Ritchie, 2013 p. 23)

The findings of the study indicated that the students have gained skills regarding leadership, project management, presentation, team work, as well as communication. Apart from skills, the students showed positive outcomes in relation to intercultural awareness through interactions at an international level. The role of ICT was also a significant aspect within school partnerships with regard to the engagement of students to online communication with other schools. In particular, the teachers have considered ICT as a major part of their professional development in the project.

The significance of the Connecting Classroom programme has been working through school clusters in each country, so there has been collaboration not only between schools from different countries, but also among schools participating from the same location. In addition to that, providing teachers with professional training prior to the partnership as well as

promoting active participation of students to collaborative activities between schools have also been a key for success of Connecting Classroom Programme.

2.5.2.2. Global School Partnerships Programme

Another UK based school partnership initiated by the Department for International Development with the support of is the British Council, Cambridge Education Foundation, UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA) and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) is the Global School Partnership (GSP). The aims of the programme were announced as;

> *Global School Partnerships aims to motivate young people's commitment to a fairer, more sustainable world. DFID supports partnerships that promote global education through the curriculum. Support and guidance is provided to teachers and grants to schools to make the most of a school partnership as a learning tool. Funding is available for visits between partner schools to enable them to develop curriculum projects together based on global themes.*
>
> (Sizmur et al., 2011, p. 1)

The central focus of the GSP was to increase students' global understanding through the development of curriculum activities with regard to global themes. Moreover, it was the teachers who had the responsibility of developing relevant curriculum activities with the availability of a variety of professional development opportunities. In fact, the first step of the GSP was funded reciprocal visits of teachers between schools in the UK and schools in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The GSP has led the teachers to cultivate curriculum activities to teach particularly global citizenship, sustainable development, interdependence and conflict resolution.

Sizmur et al. (2011) carried out an evaluation study on the GSP by conducting online surveys as well as face-to-face interviews with teachers and students. The aim of the evaluation report

was to assess the impact of GSP on the students in terms of global awareness and attitudes towards global issues in schools participating in GSP in the UK. In doing this, the approach was to compare data from 338 schools contributing to GSP and a similar number of comparison schools - which were selected through a set of attributes, such as school type, location, latest results of relevant Key Stages and ethnic diversity.

The study claimed that the students in both GSP and comparison schools shared positive attitudes regarding global issues, with the GSP school students showing more profound understanding in responding to a broader range of global issues. It also argued that students not only grew critical reflection on global issues, but also the ability to be responsive to global inequalities. The teachers involved in GSP have expressed the view that their knowledge and understanding of development issues as well as motivation for teaching about development issues were improved, while they valued professional development about global issues (Sizmur et al., 2011).

Despite the positive outcomes regarding the students' awareness of global issues and cultural diversity, the GSP predominantly relied on curriculum development. The study has not indicated any social interactions between students from different schools in GSP, while it was mandatory for teachers to have reciprocal visits to other school contexts. Also, the study has not highlighted any use of ICT within the GSP. To conclude, the significant aspects of this study that should be taken into account are the emphasis on reciprocity between schools, as well as the involvement of the teachers particularly through professional development.

2.5.2.3. Global Gateway (Schools Online)

The 'Global Gateway' school partnership programme was another UK-based international school twinning project that emerged as a result of the strategy of '*Putting the World into World-Class Education'* announced by DfES. Established and managed by the British Council for the DfES, Stiasny (2007) claimed that the Global Gateway has turned into a significant instrument to support the strategy of DfES by promoting and empowering school partnerships between the UK and other countries. Moreover, it was Commonwealth countries that played a major role in occupying the other side of school partnerships with the schools in the UK. In fact, an early version of the web portal[11] for the project was launched at the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Edinburgh in 2003. The Global gateway was formally initiated in 2005 and established more than 4000 school partnerships between schools in the UK and other countries and the programme also became the venue of the International School Award accreditation framework[12]. The Global Gateway programme was carried out until 2011 and renamed as 'British Council Schools Online School Partnership'.

The effectiveness of the Global Gateway mainly relied on the web portal upon which students, teachers, and school staff as well as parents were provided with an enormous catalogue of links of high quality lesson plans and resources, activities, funding and schemes to support school partnerships, students and teacher exchanges or visits. Moreover, teachers have benefited from the portal through access to resources with regard to running projects with other schools, setting up exchange and visits to other schools and appropriate ICT tools in

[11] www.globalgateway.org
[12] https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/Global-Gateway

order to support distanced partnerships as well as improving teachers' and students' ICT skills. As Stiasny (2007) noted more than 7,800 schools from all over the world took part with 54% of them contributing to partnerships from Commonwealth members. Despite extensive research, no evaluation reports have been found, so the effectiveness of the project in delivering the aims alongside the involvement of teachers and students could not be discovered.

2.5.2.4. The International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet)

The International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet) is another UK based international school collaboration initiative that has connected over 5,000 schools from 30 countries, such as Australia, Canada, China, England, Finland, Holland, Mauritius, South Africa, New Zealand, USA and Wales. As (Caldwell, 2008) stated, it was the success of Specialist Schools project, which was aiming to circulate the best educational practice through school collaboration, in the UK that has led interest towards developing an international network based on dissemination of best educational practice. That interest has resulted in the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) to develop iNET in 2004.

The aim of iNET was to build influential and innovative networks for schools in order to facilitate innovation through sharing knowledge and providing schools with a vision of transformation of educational practice. In doing this, iNet have enabled schools to exchange, collaborate and innovate with the availability of a wide range of resources like web platforms and publications that are granted to schools from all over the world. Moreover, teachers as well as school staff were empowered with possible engagements towards developing new pedagogies, improving leadership, while students had opportunities to practise the

developed educational pedagogies as well as to experience global citizenship. Gouseti (2013a) has differentiated iNet from other school networks in two ways; allowing rich educational exchange in global dimension and being open to any school through country specified annual fee.

2.5.3. Other International Cultural-Based School Linking Initiatives

2.5.3.1. Faith to Faith

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation established 'Faith to Faith' school linking projects aiming to promote students from the 12-17 year old age group to reflect on their own religious beliefs with students from different religious background[13]. The programme relied on a web-based platform to allow students to have interactions and discussions through video conferencing. By adopting the digital platform, the students have provided with opportunity to express their beliefs and values as well as to learn the beliefs and values of their counterparts. The Faith to Faith programme is currently linking 800 schools from 19 countries: Australia, Canada, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Singapore, UAE, UK, Kosovo, Ukraine and USA.

2.5.3.2. International Education and Resources Network (IEARN)

As a NGO based in Spain, International Education and Resources Network (iEARN) has established international school partnerships with involvement of over 30,000 schools and youth organisations from 140 countries[14]. iEARN has facilitated students and teachers to engage in collaborative activities through ICT. The organisation has provided students with a

[13]http://cperrier.edublogs.org/2014/02/08/face-to-faith-the-best-global-education-instructional-practiceprogram-your-school-should-have/comment-page-1/
[14] https://iearn.org/about

safe digital environment where they can communicate and collaborate. To be part of school partnerships, teachers choose a project from a wide range of options that can be integrated in their classrooms, so the collaboration between schools takes place through curriculum projects. Aside from the local aspect of curriculum project, a global perspective is also required in order to stimulate students to become global citizens through collaboration with their peers around the world.

2.5.3.3. UCLASS

Established in 2012 by a couple of teachers in Brooklyn, USA, UCLASS has provided students and teachers with a free online social learning platform to connect classrooms from all around the world[15]. The students and the teachers were allowed to engage in a wide range of collaborative activities and projects in global scale. The platform was acquired by Renaissance Learning, an influential educational organisation in K12 assessment and learning analytics. At the moment, UCLASS hosts over 10,000 users from 60 countries having partnerships with Teach for America, Teach for All, the Asia Society, SchoolTube and Concern Worldwide.

2.5.3.4. EPals

Apart from non-profit organisations and governmental led school linking initiatives, there are also commercial interests in school linking. Established in 1996 as an online electronic pen pal service for schools, EPals relies on a digital platform for K12 classrooms to share projects, practice their language as well as participate to cultural interactions[16]. There are over 325,000

[15] https://uniteourclassrooms.wordpress.com/
[16] https://images.epals.com/downloads/WhatCanATeacherDoWithEpals.pdf

teachers and students from 200 countries that are provided with opportunities in relations to exchanging ideas and sharing projects.

2.5.4. Building Successful International School Partnerships

As indicated in earlier sections, international school twinning projects are mostly carried out under the supervision of organisations like NGOs and governmental or business organisations. As it has been described in some of above projects, the organisations sometimes provide schools with funding to accomplish the objectives of the projects. Despite the indisputable role of the organisations on international school twinning, executing and maintaining a successful international school partnerships rest on participant schools. This section is concerned with providing schools with suggestions that have shared by some NGOs with regard to building successful international school partnerships. It should be noted that the complex nature of international school links does not favour organisations and schools having an easy recipe to follow in carrying out effective school partnerships.

In a review of international school partnerships, OXFAM (2007) have indicated that successful international school partnerships can lead students to develop:

- *self-awareness*
- *respect for others*
- *skills of enquiry and critical thinking, and the ability to apply these to local and global issues*
- *the ability to communicate in different ways and settings*

- *an appreciation of diversity*
- *a sense of injustice and a commitment to tackling it*
- *an understanding of how local and global are interconnected, and of the impacts that actions have at both levels.*

(OXFAM, 2007, p. 2)

While successful international school partnerships can be beneficial for schools in gaining those valuable understanding, OXFAM (2007) highlighted that partnerships in challenging circumstances can give rise to unwanted consequences:

- *close minds instead of opening them*
- *promote pity and sympathy for those in the poorer country, rather than empathy with them*
- *focus on differences, with too little recognition of a common humanity*
- *reinforce stereotypes*
- *cultivate paternalistic attitudes and feelings of superiority*
- *fail to examine global issues of inequality and injustice.*

(OXFAM, 2007, p. 3)

Although the literature is lacking in relation to carrying out successful international school partnerships, OXFAM, British Council as well as the Department for International Development (DfID) have shared their suggestions in this regard. The recommendations are summarised and presented through the following sections.

2.5.4.1. Partnership Agreement and Preparation

One significant and common early step that both OXFAM, British Council and DFID emphasised is agreement and preparation between schools at the beginning of the partnership. OXFAM (2007) stated that the partnership agreement can assist schools in overcoming potential challenges through explicit reciprocated goals, priorities, expectations and instruments for communication and decision-making. In doing this, it is suggested that the partnership is best built on a set of explicit objectives agreed through a simple document rather than long complicated set of rules.

Having published a guide for the Global School Partnership programme, the Department for International Development (2010) pointed out that the agreement between schools should cover reasonable, suitable and achievable aims as well as cover an action plan for potential support from other organisations. Also, the British Council (2016) have recommended schools to have an initial agreement over identifying the possible subject areas, year groups, a clear timetable, learning goals as well as communication plan. Having a partnership agreement at early stages of a school twinning can demonstrate the degree of the commitment of the participant schools to the collaborative activities around which collaboration would take place.

2.5.4.2. Integrating Curriculum Activities

OXFAM (2007) suggested that embedding school partnerships within the space of a curriculum would lead all members of a school to perceive the world through the perspective of their partner school. The report also stated that having explicit educational objectives within the curriculum can result in a sense of direction in achieving those objectives with the possibility of encountering a fair sum of unplanned learning. Acknowledging the uniqueness

of each school partnership and its influence in developing curriculum activities, OXFAM (2007) considered embedding partnerships within curriculaas a challenging journey and recommended several essential points to be taken into account by schools.

The suggested journey begins with schools aiming at specific educational objectives to be developed and delivered through a framework of Global Citizenship. While the quality of curriculum projects is emphasised over the quantity, schools should have a degree of flexibility in delivering joint curriculum objectives since each school might have different structures and constraints as well as priorities.

The report considered sensitive and controversial issues as the most significant part of the journey. OXFAM (2007) advised schools to be cautious regarding possible controversial issues, such as conflicts, poverty, racism, HIV etc. particularly in case of partnership of schools between developed countries and undeveloped countries. Although such issues can lead to significant cultural understanding and learning opportunities, teachers should be prepared for delivering or encountering these issues through curriculum projects to avoid unwanted misunderstandings. The report also pointed out the image of undeveloped countries in mass media, as those countries often become known through significant incidents like natural disasters. In overcoming this, it is suggested that students should be provided with media literacy activities in order for them to be able to question the influence of media within images and stories and to challenge perceptions and stereotypes.

Apart from OXFAM (2007), DfID (2010) also suggested that curriculum projects should allow students to explore global dimension themes like diversity, globalisation, sustainable development, peace and conflict. Moreover, the students should be able to develop negotiation skills, critical and independent thinking.

The British Council (2016) emphasised several key points for curriculum activities within school partnerships. The report suggested that such activities should support ongoing lesson plans rather than being extra-curricular. Subject areas in both schools should be common, but the names can be flexible, such as Social Studies or Citizenship; Music or Visual and Performing Arts**.** The report also highlighted quality over quantity regarding the curriculum projects.

Apart from the provided reports, the significance of curriculum integration in the entire school linking domain is evident. As indicated in early sections, curriculum development has occupied a central space in school partnerships at both national and international level. For instance, the role of the curriculum at national level school linking practice was documented within major school linking projects, such as Beacon School, Diversity Pathfinders as well as School Federations.

In addition to that, UNESCO's ASPnet was established and carried out through the development and dissemination of curriculum activities. Similarly, Connecting Classrooms, Global School Partnership Programme, Global Gateway as well as The International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet) have considered curriculum activities as one of prevailing strategies within school partnerships. Another role of curriculum activities within international school partnerships is the demand of the involvement of teachers as well as school staff.

2.5.4.3. The Involvement of Teachers and School Staff

OXFAM (2007) highlighted the wider curriculum alongside values and attitudes of schools associated with Global Citizenship for successful international school partnerships. Moreover,

time and space are the two features that schools should provide teachers with in order for them to integrate Global Citizenship to their teaching subjects. The British Council (2016) also emphasised the involvement of teachers and the need for support by schools in stating that having the partnership relying on one of two teachers leads to vulnerability. DfID (2010) suggested that having many colleagues in the early stage of partnerships can generate wider interest and support in schools as the significance of professional development was emphasised.

In addition to the reports, the involvement of teachers has also been highlighted within school linking practices in both national and international level. Moreover, the role of the teacher has been pursued through the professional development of the teachers. Another aspect of the involvement of teachers is the collaboration among teachers with their counterparts within school partnerships. The communication between schools is crucial in achieving collaboration among the teachers.

2.5.4.4. Good Communication

Since international school partnerships are concerned with geographically and culturally distant schools, communication between schools is vital. OXFAM (2007) suggested that good communication between schools is essential to establish and develop an equal partnership, but it is mostly challenging and even sometimes frustrating and difficult to maintain. Similarly, the British Council (2016, p. 16) referred to effective communication between schools as "the lifeblood of a school partnership" with it often being the greatest challenge within school partnerships. One challenge of communication can be through the differences in access to communications technologies. For instance, the difference in communications technology

can lead one partner to become impatient due to slowness while the other partner can feel under pressure.

The British Council (2016) suggested some principals regarding maintaining good communications between schools. The first principal is reciprocity in maintaining communication, as both schools should be feel responsible. Another point is the time scale among schools, as it has to be mutually agreed upon. Having multiple choice of communication, such as email, Skype and Social Media can increase the quality of communication among schools.

It should be noted that the central focus of the report presented by OXFAM (2007), DfID (2010) and the British Council (2016) has been the international school partnerships between the UK schools and school in Sub-Saharan Africa. This can be proven by the gravity directed towards controversial issues, such as conflicts, inequality and poverty. That also has been reflected through the lack of interest in ICT within partnerships. On the other hand, the influence of ICT on international school partnerships has been growing in countries where digital technology infrastructure is not a major concern. Moreover, this growth can be observed throughout the development of ICT. In other words, the deployment of ICT within international school partnerships is not a recent phenomenon and it has historical roots in the domain.

Due to the unavailability of ICT in early international school partnership projects, the organisational structures of early projects were based on networking without any interactions between schools. For instance, UNESCO's ASPnet have translated the developed curriculum activities and sent them to schools via postal services. After that, EPals has allowed their participants to interact through electronic pen pal services. The recent development of

information and Communication technologies (ICT) has enabled international school projects to have direct interactions. Therefore, the role of ICT in international school partnerships should be investigated since the active participation of students is also critical for this thesis.

2.6.Digital Technology in School Twinning

From radio and television to the newest digital technologies, the dynamic potential of ICT in educational change and reform is widely recognised, despite challenges in integrating ICT into education (Fu, 2013). Undoubtedly, one of the most compelling aspects of ICT that has been embraced within educational practice is the opportunity for communication between distant locations. While radio and television entail a one-directional communication, computers recruiting the Internet have allowed a two way communication which has led to the emergence of 'Computer-Mediated Communication' (CMC) as an educational practice (Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013)., Delayed communication, such as email and discussion forums have become referred to as 'asynchronous', while real time communication such as chat rooms and videoconferencing are described as 'synchronous' within CMC.

The emergence of synchronous and asynchronous communication has led to the opportunity of interaction and collaboration between geographically distanced pairs or groups. Moreover, such collaboration has been celebrated in education and led to the rise of the term 'telecollaboration' (Guth & Thomas, 2010). Belz and Müller–Hartmann (2003, p. 72) described telecollaboration in relation to language classes as follows:

> *In telecollaborative partnerships, internationally-dispersed learners in parallel language classes use Internet communication tools, such as email, synchronous chat, threaded discussion, and MOOs (as well as other forms of electronically mediated communication), in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate and intercultural exchange.*

As is highlighted by Belz and Müller–Hartmann (2003), the opportunity of having social and intercultural interactions has led to the adaptation of telecollaboration in second language (L2) classrooms. Moreover, several studies, such as linguistics competence (Hung, 2007), developing learner's identities in the second language (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004), and investigating cultural stereotypes (Itakura, 2004) have all been conducted therefore illustrating the significance of telecollaboration in L2.

Apart from L2, telecollaborative technologies have also been adopted in international school partnerships as a means of allowing schools to have cultural communication, exchanges and interactions regardless of distance. Moreover, these technological opportunities have been incorporated by several UK-based school partnership projects. For instance, a junior school located in Slough with a 90% South Asian background and a school from Delhi embraced communication through email that resulted in an ongoing dialogue towards developing global perspectives for students and teachers (DfES, 2005). As another educational illustration of telecollaborative technologies, discussion forums and video exchange occurred within a school partnership between two school clusters in the UK and Ghana. For example, as a part of the school cluster in the UK, a special school in North London has engaged in learning about HIV/AIDS as well as "Citizenship, feelings about 'my country'; and in Literacy, storytelling" with its partner school from Ghana (DfES, 2005, p. 21).

Prior to the above development in digital technologies, communication within international school twinning was mainly based on exchange of educational materials and letters through traditional postal services. As an early worldwide school linking initiative, UNESCO's ASPnet project relied on disseminating educational materials, including curriculum activities focusing on peace and human rights, through networks of schools because geographically distanced

schools did not have opportunities to have any interactions with other schools. Finally, 'Pen Pal' initiatives have provided geographically and culturally distanced schools with opportunity of having cultural interactions.

2.6.1. Pen Pal

The concept of pen pal initiatives emerged as connecting people from various parts of the world through exchange of letters. Pen pal services have been carried out through organisations which invited people to subscribe and find their pen pal partners. Similar organisations appeared for schools to look for partners for their teachers and students to engage in social and cultural as well as literacy interactions. Despite the development of ICT, schools in technologically deprived areas may still use pen pal to have interactions with geographically and culturally distanced schools. For instance, pen pal was adopted for cultural and educational purposes between a Malawian school and an American school due to this lack of an ICT infrastructure.

Barksdale, Watson, and Park (2007) conducted a study on the pen pal interactions between 85 fourth grade students from the Malawian school and 90 fourth grade students from a paired American school. The project was offered by the headteacher in the Malawian school as an opportunity to allow his students to engage in cultural exchanges, as well as to practice their English. Due to financial difficulties in adopting digital communication in the region, the project was carried out through pen pal between the students. Apart from Malawian students, American students were also living in an isolated small town with a lack of ethnic diversity within their community, also the students were Caucasian, English speakers. The findings of the study indicated that the students exchanged their understandings through common topics, such as family, pets, religion, food and their favourites. Moreover, the study

claimed that the students were able to “communicate effectively with one another on these topics” (Barksdale et al., 2007, p. 65). The study also revealed that there were significant similarities in terms of writing styles and patterns between letters. For instance, a Malawian student simply wrote “I am having a good time in Malawi” in response to an American student’s writing; “I’m having a good time in America” (Barksdale et al., 2007, p. 62). Despite a fair level of communication, considering the age group and Malawi students having English as second language, developing the cultural exchange through language influenced Malawian students in expressing more cultural understandings. Finally, the study revealed that both Malawian and American teachers have used the letters in classroom discussions in all curricular areas. The research demonstrated that pen pal can be effective in connecting geographically and culturally distanced students in areas where digital communication is not available. As indicated earlier, the emergence of telecollaborative technologies has brought a new dimension into cultural and educational interaction between schools from different countries.

2.6.2. Telecollaboration

Although, telecollaboration has been mainly adopted for developing literacy competencies in Second Language (L2), there have been several international school partnership projects that utilised telecollaborative technologies to pursue cultural and educational interactions. One major example of this was school partnership projects between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Established as a cross-national initiative in 1999, the ‘Dissolving Boundaries’ project aimed to allow students to engage in collaborative work, to develop ICT skills, and to become more culturally aware. Austin, Smyth, Mallon, Mulkeen, and Metcalfe (2004) carried out an evaluation study on the project through the deployment of

questionnaires, with participation from 40 teachers in Northern Ireland, 44 in the Republic of Ireland- all from primary, post-primary and special schools. The findings of the research revealed that the majority of the teachers had found computer conferencing as "*beneficial*" for their students with no significant difference between North and South. Despite that, 10% of teachers had shared their concerns regarding the imbalance of the computer conferencing. The teachers also indicated that the students had developed communication skills through video conferencing. Despite the lack of insight regarding the engagement and experiences of the students, the project has resulted in positive cultural exchange between two culturally sensitive contexts.

An international school partnership project linking Stonelaw High School in Scotland and Bloomfield Hall in Pakistan, was carried out through email exchanges and videoconferencing between students. Around 30 Scottish students sent a questionnaire to Pakistani students through email, with the aim of understanding their opinions as well as concerns regarding contemporary issues in the world. The responses from the students in Pakistan led to videoconferencing between the two schools. One student shared the judgement that "I've gained an insight into the world and the life and concerns of teenagers in different countries. It's really brought our learning alive" in a study carried out on the partnership (Maitles & Gilchrist, 2006, p. 75).

Participating in a pre-established school network between the UK and New Zealand, students were invited to engage in a variety of educational activities and to share them with their counterparts through email exchanges. Valentine and Holloway (2001) conducted research focusing on the use of ICT within rural areas within the framework of the pre-established school network. The study indicated that adopting email communication led the students to

“develop more nuanced understandings of the similarities and differences between them... and construct a sameness across distance in their imaginative geographies” (Valentine & Holloway, 2001, p. 390).

Considering the positive outcomes of the given studies, telecollaborative technologies have allowed a degree of interaction between geographically and culturally distanced schools through merely the exchange of text, perhaps supplemented with videoconferencing when possible. However, expressing as well as understanding cultural contexts and codes through text exchange can be limited due to the complex nature of cultural contexts. Also, videoconferences in these projects took place in school settings and excluded cultural contexts outside of the school environment which might hinder gaining the richest cultural understandings. On the other hand, the interaction and collaboration between geographically distance partners and groups has been significantly enriched through the transformative influence of the World Wide Web and such differentiation: a development that has resulted in the rise of the phrase ‘Web 2.0’ technologies.

2.6.3. Web 2.0 Technologies

The World Wide Web has been through a shift from being a static content distribution to a more dynamic user oriented content creation resource, with the availability of sharing content with other users for social interactions. Moreover, this transformation within the World Wide Web has resulted in the rise of the term ‘Web 2.0’ in contrast to ‘Web 1.0’ which refers to the Web prior to this emphasis on production and distribution (O’reilly, 2005). Apart from Web 2.0, ‘social software’ (Clarke & Minocha, 2009), ‘the participatory Web’ (Crook, 2012) amongst other terms have emerged in referring to the engagement of users within this new form of World Wide Web. While ‘social software’ appeared to highlight the sharing of

data as well as interactions among the users (Clarke & Minocha, 2009), the 'participatory Web' pointed to the active involvement of users within "a wider set of contemporary political, economic and cultural trends, all broadly foregrounding possibilities of social participation" (Crook, 2012, p.64). The engagement of users within Web 2.0 technologies involves "individual and collective publishing; sharing of images, audio and video; and the creation and maintenance of online social networks" (Bennett, Bishop, Dalgarno, Waycott, & Kennedy, 2012, p. 524) through Web applications, such as wikis, blogs, social networking sites as well as online games and 3D environments such as Second Life.

Web 2.0 technologies consist of a wide range of applications that provide users with a variety of functions. Such diversity among the Web 2.0 technologies has led several authors to categorise Web 2.0 technologies based on their common features. Grant, Owen, Sayers, and Facer (2006) characterised Web 2.0 technologies into five categories: text-based applications; Web blogs, wikis, audio-visual applications, spatial and geographic applications; Google Earth, Mobile phone applications and personal networks. Beer and Burrows (2007) included mash-ups and social networking sites alongside wikis and folksonomies. However, classifications based on the technical features of web 2.0 tools can be limited for understanding the social and participatory dimensions of web 2.0 technologies. Crook (2008b) provided a taxonomy with more regard to the experience and engagement of users within various Web 2.0 technologies. The taxonomy identified the social and participatory dimension of games and virtual worlds as '*playful*', media design, sharing, and publication as '*expressive*', blogs, social networks, and wikis as '*reflective*', syndication, recommenders, and folksonomies as '*exploratory*'. The classification is significant in combining the technical and social aspect of common Web 2.0 technologies.

Since its emergence, the implementation of the Web 2.0 technologies in educational contexts has been a matter of discussion. One dimension underpinning the desire of integrating Web 2.0 technologies into the school environment has been the recognition of the common use of various Web 2.0 technologies by young people in out-of-school contexts (Dohn, 2009; Liu, 2010; Trinder, Guiller, Margaryan, Littlejohn, & Nicol, 2008). Several studies indicated a rise in mobile and networked device use among young people (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2016), as well as peer participation with various Web 2.0 technologies, particularly social networking sites (Lenhart, Smith, Anderson, Duggan, & Perrin, 2015; Trinder et al., 2008). Moreover, the term 'digital native', identifying a new generation surrounded by digital technology and inherited digital skills (Prensky, 2001), has been referenced in justifying the readiness of students for using Web 2.0 technologies in formal educational settings (Liu, 2010; Trinder et al., 2008). On the other hand, Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) indicated that the arguments around digital natives tend to neglect not only the influence of socio-economic status on ownership of digital technology, but also the quality of engagement of students with digital technology - as not all students exercise creative or politically-informed use of digital technology.

Another dimension underlying an interest in integrating Web 2.0 technologies into educational contexts has involved taking advantage of rich communication and collaboration made possible by Web 2.0 technologies. Collins and Halverson (2010) pointed out that learner participation and creativity, alongside online identity formation, are possible themes that should be a consideration of pedagogical research and the exploitation of Web 2.0 technologies in formal educational settings. To focus this idea, Crook (2008a) identified four

pedagogically-relevant themes: namely 'inquiry', 'collaboration' and 'publication', and 'literacy' in summarising the significance of Web 2.0 technologies for teaching and learning.

Inquiry: Web 2.0 technologies provide learners with more personal research opportunities through the availability of "new structures for organising data on the internet, new sources to refer to, new forms of authority, and new tools to interrogate" (Crook, 2008a, p. 27) through the vast information space that is the Internet.

Collaboration: As one distinctive aspect of Web 2.0 technologies, more personal communication allows students to have collaborative activities in a shared online space at various depths through participation in networks.

Publication: Web 2.0 technologies provide students with a wide range of tools, as well as audience in creating digital materials. While various digital tools allow construction of rich and original content, a sense of audience can lead to a more grounded feeling of producing authentic research.

Literacy: Another significant functionality of Web 2.0 technologies is the availability of different forms of communication literacies. With Web 2.0 technologies, students can enjoy new genre of communication alongside traditional written language in constructing and conveying rich meaning – this particular applies to the opportunities for visual expression within web-based activity.

Web 2.0 and School Twinning

'European eTwinning' is the most influential international school partnership project that has embraced ICT at all levels of interaction and collaboration among students. Therefore, the

role and use of Web 2.0 technologies in international school twinning domain will be discussed here through the European eTwinning project.

European eTwinning

As a major long term international school partnership project, European eTwinning was established in 2005 as a part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme. The focal point of eTwinning has been promoting interaction and online collaboration among teachers and students through the adoption of ICT. The number of users has reached 450,000 from over 30 countries within Europe, with participation of 23,000 teachers from the UK since the launch of the programme. Wastiau, Crawley, and Gilleran (2013) pointed out that the popularity of eTwinning has relied on its non-bureaucratic way through which teachers collaborate together with the availability a variety of online tools.

As the central digital platform, the eTwinning platform has provided teachers with a variety of communication and collaboration features in 28 languages. By participation in the eTwinning platform, the teachers become part of a social networked community as well as becoming involved in professional development through online seminars, learning events and online courses. Apart from that, the teachers initiate and share projects with other schools with the participation of students, so that the students have an opportunity to have social and educational interactions with their counterparts. The estimated number of projects that has been carried out through the eTwinning project is 57,000. Since the scope of the project is vast, the studies that share the age group (9-11 year-old) that is planned for the present research will be presented in this section with a focus on the participation of children to the collaborative activities within eTwinning platform.

Wastiau et al. (2013) carried out nine case studies involving schools participating to eTwinning. One of the studies investigated collaborative activities between Isca College of Media Arts in Exeter. Having 750 students aged 11-16 years with 80 staff members, the school has a number of students with free meal status that is above the national average. It has held a media art specialist status since 2004. Isca College participated a project named "Travel Buddies" in collaboration with two schools from Essen, Germany and Trezzano, Italy. The project required students to take mascots that they received from other schools and place them in their local areas. The students were invited to take photos of newly placed mascots and add a description on the photos to be shared in the online gallery of the project. The project teacher in Isca College made sure that every student would actively participate in all relevant tasks, such as "choosing the location of their photograph, the timing and the presentation style use" (Wastiau et al., 2013, p. 24). Moreover, in commenting on the experience of the students involved in the project, the teacher observed that "It has made them more confident learners, willing to take risks and face a challenge. It has also provided us with very interesting conversations about prejudice and stereotypes, about our identity and the world out there" (Wastiau et al., 2013, p. 26). The reciprocity between schools was lacking, as the students in the UK shared their concerns regarding the quality of work of the letters that was produced by their counterparts.

In another case study, a school in Finland has carried out a project with schools from Scotland and England, along with the limited participation of an Afghani school. The project was called "Digital Diary Dialogues" in which students ranging from 5 to 16 were invited to construct texts, photos and videos via an allocated mobile phone for each classroom and share them through a secured web platform, rather than the eTwinning site. The findings of the study

indicated that the students' participation in the "Digital Diary Dialogues" was limited due to time management, lack of reciprocity from other schools and technical difficulties of technology. The findings showed that having four schools in the partnership has been challenging, as the time difference as well as school year schedules were inhibitors of the collaboration.

Since providing full details here of all 9 case studies would not be practical, the findings of the rest of these case studies will be summarised through common emerging patterns regarding the participation of students, as well as the quality of the collaboration. One common pattern among the students was motivation and excitement on working with their counterparts. The study further indicated that the enthusiasm of the students has led them to "not only to discover other environments and increase their knowledge and know-how; but also, as a consequence, supports a better understanding of their own environment" (Wastiau et al., 2013, p. 9). On the other hand, the lack of proficiency in foreign languages and ICT skills between students in different schools, as well as among students in same school, have been significant obstacles in interactions particularly between children younger than 12 year-olds.

Gouseti (2013a) conducted extensive research on several projects involving participation of schools in eTwinning, with the aim of exploring the use of Web 2.0 technologies in European school eTwinning for collaborative purpose. The sample of the research was school partnerships between UK-Germany, UK-Greece, Greece-Denmark and Greece-Italy within eTwinning. The data was collected through class observations, semi-structured and email interviews with teachers as well as focus group interviews with students from two English and two Greek schools. Apart from that, online observations were carried out on the adopted

Web 2.0 platforms, namely Twinspace and Wikispaces, in order to document the interaction among the students.

The findings indicated significant differences among the projects. The online interaction in the Greece-Italy school partnership was limited to only the participation of teachers on Wikis, while only 4 students registered without any access to the Wikis. The lack of engagement over Wikis was also observed within the UK-Greece school partnership. The findings showed that the majority of the added content to the wiki was "copying and pasting in bulk from online websites such as Wikipedia" (Gouseti, 2013a, p. 574). In addition to that, no collaboration was evident between the students and their partners over the wiki entries. In the UK-Germany project, the aim was to allow students to have interactions with their partners with the focus of personal engagement, such as hobbies, favourite films etc. In the UK school, the students could only access the wiki through their teacher's account, rather than their own account. The teacher described the technical problem as a "nightmare", since she could not receive support from the ICT team in the school due to lack of time and excessive workload. Despite the participation after the technical issues, the findings indicated that the engagement was one directional, with no sign of collaboration among partners. The study demonstrated that the obstacles around synchronous online communication were curriculum incompatibilities, time differences, as well as technical difficulties and lack of support from the school.

On the other hand, this research captured some instances in which the students had informal interactions through social networking platforms. During the exchange visits in Greece-Denmark school partnership, the students shared their Facebook and MSN details which resulted in social interactions among students in social platforms. The findings of the study

show that adopting Web 2.0 technologies for pedagogical exploitations is challenging particularly within international school partnerships.

2.7.Conclusion

This chapter aimed to identify common characteristics of international school twinning for adopting a feasible and economical working framework to be established between a primary school in Turkey and the UK. In doing this, the chapter has investigated the domain of school linking in broad consideration.

One common dimension that has emerged from analysis of various school linking projects is the significance of curriculum. Development of curriculum activities has been a central focus for school linking projects in both national level and international level. In national level, diversity pathfinder (Woods et al., 2006), school federations (Chapman & Muijs, 2014; Ribchester & Edwards, 1998) and school linking, models have put curriculum development as one of their core objectives. At the international level, UNESCOs ASP net (Schweisfurth, 2005), Connecting Classrooms (Kirtley & Ritchie, 2013), Global School Partnerships Programme (Sizmur et al., 2011), Global Gateway (Schools Online)(Stiasny, 2007), The International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet),and European eTwinning have carried out collaborative activities around curriculum development. In addition to that, OXFAM (2007) and British Council (2016) have taken the curriculum into account as one of the most significant ingredients for building successful international school twinning. Therefore, curriculum activities based on cultural diversity is going to be adopted in establishing the international school partnership in this study.

Apart from curriculum development, the role of teachers has also been a significant part of school linking projects. One aspect of the role of the teachers has been professional training of teachers, particularly within national level school linking projects (Chapman & Allen, 2006; Stoll, 2015; Varga-Atkins et al., 2010). Similarly, several international school partnership projects have provided teachers with training programmes, such as Connecting Classrooms (Kirtley & Ritchie, 2013), Global School Partnerships Programme (Sizmur et al., 2011), Global Gateway (Schools Online)(Stiasny, 2007) as well as European eTwinning. Moreover, NGOs have played a vital role in preparing and maintaining appropriate professional training programmes for teachers. On the other hand, the international school partnership project to be developed in this study cannot have opportunity in delivering training for teachers due to lack of external support. Instead, the teachers must constantly be supported over possible pedagogical exploitation of international school partnership by the researcher. The reality of this proposal remains to be established.

Another significant dimension that appeared through investigation of the domain of school linking is the key role of ICT, particularly within international school twinning projects. As stated, the early international school partnerships were carried out through the dissemination of cultural diversity based curriculum activities predominantly in UNESCOs ASPnet project. On other hand, the development of ICT has led to an opportunity for integrating various digital technologies into international school partnerships. The role of ICT has been in providing schools with communication and interaction opportunities where they cannot be maintained without deployment of ICT. Connecting Classrooms, Global School Partnerships Programme, Global Gateway (Schools Online), The International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNet) and European eTwinning have integrated ICT.

In particular, the emergence of Web 2.0 has been embraced by international school partnerships. In particular, the availability of having a shared digital space for schools to have collaborative activities has been a significant factor in employing Web 2.0 technologies in international school partnerships. In this regard, European eTwinning has established Twinspace for schools to take advantage of rich interaction and collaboration around common projects. Despite the lack of students' participation within European eTwinning (Gouseti, 2013a) (Wastiau et al., 2013), the potential of Web 2.0 technologies in allowing students to have rich collaborative activities would be valuable for the international school twinning in this study.

Integrating Web 2.0 technologies into the international school twinning in this study provides students with not only the opportunity of having direct interaction and communication, but also an opening for rich form of expressions. Crook (2008a) has highlighted (digital) 'literacy' as one of core functions that could be pedagogically exploited in educational contexts. He further stated that students can take advantage of new forms, such as visual, auditory spatial etc. of communication alongside written language in conveying rich expressions. Indeed, there have been discussions in academia regarding a new consideration over the range of literacy practices in formal education. In particular, the New London Group (1996) suggested that the availability of various forms of expression accessible through the use of ICT should be embraced in educational settings, in order for students to engage in new ways of meaning making.

Considering the complexity of expressing cultural understanding for students, students should surely be provided with rich forms of expressions, such as the visual, alongside direct interaction and collaboration with their counterparts through the deployment of Web 2.0

technologies. In which case, the experience as well as the capability of students in manipulating and conveying visual expressions should be put under some careful consideration. The focus of the next chapter is on exploring the pedagogical value and demand of visual communication/expressive resources for students, particularly in constructing and conveying personal understandings.

3. VISUAL COMMUNICATION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the possible recruiting of visual communication for children to convey rich social and cultural expressions. The chapter begins with Section 3.1 investigating critical calls on the traditional conception of 'literacy', urging consideration of visual communication as conveying rich meaning within society and education. This is followed by Section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 exploring the numerous literacies that have emerged through critiques of a narrowly traditional sense of 'literacy'. Section 3.1.3 moves on to the ubiquity of images in education, while section 3.1.4 focuses on the specific case of visual expression as a major constituent within new forms of literacies. Following this, section 3.2 explores children's voice through images, in order to identify promising ways for children to express their understanding through the visual modality.

3.1.A Call for New Forms of Literacy

In referring to the need for acknowledging new forms of literacy, Unsworth (2001, p. 7) stated that language-based literacy alone is "..by no means sufficient for the development of the kinds of literacy practices that already characterize the continuously evolving information age of the new millennium". Reviewing numerous empirical resources of the decade, Mills (2010) indicated that the emergence of new practices of communication mediated by digital technologies is one aspect of current criticisms around definitions of traditional literacy. In addition to the role of digital technologies, O'Rourke (2005, p. 1) pointed out the impact of globalisation - in the sense of increasing the flow of commodities and information, as well as people and cultures across borders in contributing to expectations of going beyond standard language-based literacy for "more complex readings and processing of information". Having

said that, the demand for new understanding of 'literacy' was based on conceptualising various practices of literacy alongside language-based literacy as currently existing within society and education, rather than inventing new literacy practices or replacing traditional text literacy. Moreover, calling for new forms of literacy emerged through the aims of combining various formats of expression with language-based literacy and integrating them into educational contexts. In this respect, a consideration of multiple literacies, or *Multiliteracy* has become an influential approach in literacy studies.

3.1.1. Multiliteracy

It was the New London Group (1996) - a gathering of social scientists from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds - that published a major theoretical study on reforming conceptions of literacy. The New London Group (1996) pointed out that socio-cultural diversity and the impact of digital technology on communication are neglected by the narrower framework of print-based literacy practice. To reconceptualise traditional notions of literacy, the New London Group proposed a multiplicity of forms in 'literacy'. In this manner, literacy should go beyond solely language-based formats, by allowing multiple dimensions of expression within its practices.

Cope and Kalantzis (2000), two authors in the New London Group, stated that the first dimension is a recognition of both the cultural and social diversity of language-based literacy practices, as utilised within contemporary society. In other words, standardised language-based literacy should represent different cultures in developed societies and different social classes within those societies. The New London Group (1996) identified the impact of digital technology on communication as the second dimension to be embraced in literacy practices. The prevailing argument is that individuals are already taking advantage of various form of

expressions for representation and communication through digital technology and the understanding of literacy, particularly in educational contexts, is neglecting these practices while still focusing on solely language-based form of literacy. To theorise this multiplicity of literacies, the New London Group (1996), (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) and (Unsworth, 2001) proposed the term 'Multiliteracy' to describe the essential shift of these two principal themes on conventional literacy practices.

As Cope and Kalantzis (2009, p. 175) suggest, "..all forms of representations, including language, should be regarded as dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction". From this perspective, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) consider the pedagogy of multiliteracy as embodying various forms of representation and communication alongside language in literacy practices, whereby students can convey meaning in a richer way. In this respect, the pedagogy of multiliteracy opens up a space for 'multimodality' as a formulation that acknowledges the significance of various forms of expression for within representation and communication.

3.1.2. Multimodality

Kress (2003) also claimed that it is no longer believed appropriate to conceive of literacy through only the linguistic component of expression. Social, technological and economic developments encourage the dominant place of writing to be complemented with new possibilities: In particular, the integration of text and image but especially the adaption to the medium of the screen. In a study carried out on the digital technologies in the classroom, Jewitt (2002) revealed that digital educational materials are increasingly incorporating a mixture of multiple modes of expressions, such as image, animation, gesture, text and audio. Jewitt (2008b) pointed out that using multiple modes alongside written language defines a

'multimodal' approach or a format of '*multimodality'* for representation and communication. Conducting research based on the theoretical implications of multimodality, Hull and Nelson (2005) claimed that central to the notion of multimodality is the combining of different modes of expression in conveying meaning and that this also can lead to richer representation and communication. Moreover, Jewitt and Kress (2003) pointed out that multimodality already exists in nature, since individuals spontaneously communicate through a variety of modes and always in more than one.

Bezemer and Kress (2008, p. 171) describe the term 'mode' as: "..a socially and culturally shaped resource for conveying meaning. Image, writing, layout, speech, moving image are some examples of modes". In addition, a mode relies on different expressive resources; for instance, syntactic, grammatical, lexical resources, and graphical resources are all parts of writing, as well as socially-constructed meaning. O'Halloran (2011) reviewed the analysis of multimodality and pointed out that the central concerns of multimodality are the affordances and constraints of various modes along with the relationship among them as constituencies of multimodal *texts*.

The educational materials in classrooms are typically multimodal; for instance, textbooks contain drawings, shapes, models, images and text together. Jewitt (2002); (2005) indicated in her studies that the medium of multimodal text in classrooms has been shifting from page to screen, due to the rapid development of digital technology. Bezemer and Kress (2008) and Jewitt (2008a) demonstrated in their studies that the rise of the screen has paved a way to the emergence of multimodal texts as assemblies of written language with images, sound and animated movement, of which their unique affordances (as well as constraints) potentially generates powerful social, epistemological and pedagogical meaning for learning.

In referring to producing multimodal texts, Jewitt (2005, p. 316) pointed out that "..the particular design of image and word relations in a text impacts on its potential shape of meaning". The role of images as a rich form of expression within multimodal texts validates the significance of images in both conveying, as well as conceiving, profound and complex meaning. It also indicates that the domain of images occupies a major part in the reconceptualization of literacy, particularly reforming the singularity of written literacy in allowing students to express their understandings. Therefore, it can be claimed that the role of images within the appeal of new literacy practices in education relies on both their semantic richness as well as their ubiquity for communication and representation. The present chapter will focus on the ubiquity of visual representations as encountered in teaching and learning processes.

3.1.3. Ubiquity of Images in Schools

Reviewing images for learning and creativity in education, Jewitt (2008c) observed that while images were associated with art and art history, they have become more widely available for people in everyday life. Jewitt (2008c, p. 11) referred to the ubiquitous engagement of people with images in these terms: "Visual representation was clearly revealed to be crucial to how people experience the world, and therefore to how the world itself is constructed". This period in which images have turned into an essential part of everyday life has been identified in scholarly terms through such phrases, as 'visual turn', 'pictorial turn' (Mitchell, 1995) and 'visual culture' (Mizoeff, 1999). Although these terms have been contested, the growing role of images for representation and communication within cultural practices (including education) is readily acknowledged.

Images are widely embraced in educational contexts for a range of purposes and through various media. One context for the adoption of images in education is the school's physical environment as a site for visual expression. Jewitt (2008c) therefore discussed the visual design of learning spaces and visual displays that physically incorporate images in classroom settings. Visual displays embody images not only for curricular purposes, but also for celebrating art and culture. Kress (2005) demonstrated that visual displays can contain a wide range of visual resources, such as posters of art galleries, films and magazines as well as photographs and drawings of curriculum concepts. The ubiquity and richness of visual displays is evident in their covering of all classroom walls, displaying a wide range of visual resources of both curriculum and non-curriculum areas. So, this might allow images to be anchors for children to have social and cultural interactions with peers and teachers.

Apart from the physical environment of learning spaces, images are also increasingly integrated into the artefact collections of such learning spaces, for instance as textbooks and other print-based learning resources, but also *digital* learning resources. In emphasising the significance of images for pedagogical purposes, Jewitt (2008c, p. 21) stated that "..images and visual objects, visual experiences and practices are common in the classroom and have a central role in how knowledge is presented, and support dialogue and interaction between learners".

In their research focusing on the integration of images in textbooks, Bezemer and Kress (2008) revealed that the number of images in textbooks has significantly increased in the last few decades. Images feature in textbooks across curriculum subjects, particularly Science, Art, Geography and Maths. Apart from these subjects, linguistics-based curriculum subjects like English and History have also embraced images (Serafini, 2010).

In addition to print-based learning materials, the rise of digital multimedia technologies has also led to the greater integration of images into teaching and learning practices. In carrying out a studies on the multimedia resources for the highly textual subject of English, Jewitt (2002); (2005) revealed that multimedia resources paved the way for a greater number of images in the English classroom. Through integration of image, text, audio, video and animation, multimedia systems have become more pervasive in educational contexts, with the impact of digital technologies on both production and publication of multimedia.

The pedagogy of multimedia environments has been investigated through the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML) (Mayer, 2002). CTML approaches multimedia learning from a cognitive perspective, with the focus on research propositions associated with principles of instructional design for multimedia environments. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning proposed by Mayer (2002, p. 34) assumes that "..the human information-processing system contains an auditory/verbal channel and a visual/ pictorial channel", while cognitive load theory by Sweller (1994) emphasises that the amount of information to be processed in each channel at one time is limited by working memory capacity – and that this, therefore, constrains how effectively meaning is extracted. Mayer and Moreno (2003) claimed that the connection and integration of visual, and verbal information with prior knowledge are essential for accomplishing meaningful learning in multimedia contexts.

Another (but related) approach emphasising visual representations in educational contexts is the theory of multiple external representations (MER). The underlying ambition of MER is to provide a conceptual understanding of the relationship among representations in order to identify best design principals for learning complex ideas through multiple representations. In her review of the DeFT (Design, Functions, Tasks) of multiple representations, Ainsworth

(2006) stated that three key functions of MER were: *complement, constrain and construct*. These three functions identify the significance of multiple representations for constructing deeper understandings of scientific concepts. Multimedia learning and multiple representations are not the main concern of this thesis; however, their roles in usefully equipping learning spaces with visual resources alerts us to how visual representations are widely embraced in educational settings and that their effective design is a cognitive challenge. Although images have been ubiquitously integrated into education, particularly through digital multimedia technologies, Jewitt (2008c) argued that images typically have been exploited as mere *illustrations* for teaching and learning curriculum concepts – perhaps as rather passive encounters. Likewise, research on multimedia learning has mainly focused on visual representations within the principles of learning from multimedia materials, while less research pays attention to students' production or active manipulation of multimedia resources (McFarlane, Williams, & Bonnett, 2000; Mitchell, Andreatta, & Capella, 2004). The following section aims to investigate students' multimedia productions from the image point of view.

3.1.4. Students' Engagement with Images through Multimedia Production

A practice sometimes referred to as 'participatory multimedia learning' (Kiili, 2006), allows students to generate multimedia resources and this can be considered a first step towards students developing confidence in exploiting images for the construction of meaning. McFarlane et al. (2000) conducted research allowing children in primary school to create an assessment of a drug education programme through multimedia production - rather than through a conventional test. The study considered whether and how children reveal their understandings or misconceptions, such that teachers could have a better picture of

children's comprehension through multimedia production. However, the author added that teachers' making sense of children's multimedia designs was not an easy task and could be one that requires an extensive visual understanding.

In other research concerned with multimedia production, Mitchell et al. (2004) encouraged several doctoral students in education to generate multimedia materials so as to develop deeper understanding of key academic topics. The study invited students to use *LiveSlideShow* as the software enabling users to add images and sound to presentations relating to the relevant academic content. The findings of the study indicated that students faced challenges, leading them to "..rethink how they communicate essential ideas" particularly the difficulty of using images (Mitchell et al., 2004, p. 6). Both of these examples indicate the hidden (and, perhaps, neglected) challenge of young people constructing and finding meaning through image material.

Callow (2003) also carried out research investigating 11-year old students creating multimodal presentations on a topic of food production. The study specifically focused on the ways in which students understand visual aspects of their own multimodal presentations. Callow (2003, p. 1) suggested that "..students need access to a metalanguage in order both to explain their own visual designs and to develop more sophisticated and critical understandings about how visual texts in general are constructed".

Although the central focus of the studies presented in this section is to externalise knowledge through multimedia production, it is images that students have mainly exploited in achieving their task goals. Moreover, the findings of those studies indicated that students (of a range of ages) faced challenges in expressing their knowledge and understandings through engagement with images. The common suggestion within the studies presented is that

students should develop more confident skills for taking advantage of images in practices of representation and communication. Even though externalisation of knowledge through the generation of *multimedia* is not a primary concern in this thesis, it is multimedia research that highlights the challenges of students' engagement with images during the production process and this is vital to take into account in any plan for recruiting images into the present study. Similarly, Schnotz (2002, pp. 115-116) (referring to studies of Mokros and Tinker, and Weidenmann) claimed:

> *Visual displays can support communication, thinking, and learning. However, they do not provide this support automatically. Learners often underestimate the informational content of pictures and believe that a short look would be enough for understanding and for extracting the relevant information.*

How learners extract information from visual resources, as well as how they generate intentional content through visual resources has been a subject of investigation in the research literature. In this respect, the following sections, 3.1.5 and 3.1.6, aim to explore the conceptualisation of students' capabilities in visual communication.

3.1.5. Visual literacy

As an effort towards conceptualising visual communication for individuals, 'visual literacy' focuses on any non-linguistic practice, including expression as well as perception, as it occurs through visual resources. In particular, visual literacy recognises the impact of visual resources for representation and communication in every aspect of the individual's world, with an acknowledgement that such efforts do not necessarily always lead individuals to accomplish successful visual communication. Reviewing the concept of visual literacy, Avgerinou and Ericson (1997) stated that the term 'visual literacy' can be traced back to 1969 by John Debes with rather a tentative definition.

Since then the term 'visual literacy' has been widely investigated in the research literature, with many attempts at providing an articulated theory across many disciplines and embracing media from photography to information technologies (Hassett, 2016). Revising a wide range of definitions of visual literacy, Avgerinou (2009, p. 29) proposed key components of visual literacy as: 1) a cognitive ability; 2) a status mutually referred as an ability, skill, and competency; 3) based on the ability to write (encode) and read (decode) visual resources; 4) skills that are learnable and teachable; 5) not isolated from other sensory skills; and 6) consolidating theoretical positions from a variety of fields.

From this definition framework, visual literacy is somewhat relegated to the purely technical capabilities of operating visual communication. From this perspective, visual literacy is not a significant concern for this thesis, since the visual dimension of the present study would be linked to the expression as well as the understanding of (cultural concepts), rather than reading (decoding) or writing (encoding). Being deeply connected with the cognitive and the technical aspect of visual communication, the literature of visual literacy has been criticised for neglecting social and cultural facets of visual communication. The following section will take the social and cultural dimension of visual communication into account through exploring the concept of social semiotics.

3.1.6. Social Semiotics

Social semiotics puts meaning making or sign making into the centre of visual communication practice. Bezemer and Kress (2008) describe the *sign* as a combination of meaning and form that is motivated by the sign maker's interest. Bezemer and Kress (2008, p. 170) further declared that "..the process of sign making is always subject to the availability of semiotic resources and to the aptness of the resources to the meanings that the sign maker wishes to

realise". The sign making process consists of three principals. It starts with available social semiotic resources, which are perceived through social interaction. After that, the sign maker reflects on the semiotic resource and develops an interest and motivation to re-make that sign. In the end, the re-made sign becomes a new social semiotic resource through new social interactions.

In engaging with sign-making processes, sign-makers reflect their communicative intent through signs. Furthermore, sign-makers are also concerned with the perception of an imagined audience, in order to find out the most appropriate design to convey their ideas (Hodge, Hodge, & Kress, 1988). In a way, sign-makers bear the intended audience in mind when actively making new signs from available resources. Turning our focus towards the school context, Bezemer and Kress (2008) suggested that students` ways of adopting images and their awareness of the affordances of images can allow them to narrow the gap between author and audience (Bezemer and Kress, 2008).

From this perspective, teachers and students act as sign makers through interacting with semiotic resources in classrooms as well as in their daily lives (Kress, 2003). The available resources include visual material that they encounter in both their out-of-school context and their in-school environment. While the out-of-school visual resources are a part of the wider social and cultural background of students, visual resources in teaching and learning processes also reflect the social and cultural context in schools.

To conclude the previous section, it is the increased awareness of an impact of images in representation and communication that has led to consideration of images as a significant form of expression in education. In particular, the ubiquity of images in teaching and learning processes has shifted the use of images from visualisation of content delivery to production

and manipulation of images for expressing understandings. While 'visual literacy' has mainly focused on cognitive and technical skills, 'multimodality' has emphasised the relationship between text and image through the window of social semiotics.

This thesis recognises the significance of images for children to express their understanding within social and cultural perspectives. Although this thesis acknowledges the social semiotic dimension of images, the primarily concern here is the exploitation of images for promoting cultural diversity, rather than solely image generation by children. In other words, the present argument considers images as key resources towards developing a sense of children's social and cultural understandings, as well as reflecting on images for developing cultural diversity. In this respect, the chapter moves towards exploration of children's voices through images. In particular, section 3.2 aims to identify applicable forms of images in order to bring children's social and cultural understandings to the classroom setting.

3.2.Children's Voices through Images

With regard to children expressing their understandings through images, there is a growing body of literature paying more attention to children's *voices*: as these may be witnessed within studies focusing on how children and young people engage with images. One recent strand of interest centres on soliciting children's and young people's cultural ideas and views and forms part of a part of wider shift in which previously unheard voices (such as from women and dis/ability groups) have become of special concern to academic research (Leitch & Mitchell, 2007; Thomson, 2008). From within this agenda, Thomson (2008, p. 3) stated that visual research has emerged as a distinctive approach for eliciting children's and young people's perspectives, "as well as a new means of involving them as producers of knowledge".

One theme underpinning visual research with children and young people is the assumption in some studies (Burke, 2005; Prosser, 2007) that the use of images for data generation may reveal different responses than traditional speech and text-based research methods. These two studies suggested that allowing children and young people to generate images opened new perspectives on their lives. While Moss, Deppeler, Astley, and Pattison (2007) proposed that the use of images can be valuable for children who manifest language difficulties when expressing their understandings, Leitch and Mitchell (2007) suggested that children can often be more ready to express their beliefs and emotions through the generation of *creative images*. In pointing out the difference between images and language-based research methods with children, Burke (2008) suggested that children seem to be more motivated when engaging with images.

Process	Example
Young people making images for adult researchers to analyse	'Draw and write', cartoons, videos, scrapbooks, mindmaps
Young people make images which they help to analyse	Mapping the school or neighbourhood Photography or drawings of places I like and dislike
Young people making images as part of a student project	Photographs or video of everyday life in school Evaluative photographs
Young people making images to elicit the views of young people as part of a student research project Young people analysing images: • made by peers • of interest to them • of interest to peers	Photo-elicitation Trigger videos Posters Popular magazines, television programmes, games Art work
Young people making images as a representation of their views	PowerPoint displays, animation, annotated photographs, posters
Young people using images to document their research	Images used to stimulate reflection on process

Table 3.2-1 modified from Thomson (2008, p. 13)

Table 3.2-1 outlines the scope of visual research involving children and young people as partners in projects. As indicated in the table, there is a wide range of visual tools - such as videos, drawings, photography, and animation - that are used for research participants to unfold their thoughts and understandings. In addition, such visual tools are now commonly

used by children for reflecting their everyday life in and out of school contexts. Since this thesis is itself centrally concerned with children's culture – that is daily life in and out of the school environment - the form of visual tools that might be most applicable for the present study can be considered in the context of Table 3.2-1. Accordingly, drawings and photography seem the most suitable form of visual media that might allow children to reflect on their social and cultural understandings. The following sections will therefore investigate the suitability of drawings and photography as resources for the present research.

3.2.1. Drawing

Considering drawing first as one key representational tool, Kendrick and McKay (2002, pp. 45-46) defined the drawing of children in the following way:

> *It is a form of iconic representation that reflects the distinctive features of the represented experience (Bruner, 1964), a graphic image that represents what children know, not what they see (Piaget, 1969), and a graphic speech that conceptualizes an internal representation of story (Vygotsky, 1978).*

The drawings of children have been a source of insight for researchers from a wide range of academic fields. So, children's drawings have been considered for their projective function: they have been conventional data for clinical and diagnostic research within psychology and psychotherapy for many years (Thomas & Jolley, 1998). Moreover, Leitch (2008) pointed out that small scale ethnographic studies have also incorporated drawings to achieve continuous engagement with a child in order to better understand their lived experiences.

Apart from clinical psychology and ethnography, many studies have utilised children's drawings for exploring children's knowledge in educational settings. Children's drawings have been used in several studies: for investigating the relationship between child and teacher (Harrison, Clarke, & Ungerer, 2007), positive and negative emotional characterisations of

children (Burkitt & Barrett, 2011), drawings to aid the memorising and recalling of events (Macleod, Gross, & Hayne, 2014), and drawings to support the development of writing skills (Adoniou, 2014).

Variety around the use of children's drawings as a research instrument also reflects different theoretical positions regarding the meanings of drawing activity for children. In reviewing the development and clinical approaches, Papandreou (2014, p. 86) stated that psychological studies regard the drawing of children "..as a solitary process for expression of their inner reality, experiences and emotions". Similarly, Hall (2009) pointed out that there is a disassociation between the drawings of children and their social, and cultural contexts within research on children's drawings.

In contrast, other recent studies (Anning & Ring, 2004; Ring, 2006; Ring, 2003) have approached the drawings of children from more social and cultural perspectives – regarding them as a means of expressing meaning and understandings. Anning and Ring (2004) suggested that visual resources in and out of school contexts of children influence their meaning making in the process of drawings. Similarly, Einarsdottir, Dockett, and Perry (2009) pointed out that the available resources and materials, as well as social and cultural elements within the context, are significant for directing children's drawing. Einarsdottir et al. (2009, p. 218, citing Kress, 1997; Steele, 1999) further stated that, "this view regards drawings as an effective means for children to explore and communicate their understandings, particularly when attention is paid to the narratives that develop around the drawings".

Leitch (2008, p. 54) suggested that children's drawings can play a communicative role by developing a narrative around drawings for understanding by both child and researcher. Within such narratives, "..new layers of meanings and significance" can emerge while children

"..construct and reconstruct various aspects of their inner or outer worlds". From this perspective, the research focus around children's drawings is shifted from the solely detached analysis of drawings to a collaborative reflecting on drawings - within interactions between children and researcher around implicit drawing narratives.

Although children's drawings might play a role in reflecting their cultural understandings, any images produced in the present project would be shared with other school contexts. Therefore, children responding to images elsewhere might value a more high-fidelity representation of the other cultural context, since the interpretation of drawing might be challenging for children in such correspondence situations. Moreover, drawings would need to be digitised for communication. Accordingly, consideration turns to photography as a more applicable form of image exchange for grounding communication sought in the present study.

3.2.2. Photography

This section begins by reviewing the communicative potential of photography as a visual form of expression. Following that, the pedagogical use of photographs generated by children will be considered, alongside the experiences of children, as well as teachers, in working with photography as a medium.

3.2.2.1. Ubiquitous photography

The rise of digital photography is a significant phenomenon within the transformation of visual communication by technology, as people relentlessly capture events, activities, and moments of their daily lives (Hand, 2012). Moreover, many of these captured photographs are shared through digital technologies, while others remain precious within private collections and personal albums. Share (2015) claimed that photographic images convey a

power which cannot be replaced by any other medium. In justifying this claim Share (2015, p. 97, citing French photographer Gisele Freund) stated that: “The importance of photography does not rest primarily in its art form, but rather in its ability to shape our ideas, to influence our behaviour, and to define our society”. Indeed, a photo today can create significant social and political impact in capturing and disseminating political scandals, wars, and so on.

One aspect of photography that distinguishes it from other representational forms is the assumed accuracy with which it reflects some moment of reality: such that photography can be considered an indisputable proof of evidence in a court of law or a scientific observation. However, Sontag (1990) and others point out that, despite capturing this sense of reality, photographs are open to interpretation - and as much so as paintings and drawings. In this way, regardless of seeming to capture the real life moment, photography always involves a photographer’s subjective representation of reality (Share, 2015). These features of photography have paved a way for photographs to be exploited for educational purposes.

3.2.2.2. Pedagogical recruitment of children generated photographs

One way in which photography has been utilised in educational research is as a tool for probing children’s understandings of familiar cultural practices. An example of using photography this way has been through investigating children’s understandings of scientific concepts as encountered in out of school contexts. Photography has been utilised for exploring children’s perception of science and maths (Katz, 2011; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005), as well as supporting science learning (Cappello & Lafferty, 2015) and confidence with its vocabulary (Jones, 2010).

Photographing science and maths

Moreland and Cowie (2005) carried out research investigating how children perceive science and technology in out of school contexts. The children in this study were invited to take photographs relating to science and technology at home, at school, and in their community. The researchers avoided explaining what constitutes science or technology in order to see the way in which these matters were seen through the eyes of children. The researchers reported that the content of children's photographs relied on the physical environment surrounding children, such as machinery, plants, home appliances and school. The children were also asked to make a classification based on science and technology of their photographs and to explain their reasoning for such categorisation. The majority of those children who provided the researchers with clear explanations of their classifications were older than 6 years old. The researchers observed that the presence of photographs during their discussions with children allowed them to have richer insights regarding children's understanding of science and technology. This research suggests how photography can be a valuable form of expression for children to reflect their understanding, particularly when complemented by discussions with the individual children who had taken photographs.

MacDonald (2012) conducted a study focusing on 5 and 6-year-old primary school children's experiences with mathematical measurements in their home context – when expressed through photographs. The researcher invited the children to explain the content of their photographs and their purposes for taking them, in order to have broader insights into these children's understanding of mathematical measurements. The findings indicated that photography allowed these children to reflect their understanding of mathematical quantities such as length, height, and mass. The researcher pointed out that allowing the children to

demonstrate their understanding and experience through photography, alongside discussion over the photographs taken, led to useful insights around the children's personalised understanding of mathematical measurement.

Studies such as those carried out by Moreland and Cowie (2005) and MacDonald (2012) indicate that photography can be recruited for understanding children's knowledge and experiences with difficult concepts in out of school contexts. In particular, utilising photographs as an anchor for discussion has been shown to be essential for gaining insights into children's emerging understandings.

Photography for literacy practices

Apart from topics in science and mathematics, investigative photography has also been applied to literacy practices in childhood (Cavendish, Vess, & Li-Barber, 2016; Lilly & Fields, 2014; Wiseman, Mäkinen, & Kupiainen, 2016). Lilly and Fields (2014) considered photography as a catalyst to enhance literacy skills through conjuring interest and motivation of children. They investigated photography as a stimulus for a 4th grade primary school children's informational writing project. The children were invited to provide a topic based on personal interest and take photographs in and out of the school environment to supplement their stories. Although the main purpose of the project was to enhance the children's textual skills, the findings suggested that the children engaged well with photography as a form of expression during the project. The findings of this study indicate that photography, alongside writing, can play a crucial role for children to express personal interest.

Literacy practices aided by photography have also been adopted to gain insights into children's identities in the out of school context. Kendrick and Jones (2008a) investigated community identity by considering how students were positioned as literate learners as they

engaged with photography to document and discuss literacy practices within their community. The study examined Ugandan girls' literate identities by helping them investigate all of the local professions that utilized literacy practices, comparing this to their own understanding of literacy practices. In turn, the photographs were supplemented with texts as they were displayed as springboards for classroom discussion. Through these discussions around child-generated photographs, these Ugandan girls came to understand that part of their identity included being literate, which prompted further reflection about how they would use literacy in their future. The girls' literate identities were thereby reinforced and served as an affirmation that they could take control of their future to follow their dreams of having careers - in a society which typically does not empower women.

In another study focusing on the identities of children through photography, Vasudevan, Schultz, and Bateman (2010) carried out research inviting some 5th grade students to engage with photos. In this study, the students participated in storytelling projects in which they created stories about their homes, school and community through mainly taking photos and supplementing them with text. The study particularly helped two new immigrant students to illustrate their identities through expressing their out of school lives in this medium.

The use of photography within literacy practices has adopted photography not only as a vehicle carrying children's out-of-school experiences, but also as a supplement to children's writing practices. The main feature of photography in such studies is the vividness of the medium for reflecting real life experiences, as well as the opportunity of combining with text for conveying rich meaning.

A further aspect of photography deployed in educational contexts is teachers' possible pedagogical exploitation of child-generated photographs. Coles-Ritchie, Monson, and Moses

(2015) carried out two case studies investigating how teachers draw 3rd grade primary school children from diverse backgrounds into taking photographs that link children's local knowledge with classroom activities. Treating them as researchers, two teachers invited their students to take photographs of their out-of-school environment and then analysed the photos along with interviews. The findings of these two case studies suggested that teachers were able to take interpretative advantage of child-generated photographs and gain deeper understanding of the children's out-of-school culture. However, the study did not provide evidence regarding the pedagogical exploitation of children's photographs within the prevailing curriculum.

When these empirical resources are reviewed, photography is shown to provide effective opportunities for children to capture their understandings and experiences in out of school environments. Reflecting such understandings and experiences in the classroom context then allows teachers and children to develop them for mainstream educational purposes, such as science, maths and literacy. In addition, child-generated photographs show a capacity for carrying their social and cultural identities. As Kendrick and McKay (2002), Coles-Ritchie et al. (2015) and Wiseman et al. (2016) indicated, teachers can also gain a better understanding of children's identities through child-generated photographs. Another dimension of the empirical sources reviewed here is that photography provides opportunities for children to engage in discourse and literacy practices. Cavendish et al. (2016) and Lilly and Fields (2014) illustrate how children constructed richer meaning through the combination of photography and written text.

The manner in which photography paves a way for expressing children's out of school lives suggests that photography could be a promising representational form for the present

project. Through the adoption of photography, children are provided with an opportunity for reflecting on their social and cultural understandings. Moreover, children can share their photographs with others from different cultural backgrounds though a structure of school twinning. In this way, the power of photography in representing real life contexts might also allow other children to perceive a reflection of their own native culture that promotes deeper reflection about its nature.

In justifying the power of photography on the authentication of life, Share (2015, p. 98, citing Barthes) stated that "From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation". Although, photography often claims to be considered as the closest representational form for this 'real life', photography might typically need to be supplemented if children are to have an adequate understanding of other cultural contexts. Considering the richness and complexity of cultural phenomenon, supplementing photographs with text and reciprocal discussions is likely to be essential for children in both school and out-of-school contexts to develop cultural awareness of others. The need for textual addition for stimulating discussions around photography is also shown to be indispensable in the above empirical studies - as it was typically employed to gain richer insights of children's out of school understandings and experiences.

Since this thesis is adopting Web 2.0 technologies within a school twinning framework, children can readily share authentic cultural details with others. Children can even supplement their photographs with text, in order for other children to have better understandings of these photographs. Moreover, children can have textual *discussions* around photographs in which they might develop a still richer cultural exchange. Then, as Moreland and Cowie (2005), MacDonald (2012) and Kendrick and McKay (2002) suggested,

having verbal discussion in classrooms around photographs can lead to a broader pedagogic exploitation of photography. On this view, the ways in which children engage in discussions over photographs should be a matter of further investigation and a theme of the present thesis.

The body of research literature that comprises having discussions around photographs is associated with the practice of 'photo elicitation'. Photo elicitation stands for using photography as a stimulus during an interview in order to elicit to understandings of participants (Meo, 2010). Photo elicitation has been applied within a wide range of academic fields, creating the availability of a vast literature of case examples. However, the underlying purpose for reviewing photo elicitation in the context of this thesis is more to investigate its potential as a framework for exploring children's experiences and understandings within discussions around shared photographs. With this in mind, the following section aims to identify key characteristics of children's discussions around photographs.

3.2.2.3. Photo Elicitation

Lapenta (2011) identified the theoretical and methodological arguments challenging the assumptions of conventional structured interviews and surveys. They included the asymmetric power relations between researcher and participant. He noted how the nature of the knowledge produced led to the adoption of photography in interviews. The first significant study of photography used as a central source in research was carried out by anthropologist Collier (1957). He later conceptualised 'photo elicitation' as a research method in the field of anthropology. In addition to anthropology, photo elicitation has also become an valued research instrument for sociology (Harper, 1997), psychology (Salmon, 2001), health studies (Riley & Manias, 2003) and education (Rasmussen, 2004).

The photo elicitation technique is based on inviting participants to interpret and make comments on images provided during an interview: that is, single or multiple photographs of objects, people, depictions of social occasions and personal environments (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, and Baruchel (2006, citing Collier, 1987 and Hazel, 1996) stated that photography in photo elicitation has been incorporated as an "ice breaker" serving to extend responses of participants through arranging a comfortable space for discussions. In emphasising the significance of photo elicitation as a research technique, Harper (2002) pointed out how it can lead to greater insights from research participants, insights that may not be obtained through conventional conversation research methods.

One perspective on photography in interviews is considering it to be an 'anchor' for conversations between researcher and participant. Harper (2002) described the significance of photography in interviews in terms of closing the gap between researcher and participant by facilitating a new dimension of communication. Schwartz (1989) suggested that the richness of photography in representing topics can potentially trigger different interpretations and reflections for researcher and participant exchanges. Moreover, such variations of subjective understanding around photography can open up a space between researcher and participant to negotiate diversity of meanings which might extend the responses of a participant. While the significance of photo elicitation as a research method is now demonstrated, in order for this present study to benefit from its application, the communicative role of photography within photo elicitation research method needs to be considered.

Reviewing the theoretical positioning of the photo elicitation concept, Lapenta (2011) pointed out two opportunities regarding the presence of photography for researchers and research

participants. First, he referred to the value of photography in terms of its "immediate character of realistic reconstruction", one which relies on the capacity for representing objects, and physical or social settings (Lapenta, 2011, p. 203). As described earlier, the presence of photography in a discussion can potentially function as an ice breaker and thereby provide the respondent with a more comfortable environment particularly where children are involved. Lapenta (2011, p. 203, citing Collier and Collier, 1986, p.105) pointed out how the physical existence of photography as "..images, they explained, 'invited people to take the lead in the inquiry, making full use of their expertise,' and they readily 'invited open expression while maintaining concrete and explicit reference points.'"

This suggests that embracing photography to express rich cultural content might provide the foundation for children and a researcher to discuss relevant cultural themes. Instead of relying solely on verbal discussions, having photography as an *explicit reference point* could lead to richer and more faithful discussions alongside attracting children to engage more actively in those discussions.

Lapenta (2011) described the second opportunity of images in terms of going 'above and beyond' the analysis of photography itself, by emphasising the subjective interpretations and meanings of the photographs provided. In further explaining this, Lapenta (2011, p. 203, citing Collier and Collier, 1986, p. 105) stated that:

> *Photographs may offer an opportunity for developing a sense of self-expression for respondents who are identifying and explaining the image's contents by 'tell[ing] their own stories,' and allowing for joint discovery of the 'realities of the photographs… [by] exploring the photographs together' with the researcher.*

The ways in which photography allows participants to reflect on their own understandings and their personal stories indicates that it might be recruited for both sharing and interpreting

cultural themes. In particular, possible variations of interpretation by children and researcher could extend cultural discussions. In this way, having unstructured interview/conversations around photographs of one's own cultural context and that of others might prompt fruitful insights from children: conversation that might eventually lead those participants to richer cultural awareness and understandings of their *own* circumstances - as well as that of others.

This suggests that, analysing the content of photography without discussions with children or without asking fixed questions around the photographs provided would be a limited use of photography for the aims of present study as set out in Chapter 1. Instead, the aim of informal discussions/conversations with children regarding relevant cultural themes present in photographs could lead to richer cultural discussion and insight. Moreover, considering the possible social and cultural meaning in photographs for children might prompt them to share more personal stories – which could also enhance the quality of discussion.

3.3.Summary

In this chapter, the forms of expression through which children might convey rich meanings were considered. There are modern calls for a reconceptualization of the 'literacy' through which this might be expressed. The terms 'multiliteracy' and 'multimodality' suggest how a text-based literacy needs extending to embrace visual expressions. Critics have proposed that the ubiquity of visual resources in education and in everyday life demands that visual forms be more adopted by students for conveying rich meaning. In particular, the combination of images and text has been emphasised for such effective meaning making.

The ubiquity of images in daily life, as it is recognised by some scholars, has encouraged such phrases as 'visual turn', 'visual culture' and 'pictorial turn'. Moreover, the broad use of visual

representations in education, such as through the widespread adoption of images in textbooks, the postings on school walls and the proliferation of multimedia resources all indicate that students are well-exposed to images in school settings. Yet despite the fact that students are surrounded by images in every aspect of their life, they are still asked most often to express their understandings solely through a text-based literacy in school work. One way that students can now readily convey meaning through visual expressions is through generating multimedia materials. However, despite the availability of appropriate software, students seem still seldom invited to illustrate their comprehension of taught concepts this way.

While 'multiliteracy' and 'multimodality' are concerned with enriching written literacy with visual resources, 'visual literacy' is a concept that attempts to conceptualise learners' capabilities in extracting information from images, and producing purposeful content as a technical and expressive capability. Striving for visual literacy involves learners needing to acquire a set of skills for mastering visual communication, but reflections on visual literacy are often criticised for focusing on more cognitive and technical aspects of visual communication, while neglecting its social dimension. It is 'social semiotics', that considers visual practices from a more social and cultural perspective. Social semiotics suggests that the individual reflects the visual materials they are surrounded by when they convey meaning through images, allowing that images can offer a range of meanings in different social and cultural contexts.

Managing images can involve many demands. They can be integrated with text, technically composed or curated to express social and cultural contexts. This therefore puts a demand on educators to encourage students to consider images for expressing their understandings.

In addition, images are becoming more useful as resources for developmental and educational research. One attraction to the adoption of images in research is to go beyond verbal discussion which might be restricting the quality of reflection and discussion with children and young people. Another attraction comes from allowing children to express their understandings through a more active participation in the research enterprise – through their creation of images. So, rather than providing children with pre-determined images as the basis for meaning exploration, they might be invited to produce images or contribute to the generation of images. This possibility is becoming a more natural concern in visually-oriented research with children and young people.

Drawing and photography are the two most common visual forms that are pursued within visual research with children and young people. While drawing is often approached as external realisations of children's mental representations, photography is regarded as a more detached representation of children's experiences. It is easy to neglect the imagination of the photographer and the interpretation of the viewer, but perhaps children's photographs are more readily to be regarded as neutral or documentary representations of their world.

Approaches to the use of photography in research with children vary. Some researchers solely analyse the content of children's captured photographs, but there is increasing interest in inviting children to participate in discussions over the photographs that they take. Empirical studies (Coles-Ritchie et al., 2015; Kendrick & Jones, 2008a; Vasudevan et al., 2010) have indicated that children tend to express more personal stories and richer identities when invited to contribute to discussions of photographs. In addition, photography has been integrated into more schooled literacy activities (Cavendish et al., 2016; Lilly & Fields, 2014;

Wiseman et al., 2016). The purpose of such activities being to prompt children to combine photography and text to more effectively express rich understanding.

Although it has emerged and been adopted as a research *technique*, photo elicitation also provides a useful theoretical conceptualisation for the adoption of photography with research participants. Images play multiple roles within photo elicitation. Apart from adopting photography as an *ice breaker* in open ended interviews, the high fidelity of photography in representing objects, people and real life experiences provides researchers and participants with an *explicit reference point* for discussions. In addition, the content of photography can invoke diverse meanings and understandings for both researcher and participants. The differences within the interpretation of photographs can potentially stimulate rich reflection. In this way, not only the selected content themes of photography, but also the different interpretations and inferences expressed around photographs might be recruited to extract more personal stories or cultural understandings from participants.

As a significant visual format, photography occupies a vital space within 'new literacy' approaches and its conceptual and practical application within visual research enables photographs to be suitable visual expressions for pursuing the aims set out for the present project. The particular ways in which photography might serve the aims and procedures of this project are captured below as formal research questions.

3.4.Research Questions

As stated in Chapter 1 Section 1.3, the aim of this study is to explore how children might develop a fuller sense of cultural diversity and that aim has been located in relation to the mediation of international school twinning. Photography is powerful in depicting local, but

real life contexts. Photography allows children to thereby capture their cultural environment. This can position them to read, as well as reflect on, other cultural contexts. The potential of the medium suggests that photography can be adopted as a communicative instrument for children to have revealing interactions with other cultures. Moreover, the extant literature illustrates that child-generated photographs may be best exploited when classroom *discussions* are carried out around those images. As the review above of photo-elicitation demonstrated, photography can extend verbal conversations towards constructing fresh common knowledge. In this respect, photography can be considered a fundamental ingredient for stimulating children to construct cultural diversity as the common goal. Therefore, the consideration of adopting photography in this thesis is motivated through a concern for the following question.

RQ1: *how can photography stimulate conceptions of cultural diversity among children*

This broad research question can be broken down into sub-questions whereby children's experiences with photography as a central visual instrument for cross-cultural understanding and awareness can be thoroughly investigated. As reference to the empirical sources exploring photography in educational contexts indicated above, photography embodies the potential to provoke children towards providing deeper insights around cultural themes. Moreover, these could be more challenging for children to experience this way than through verbal communication alone. This suggests two sub-questions to my main concern, namely:

RQ1(a) *how do children interpret the cultural content of photographs?*

RQ1(b) how do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography?

While these two sub-questions are concerned both with children's interpretation and with their representation of cultural themes through photography, the discourse generated around and by photography will also be a matter of investigation. Instead of approaching photography as a straightforward representation of children's experiences, photographs captured by children will function as contexts for cultural discussion. These in turn might lead to more fully articulated cultural understandings and awareness. In this regard, the possibility of multiple meanings within photography - as emphasised in social semiotics and photo elicitation - would play a crucial role within such discussions. Accordingly, photography might facilitate not only informal cultural discussion, but also *classroom* interactions perhaps in support of curricular purposes. This possibility raises a further two questions:

RQ 2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes

RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes?

As discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.6, the dissemination of children's cultural interpretations is significant for success around international school twinning projects. In particular, digital technologies could lead to the dissemination of children's collaboratively-conceived visual materials as well as catalysing further cultural exchange between children from culturally distanced contexts. This can be approached through the following question:

RQ 4: H*ow can effective dissemination of children's collaborative findings be achieved?*

In order to investigate those research questions in this project, vigorous fieldwork needs to be pursued, guided by insights from the literature reviewed. First, it is crucial for this research to facilitate a specific exchange between institutions from two diverse cultures, so that

images reflecting different cultural contexts can be obtained. As stated in Chapter 1, international school twinning represents a long tradition that invites schools to embrace international links with geographically and culturally distanced schools. Moreover, cross-cultural exchange occupies a major position in relation to collaboration between schools from different countries. In this respect, establishing international school twinning projects with a focus on cross-cultural exchange can satisfy the first step of constructing fieldwork which may then obtain photographic material reflecting local cultural themes.

Although the depth of involvement of schools in international school twinning varies from project to project, inviting a single classroom from each school could be feasible for research. Moreover, choosing classrooms representing a suitable and common age group is significant for maintaining a shared and meaningful level of engagement among students. As stated in Chapter 1, conceptions of social and cultural identity among children and young people profoundly depends on their age. As the empirical studies reviewed indicate, 10-year-old children demonstrate distinct social and cultural identities, while they are still at a developmental stage of constructing identifies that are socially and culturally firm. In this respect, children in that age group have a level of cultural confidence that allows them to reflect, whilst they can be more flexible than older age groups in embracing new cultural experiences.

Once an international school twinning is established with the participation of two classrooms of such 10-11 year-old children, the participants can be invited to take photographs of their environments which may be exchanged across the schools. Encouraging the children to generate images of their own cultures, as well as to work with photographs from the twinned school, means that a space of time needs to be allocated on a regular basis for this project.

During that period of time, exploratory verbal discussions should take place around the provided images. Moreover, as researcher, I should have a close relationship with the children in order to observe their social and cultural interactions around the photography. Also, in order for me to narratively explore the role of photography in stimulating children's cross-cultural understanding, I should take significant discourse responsibility and thereby prompt children to have elaborated encounters with the photographs. In this way, I would need to act both as an observer and a facilitator of cultural discussions during our meetings.

Apart from my observations, the children's exploration of photography for cross-cultural exchange can be documented through recruiting digital tools. As indicated in Chapter 2 Section 2.6.3, Web 2.0 technologies have been increasingly embraced in international school twinning projects. With a secure Web 2.0 platform, the children can upload their photos and have cultural interactions around them with their counterparts. A Web 2.0 platform can provide space for the dissemination of images between the schools. Also, the documentation of such cultural interactions among children can be a further source of data for developing a better understanding of the impact of photography as a catalyst for cross-cultural understanding.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter comprises four main parts. Section 4.1 elaborates on the research paradigm, including section 4.1.1 that describes a pragmatic approach to knowledge and its development through educational research. Following that, Section 4.2 considers Design Based Research as the approach to describe the relationship between the studies reported in this thesis. After that, section 4.3 proposes qualitative narrative inquiry as the overarching research methodological strategy. The chapter ends with section 4.4, focusing on ethical considerations for this research.

4.1.Research Paradigm

My understanding of conducting research prior to my MA degree was probably not unusual. It entailed essentially following a 'recipe' similar to those used in other research projects, without being aware of the range of different research approaches or the need to personalise a strategy. I came to realise that research demands adopting a perspective – on the nature of knowledge and the methods for gaining it. Moreover, this awareness has influenced all aspects of my research and helped me develop a research design and methodology for this present project. To find the answers to the research questions, it is vital to determine a theoretical position influenced by existing research literature, so that one's own methodology and methods can be selected accordingly. In this way, coherence can be achieved throughout the research process.

Neuman and Robson (2014, p. 41) define a research paradigm as a combined "set of assumptions, beliefs, models" underlying good research, and methods for collecting and analysing data. Weaver and Olson (2006, p. 460) further state that "..paradigms are patterns

of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished". In this sense, the research paradigm guides researchers during the process of selecting the appropriate methodology and strategy for data collection.

The research paradigm does not only lead researchers towards appropriate methodological choices, but also shapes researchers' perspectives on the events of a study throughout the process of its execution. Becker, Bryman, and Ferguson (2012, p. 542) highlight the significance of a research paradigm as "..a cluster of beliefs and dictates that for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted". Similarly, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) suggest that researchers' approach and worldview leads them "..not only in choices of method, but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways". From this perspective, the research paradigm allows researchers to declare ontological and epistemological foundations of their study. While epistemology concerns how we understand and explain the theory of knowledge (Crotty, 1998), ontology is "what is" and forms epistemology, or "what it means to know" (Walliman, 2015).

Conducting research from a clear epistemological and ontological standpoint is a vital part of the research paradigm. The central aim of this study involves allowing children to develop a sense of cultural diversity mediated within a school twinning strategy. As reflected through the research questions, this study is particularly concerned with the role of photography, alongside its recruitment by teachers and its dissemination within an international project, in achieving the aim of the study. The multifaceted nature of the research questions requires a more flexible approach in deploying research methodology and research methods. In addition

to that, practices within the research context play a curial role in satisfying the research questions which also dictates more focus on the practical implications and research paradigm accordingly. Considering all of the above dimensions of the research process, a *pragmatic* research paradigm is considered to be more suitable approach in this study.

4.1.1. Pragmatic Research Paradigm

The pragmatist worldview is not obsessed with only one particular understanding of knowledge and nature. Powell (2001, p. 884) states that "..to a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find the truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving". Referring to the ontological and epistemological stand of pragmatic approach, Creswell (2013) points out that the ontological understanding of pragmatism is the practicality of reality, while knowledge is that way of thinking indicating pragmatic solutions. In the pragmatic approach, knowledge provides individuals with possibilities for supporting their everyday problem solving (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). In emphasising the significance of a pragmatic paradigm in real life research, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggest that instead of insisting on whether reality is independent of mind or within mind, the pragmatist focuses on the actual human practises that work at the time.

To fulfil research aims and answer research questions in this study, the practical implications associated with international school twinning play significant roles. Not only the complexity of the real life context of schools, but also educational activities in which children are invited share their cultural understanding and awareness of both own and other cultural contexts through engaging with photographs – these all require practical consideration. Since a pragmatic research approach emphasises more practical solutions in real life settings, rather

than preoccupation with the nature of knowledge, pragmatism is a more sensible paradigm for achieving the research aims of this study.

Pragmatism also offers a distinctive perspective on educational research, beyond proposing specific research methods. Even though some scholars adopt pragmatism as an advocacy for 'mixed methods', pragmatic educational research offers flexibility rather than a concrete methodology. The link between educational research and practice is based on cooperation and coordination (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). The pragmatic perspective concentrates on identifying the research problems and then matching the possible research methods to the psychological, cultural and political demands of those problems. Creswell (2013, p.11) stated that the main focus in the pragmatic research paradigm is the research problem and it is a paradigm that considers all potential approaches to understanding the problem. To comprehend the research problem, data collection and analytic methods are decided, without any philosophical faithfulness to any alternative paradigm, all in order to achieve the greatest insight on the problem. Therefore, the main focus is not limited to the realm of means, techniques and instruments, for it also involves the realm of ends, purposes and values (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

The research questions are concerned with the role of photography in stimulating children to develop a sense of cultural diversity alongside its dissemination within international twinning practice and the pedagogical exploitation by teachers for extracurricular classroom activities. Moreover, these research questions require a real life international school strategy in which the researcher makes an intervention to actual classroom settings. In this case, a pragmatic research paradigm is the suitable approach for both reflecting the various aspects of the research questions and dealing with the real life research contexts. In particular, the flexibility

in adopting a diversity of research methodology and methods that pragmatism equips the researcher with can be significant in answering the research questions. Through a pragmatic paradigm, this research can deploy appropriate research methods to best answer the research questions without over-concern with their position in qualitative and quantitative research. Moreover, pragmatism also allows a researcher to combine the data as well as findings of various research methods in making sense of research questions. Therefore, the characteristics of both research aims and questions of this suggest the pragmatic paradigm to be most suitable for my research.

4.2.Design Based Research

Collective (2003) suggests that Design Based Research (DBR) has embraced educational research to bond theory and practice within an educational context. In other words, DBR allows researchers to generate useful knowledge aiming to advise educational practice. Wang and Hannafin (2005, pp. 6-7) proposed a broad definition DBR as:

> *We define design-based research as a systematic but flexible methodology aimed to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development, and implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real-world settings, and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories.*

Amiel and Reeves (2008) point out that one vital aspect of DBR is being interventionist by enacting an educational design as a solution to complex problems that may arise within a natural educational settings. Collins, Joseph, and Bielaczyc (2004) state that with initiating implementation of the educational practice, a long process of refinement takes place in which the practice is systematically revised and improved in the real educational setting. In attempting this, the research and design play an interdependent role which means that although the design provides a space for the research to be conducted, the design is still

developed through the results of the research (Cobb, Confrey, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003). During all these processes Collins et al. (2004) emphasised that the researcher is required to have a close interaction with teachers and students, as well as the educational environment.

As stated, the aim of this study is to promote children to develop a stronger sense of cultural diversity at the primary education level through international school twinning. In doing this, this study adopted photography as the fundamental ingredient, alongside Web 2.0 technologies, for children to take advantage of within the twinning exercise. Adopting photography as well as Web 2.0 technologies for children to engage in cross-cultural exchange reflects practical implications taking place in the school contexts. This requires an intervention to the context of schools in which children are invited to engage in an educational practice in order for them to share and gain cultural understanding and awareness of both own and other cultural contexts.

In traditional empirical, predictive research, a new technique based on principles of a theory or new technology is evaluated in a controlled environment with limited time and fewer iterations (Amiel & Reeves, 2008). In contrast, Wang and Hannafin (2005) point out that DBR allows the research to be conducted in a real-life context across a longer time period and with further opportunity for iteration, in order to achieve greater practical exploitation of the educational practice or technology. In order to do this, researchers are required to collect data through various research methods to ensure they will obtain a better understanding of the educational setting and the practice. Therefore, researchers can evaluate the educational design to determine whether it is time to end the research project or develop a new iteration.

In order to have a better understanding of children's experiences with photography as a stimulus for cross-cultural exchange, it is vital to bear in mind the practical implications of

photography and its dissemination in this study. Adopting DBR for such purposes can allow the researcher to overcome possible practical issues and develop appropriate practical implications for having better insights on research questions. In this manner, this study begins with establishing an initial international school twinning project. Once the first school twinning project ends, the results are expected to influence and lead to possible further projects. So that adopting DBR enables the researcher to deal with the practical implications in a study by allowing practical inferences of the first school project to guide practices in the further ones.

Unlike traditional experimental research, the purpose of DBR is not to test theory as an unchangeable concept; instead, the theory and design are equally developed through the research (Van den Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, & Nieveen, 2006). In other words, the chosen design is constantly used to be enacted and refined by the researcher while the theory is both the basis and the end product of DBR (Edelson, 2002). Furthermore, this dimension of DBR allows the researcher to be more flexible during the project. With flexibility, the educational design can be adapted to the research context, but also consistent with key principals of learning (Wang & Hannafin, 2005).

DBR allows practical alterations not only in separate studies, but also within each context. In this case, the researcher has the flexibility of making minor changes in order to overcome practical issues standing against achieving research aims as well as better answering of research questions. Having insights of the practical implications as well as developing useful solutions requires close interactions with the participants in the research contexts.

Anderson and Shattuck (2012) state that the researcher will inevitably need to interact with teachers and students as the active practitioners in order for the researcher to gain a better

understanding of the educational environment and the educational practice within DBR. Similarly, Cobb et al. (2003) emphasise that DBR obliges collaboration between researcher and participants - within this collaboration, the complexity of the implementation becomes clear which enables the researcher to further develop the educational practice. This suggests that the participants play a significant role in both identifying possible issues within practical implications and developing appropriate solutions accordingly.

When the literature of DBR is considered, the practice of DBR is expected to deliver a set of systematically planned iterations over a certain number of practices and a certain period of time. Moreover, the end product of DBR is suggested to be a well-established educational design that could be applied in other educational contexts. On the other hand, the role of DBR in this study is to best deliver the aims of this study, as well as provide a suitable space for answering research questions. In attempting this, DBR allows the researcher to identify issues and develop practical alterations at the end of a first study and minor solutions within possible further studies. In this respect, DBR stands as a sensible approach here.

While DBR describes the design of this study, the actual practices in which children share and gain cultural understanding and perceptions of both own and other cultural contexts with the aid of photography reflects a *narrative* dimension. The next section elaborates narrative inquiry as the overarching practical approach for proceeding with the fieldwork of this study.

4.3.Narrative Inquiry Methodology

Capturing the voices of children and addressing their inner thoughts, feelings, and experiences have always been challenging tasks for researchers. As stated in the previous chapter, such difficulties have encouraged the adoption of visual materials within research

carried out on/with children. While the use of visual resources might be valuable for making sense of children's understandings, the role of visual materials such as photography in this thesis is to stimulate children to reflect on cultural diversity, rather than to simply taxonomise their existing cultural understandings. In addition to that, there is a transformational process through which children gain understanding and awareness of both their own and other cultural contexts with the aid of photography. In order both to monitor children's perceiving new cultural insights and to understand the role of photography in that, the character of children's engagement with photography throughout this study should be closely investigated.

In capturing new cultural understandings and perspectives by children through photography, conventional research methods like pre-test/post-test or semi/structured interviews might not be suitable as they intend to provide some insights of an end product. On the other hand, since this thesis is concerned with recruiting photography for prompting children's cultural understanding and awareness, investigating the *process* in which the children engage with photography is a significant motive in itself – whatever the nature of children's gained cultural understanding at the end of research. Consequently, a closer engagement with the children via more informal and improvised research methods, focussing on process, could be most useful for the present study. 'Narrative Inquiry' is the research methodology that is expected to achieve such requirements - with the incorporation of appropriate research tools in its execution.

A narrative inquiry methodology has been deployed in research seeking deep understanding of personal experiences (Blickem & Priyadharshini, 2007; Clandinin & Huber, 2002). Offering a deeper understanding of human experience has led narrative inquiry to be a useful research

methodology for a variety of academic fields, especially within mainstream social science (Gola, 2009; Sanders, 2011), healthcare (Haydon & Riet, 2014) (Haydon & van der Riet, 2016) and educational studies. Examples in education include teachers' use of digital technologies (Turvey, 2012), teaching mathematics (Fenton, 2003), the science curriculum (Hwang, 2011), multicultural teaching (Phillion, 2002) and counselling (Patsiopoulos & Buchanan, 2011).

Clandinin (2006) states that the main approach of narrative inquiry is to pay attention to the personal stories of participants. To Brushwood Rose and Granger (2013), narrative is a complex comprehensive path narrowly lined up with storytelling, while Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that both narrative and storytelling are primary experiences of people. Pointing out the role of personal stories within narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 375) provide a widely recognised definition of narrative inquiry as:

> *People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.*

As also indicated in this definition, narrative inquiry is concerned with unravelling more insight of individuals through personal stories. In achieving this, Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, and Morales (2007) state that the practice of narrative inquiry research deals with one or two individuals, collecting their personal stories, identifying their experiences and chronologically outlining the meaning underlying those experiences. Throughout this procedure, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that researchers are required to pay attention to the personal stories of participants, critically approaching them, reconstructing and restating them with

new meaning, all in order to facilitate co-construction of knowledge through close relationship with participants.

Although the main components of narrative inquiry are described, Chase (2008) state that there are different approaches of narrative inquiry depending on the context of the field of study. Similarly, this study adopts narrative inquiry in two different ways. This study is aligned with the perspective that takes the phrase 'narrative inquiry' to refer to both an *object* (the resulting narrative construction) and a *method* (a way of researching some process working towards the achievement of that construction).

4.3.1. Narrative Construction

Among those, the object is normally considered to be the narrative construction as it has occurred through a *journey,* with the participation of an *actor* at the focus of the research such that this will generally be about "the self". As indicated earlier, narrative inquiry is mainly concerned with extracting *individual* experiences through personal stories: that is to say, the central focus is the *self* of the participant.

In approaching to narrative construction, this study adopted Fisher's (1984) 'narrative paradigm'. Fisher (1984 p.59) suggested that "narration is merely an element in rhetorical discourse or is a specific literary genre". In proposing a narrative paradigm, Fisher stated that narrative construction occurs when the different choices and values of individuals merge to create shared social identities. In this respect, rather than a single individual, this study is dealing instead with a group of *social actors* (children).

The role of that social group is to develop an understanding of cultural diversity - which is expected to be achieved through the journey of engaging in a succession of experiences with

photography. Throughout such experiences within that journey, the children are expected to contribute to a building of *shared* cultural understandings. Moreover, this object of narrative construction can be considered as an extension of the participants' "cultural identity" - since developing understanding of cultural diversity is not only an objectified understanding of people in another place it is (through the *comparative* effort) a way of understanding one's own cultural context – holding a mirror up to it. Therefore, the ways in which this study seeks to invoke shifts in cultural identity as a narrative target or goal makes a reasonable call on narrative inquiry.

4.3.2. Narrative Analysis Method

While the first use of narrative inquiry is based on the narrative construction of an extension of cultural identity, the second approach is dealing with that narrated outcome through narrative inquiry as a *method*. As stated earlier, narrative inquiry has been growing in its scope towards a new kind of maturity. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) pointed to the importance of relationships between people's narrative practices and their environment. They proposed the concept of *reflexive interplay* suggesting that people's narratives and their environment shape each other. In this respect, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) focused on understanding *narrative reality* rather than only individual narratives.

Another new approach within the methodology of narrative inquiry has been in relation to the sources of data. Chase (2008) stated that early narrative inquiry practices considered oral narratives from sociolinguistic perspectives. She further pointed out how personal documents, such as letters and memoirs had also become of interest to narrative research. Furthermore, the use of writing and oral forms within narrative inquiry was challenged by

suggesting that physical objects and visual images can also resource researchers to read people's narratives (Riessman, 2008).

Thus visual images and physical objects have been increasingly used in narrative research. In research investigating women's past experiences of racial oppression in South Africa, Segalo (2014) invited participants to create embroideries to allow them to reveal something of the personal and collective sufferings in their past. Not only the embroideries, but also the social interactions among the participants over four months allowed them to share the difficulties experienced. In another study, Kwan (2008) focused on Muslim women's life experiences in the United States after the terrorist attacks of September, 11. She invited participants to take photographs of their daily lives and then conducted interviews around their images. In this way, using visual images allowed the participants to realise more vividly the changes that occurred in their lives after the attack.

Apart from meaning inherent in the artefactual data, the communicative aspect of narrative inquiry that allows personal narratives to be shared is also important. One approach to narrative as an instrument to identify and reflect on personal identities is the use of narrative in psychotherapy. This is not only based on identifying critical personal experiences, but also *reflecting* on them (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). During the therapy process, the therapist exploits personal narratives and negotiates with individuals in reconstructing the meaning of the revealed narrative (Avdi & Georgaca, 2007). In achieving this, the role of therapist is to collaborate with the individual in a co-construction of the lived experience, rather than only focusing on unfolding the personal narrative.

From this perspective, my role is to retrospectively involve with the development of a sensing of cultural diversity by children. Moreover, the journey in which I closely collaborate with

children is not planned in advance, but it is to be unravelled through narrative inquiry. My role is to manage the direction of travel during that journey. In this respect, the methodological obligations lead me: (a) to document the nature of the activities that underlay the construction process and (b) to be reflective in documenting my own role within it.

4.3.3. Narrative Approach in this Thesis

As indicated earlier, although personal stories are the primary concern of narrative inquiry, narrative inquiry does not solely take the stories into account, but also the meaningful context contiguous to the story, as well as the timeline of the story. Drawing on John Dewey's pragmatic thinking, Clandinin (2006, p. 46) suggests interaction as one of the key dimensions within narrative inquiry by stating that "..people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context". Apart from social context of both the story and the storyteller, Clandinin (2006) pointed out that human stories derived from prior experiences and current experiences stimulate future stories. Considering all these aspects, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 20) delineated narrative inquiry as "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus".

In this study, children are invited to discuss photographs of their own and other cultural contexts in order for them to develop cultural understanding of their own lives and that of others. It should be noted that the utilisation of narrative inquiry in this study is not based on the focussed inquiry around every individual child in the research, rather the purpose is to focus on each *session* carried out with children. This study is recruiting narrative inquiry as an approach regarding narration of verbal cultural discussions among the researcher and children around photography. The adoption of a narrative inquiry methodology in this study

can thus be described through the following framework: namely *temporality, sociality* and *place* suggested by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In developing a conceptual framework of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Huber (2010) point out the three commonplaces of such inquiry, proposed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as *temporality, sociality* and *place*. Referring to temporality, Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 479) state that "events under study are in temporal succession" while Clandinin and Huber (2010) point out that actions and events take place within individual's present situation which are shaped by past as well as from their future. In other words, experiences of individuals within their surroundings indicates a temporal transition.

The temporality of narrative inquiry can be referred as the temporal stage where the development of children's cultural understandings and awareness of their own context and that of others take place. It is within this stage that children's cultural inferences and interpretations can be identified. Instead of focusing on children acquired cultural comprehensions at the *end* of the study, investigating the stages in which such experiences take place through a lens of narrative inquiry can lead to better insights on the impact of the educational practice.

In relating sociality to personal and social conditions, Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 480) consider personal conditions as "..the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" while Clandinin and Huber (2010) describe social conditions as the environment in which events and experiences of individuals are being stretched. Sociality identifies the social relationship between researcher and participants as a significant dimension of narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Huber (2010, p. 4) emphasise that "narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship" since the key components of research, such as

outcomes and successive steps are shaped within the social relationship between researcher and participants.

The sociality dimension of narrative inquiry mainly reflects social interactions among the researcher and children within each session. One aspect of this stage is encouraging and prompting children with the aid of photography to engage in richer cultural discussions. Sociality also allows children's engagement with photography to be visible through verbal discussions. In other words, the close relationship between the researcher and the children allows children's experiences with photography to be documented.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 480) referred to *place* as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place". Narrative inquiry suggests that the place in which the research occurs needs to be taken into account by the researcher, because the place is inseparably associated with experiences of the researcher and participant.

The space in narrative inquiry stands for the physical space in which educational practice takes place. In this case, children's cultural understandings and awareness is highly related to their social environment. On the other hand, space can also be referred as the physical presence of photographs as they are the ones which stand as the intervention in the physical space. Narrative inquiry can allow the researcher to have better insights regarding the physical impact of photography on cultural discussions with children. Considering photographs as anchors for the verbal discussions with children, narrative inquiry can lead to a pinning down of the significance of photography as the main instrument for rich cross cultural exchanges.

Bearing the above point in mind, narrative inquiry can allow the researcher to narrate the sessions with children. With a narrative approach, the main focus of the research can be exclusively investigating the role of photography in achieving the aims of this study, rather than applying a focusing on individuals. In this way, a more collective understanding of factors like photography and cultural contexts can be obtained through analysis of every session carried out with the children, thus the research questions can be addressed.

4.4.Observation Research Method

In considering the activities of individuals as central to real world research, Robson and McCartan (2011) state that a natural method is to witness those actions of individuals directly, record them in a sensible way, and then describe, analyse, and interpret the observed data. It is the observational research method that offers researchers the means to gather real time information of naturally occurring social contexts (Creswell, 2009). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013) suggest that having direct observation of social phenomena provides researchers with opportunities for collecting more valid and authentic data than is the case with more *mediated* methods. Pointing out the differences between observation and interview orsurvey research methods, Robson and McCartan (2011, p. 316) claim that there are some natural issues of reliability within interview and survey data: difficulties that arise from possible shortfall in memory or the desire for presenting oneself in a favourable way. Considering such difficulties of interviews with children in terms of encouraging them to express their understandings, it is suggested that observing their behaviours and actions during a research process might be more useful in obtaining more credible data. Since this intervention is concerned with investigating the role of photography in stimulating cross-cultural discussions with children, it is supposed that observing their experiences around

photography during the research process can provide richer data than interviewing the children at some endpoint. In particular, children's reactions in reflecting their cultural understanding through their own photographs, as well as making sense of the photographs of others, can be captured through observing their *live* experiences while they occur – and, thus, as a participant in such encounters.

Although the observational research method is considered to be a more sensible way for the interventions possible in this study, there are various distinctive practices of observation that can colour the nature of the research data. One distinction within observational research method is the involvement of the researcher within the process observed. Gold (1958) proposed a widely accepted classification regarding the role of the researcher in observation contexts

- *The complete participant*: The observer engages in social interactions through seeking to become a full member of the group, with a disguised role.

- *The participant-as-observer*: The observer is a part of social activities and interactions, with a revealed role.

- *The observer-as-participant*: The observer is known to the group, but the involvement is limited.

- *The complete observer*: The observer is not involved in any social interaction, with a revealed role.

As outlined in the previous section, a narrative inquiry methodology is adopted here to investigate the *journey* of construction of fresh cultural understandings - through

photography by children as a group of *social actors*. In achieving that, the researcher is tasked to orchestrate children in working with photographic images and thus have close social interactions with the children in order to gain insights concerning that journey. In this case, *the participant-as-observer* is the natural option for this research, since it allows the researcher to engage in activities and social interactions with the children while they are developing that sense of cultural diversity. Moreover, my identity will be understood to the children in terms of my role as orchestrating them, rather than more forcefully determining or obstructing their experiences. As Robson and McCartan (2011) suggest, in conducting participant observation in schools, children commonly consider the researcher akin to a teacher: a circumstance which could potentially lead to more openness from the children in expressing their thoughts.

In addition to specifying a role of the observer, a range of data collection *techniques* are offered in observation research method. One way of gathering such data is referred as '*structured observation':* whereby the researcher enters a research site with a coding scheme comprising fixed categories (Robson & McCartan, 2011). Structured observation enables the researcher to generate numerical data in a systematic way and it is therefore considered a quantitative method (Cohen et al., 2013). However, in this project, the researcher is required to be attentive and responsive to the behaviours and events that arise from social interactions with the children. Moreover, such behaviours and responses of the children cannot be so readily predicted in advance - which incapacitates any form of predetermined observation coding scheme.

The foremost data collection method available for carrying out participant observation is the taking of field notes throughout the research process. In addition, Silverman (2013) notes that

collecting audio or video recordings is also useful, as such recordings can potentially allow the researcher to return to the original data to supplement their field notes. In the end, the selection of a data collection instrument depends on the particular behaviours and activities of individuals that are intended for observation within the research.

Data collection in participant observation begins with a *descriptive observation* of the research site (Robson & McCartan, 2011). The idea here is to describe the space, people, objects and activities that take place there. In that step, taking extensive field notes of the research site can provide valuable insights regarding the context of the research. The following stage is referred as *focused observation* which involves covering the behaviours and actions of those individuals that are most connected to the research questions (Flick, 2009). The last step is suggested to be *selective observation* in which the intention is to look for further evidence relating to observations in the earlier stage (Flick, 2009). Since these two stages are the most significant for the observer to collect data from and for making sense of the behaviours and activities of participants, the data collection procedure itself needs to be well articulated.

In this study, the core ingredient in the research is the discourse and activities of children taking place around the photographic images, particularly those children's experiences with particular images. As such, experiences of the children will be covered through the focused observation and selective observation stages, the data collection in those steps is crucial for this project. While the taking of field notes will be the primary instrument for collecting data, Robson and McCartan (2011) suggest that audio/visual recordings, documents, and other artefacts within the research site can also supply data. In this study, child-generated photographic images can be considered as important artefacts for the research. Moreover,

the focused behaviours and activities of children in this project mainly take place around those images. In this case, referencing field notes against images in documenting events can lead to a better record of the experiences of children with the photography resource.

Robson and McCartan (2011) stress that the source of data is not only the behaviours and actions of individuals, but also the verbal discussions with them. They further state that although asking questions to informants can be considered as akin to interviewing, it is more likely for the researcher to carry out 'conversations' or 'informal interviews' with them. Similarly, in the present study, the researcher is expected to carry out verbal discussions with children throughout the research. Through such discussions, it is expected that better insights regarding the experiences of children prompted by photography can be obtained.

DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) note that researchers using participant observation also tend to adopt variously more conversational than structured data collection methods, including informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. Among these, they consider that informal interviewing is be the most sensible choice for participant observers, because it is an established part of the participant research process. As stated earlier, the nature of this study involves the researcher sharing social interactions with children in order to scaffold them towards exploiting the affordances of photography for developing a sense of cultural diversity. Such social interactions will occur through verbal discussions around the photography. While taking field notes aims to document the role of photography in stimulating understandings with the group, verbal discussions with *individuals* around photography can provide further insights regarding children's individual experiences with photography. In striving towards this, the verbal discussions with the children might be more directive, yet still informal.

In describing the verbal discussion in informal interviews, DeWalt and DeWalt (2011, p. 121) state that "..the researcher is likely to be directing conversation and asking many more questions that would usually take place in a casual conversation among acquaintances". From this point of view, it is sensible for the researcher to assemble a set of questions to be applied within verbal exchanges, without losing the informality within those discussions. In capturing the verbal discussions, field notes and audio recordings can be useful. Moreover, since conversations are expected to take place around images, the attachment of field notes or audio recordings to the images will provide more rigorous data collection. Considering all these processes of data collection - particularly with respect to the involvement of child-generated photographs, there surely arise several ethical considerations. In the following section, I discuss possible ethical concerns and the ethical reflections that this study takes into account.

4.5.Ethics

The aim of this study is to promote children to develop a greater sense of cultural diversity and international school twinning is the main contextual strategy to mediate that goal. Moreover, photography is the utilised communicative tool for maintaining cross-cultural exchange between schools. In the research, the children are invited to:

- Take photos of their in- and out-of school environment,
- Upload photos to a secured Web 2.0 platform,
- Make comments on the uploaded photos with their counterparts,

- Interpret and discuss photos in their classroom setting with the presence of the researcher.

The teachers in the study are requested to:

- Follow and guide interactions between the children on the Web 2.0 platform,
- Allocate classroom time for cultural discussions around the photos,
- Pedagogically exploit the photos from other school for extra-curricular purposes with the presence of the researcher,
- Collaborate with the researcher in planning extra-curricular use of the photos.

In inviting participation from the teachers and the children in this research, they are provided with information sheets regarding the purpose of the study and consent forms for participation. In the following section, the ethical procedures adopted as well as identifying possible ethical challenges arising from participation of the teachers and the children in this visual research are described.

4.5.1. Ethical Committee Approval

Prior to conducting the empirical research, Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) approval was granted establishing an appropriate researcher background as required from the Ethics Committee of the School of Education (University of Nottingham) for carrying out research involving vulnerable participants. Following that, an ethical form presenting research aims, methods of data generation, and approaches to recruiting participants was submitted for scrutiny, alongside information sheets and consent forms to be given to prospective research

participants was sent to the Ethical Committee. In addition, a form guaranteeing various researcher commitments: namely to informing participants regarding the nature of research, the protection of anonymity in relation to their identities and to that of any visual products, and the storing of research material on a password protected computer. In particular, assurance was given that visual materials generated by children would be cautiously handled.

The information sheet openly explaining the purpose and procedure of the research was given to headteachers and teachers. In addition to that, teachers were provided with consent forms clarifying their own roles in the research and their rights of withdrawal from the research at any stage. Also, parents were well informed regarding the involvement of the children in the research with the rights of withdrawal through given consent forms. As the Ethical Committee approved the research, the requirements for conducting research can be accessed at the website[17] of the School of Education.

In providing parents with consent forms, different approaches were applied under the guidance of headteachers. From some schools, consent forms were given with an 'opt out' (Appendix 1 Section A) option as those schools requested the forms to be written in that way. In another case, the school edited the form and put an 'opt in' (Appendix 1 Section B) option for parents to consent their children to participate to the research.

This research invited children not only to be involved with visual materials, but also to capture photographs of their in- and out-of school environments. Moreover, the children were expected to upload their materials in a restricted and carefully selected Web 2.0 platform, namely Edmodo. Child- generated photographs were only shared with children from the

[17] https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx

other school contexts, the researcher and the supervisors. As indicated earlier, all these processes were openly declared to the teachers, parents and children through information sheets, and consent forms. Since visual research involving children is a sensitive subject, possible ethical challenges were investigated in the literature and they were cautiously taken into account throughout the research process. The next section seeks to identify the ethical concerns of visual research with children.

4.5.2. Ethical Considerations in Visual Research with Children

In conducting research with children, Christensen and Prout (2002) suggested a 'symmetry' between involving children in research and taking ethical issues into the account for researchers. In stating this, Christensen and Prout (2002) proposed that children should have competencies regarding dealing with ethical challenges throughout the research. Approaching visual research with children from this perspective, Allan (2005) carried out research inviting girls to take photographs of their school contexts and themselves. Letting the participant girls to take responsibilities in drawing ethical boundaries, Allan (2005) stated that the girls in the study confidently captured photographs, but they shared their concerns when an unknown male photographer was introduced to take their photographs. The author stated that children might have a sense of ethical issues in participating in visual research. However, the nature of such research with children poses complex ethical challenges that should be covered without putting any liability on children's shoulders.

The above study indicates that children should be allowed to take photos of their environment without involvement of researchers. In the present study, the children were invited to take photographs themselves and the researcher has not engaged in capturing any photo involving children in school context. The main ethical challenges of visual research with

vulnerable participants emerge after the generation or collection of visual data and the ways in which the researcher secures, reports and publicise the visual materials.

The ethical considerations of research involving children are consent, confidentiality and anonymity. However, visual research with children requires further ethical reflections with all those three dimensions. Reviewing the ethical issues related to the use photographs, film and video images in research, Wiles et al. (2008) suggest that researchers can be granted with consent of participants in using images in their research, but there are further ethical challenges in using any photography or film of the participants despite their consent. The main argument in relation to the consent, use and dissemination of participant generated images is that the participants may not be aware of possible long term implications of situating and reporting such images in research.

Among the identified ethical challenges within visual research, Pauwels (2008) considers anonymity as 'the core problem' for researchers. Banks and Zeitlyn (2015) state that anonymisation of participants within visual research is highly problematic, particularly in utilisation of participant generated photographs. Wiles, Coffey, Robinson, and Heath (2012) carried out a study investigating researchers' positioning regarding the anonymity and publication of participants related visual materials. Selected from various fields of social science, all participants published numerous visual researches with one third of them focused on children. Wiles et al. (2012, p. 41) state that the findings indicated "..ongoing tensions between, on the one hand, research participants' rights and researchers' desire for participants to be seen as well as heard and, on the other hand, researchers' real and perceived ethical responsibility to safeguard participants".

As a possible solution to secure the anonymity of research participants in their images, image editing techniques may provide opportunities to reduce the possibility of identification of the participants. However, Pauwels (2008) and Wiles et al. (2008) point out that such methods are likely to hinder the communicative dimension of images which can potentially harm the purpose of adopting images in the research. Indeed, the use of image editing practices and its impact on the research are crucial to bear in mind, particularly when the focal point of utilising images is to reflect the communicative richness of images.

As stated earlier, parental consent regarding the participation of children and their engagement with visual materials was granted. In addition to that, the anonymity in terms of names of schools, teachers and children are preserved in the research report. However, child-generated images in which children's faces and a school context can be identifiable occur in the research report without any editing.

As stated in Chapter 2, the majority of international school twinning projects are initiated, managed and funded by non-profit organisations, such as UNESCO, British Council, European eTwinning. When the evaluation reports on these projects are considered, it is evident that the reports frequently contain images of children, their school and out-of school contexts, without any changes of names and images. In addition to that, videos of such school twinning projects are available in the public domain through their websites. On the other hand, the main approach in this study is to put children's generated images into the thesis with an edit option (e.g. covering faces and change of names), so they would not be recognised.

Another ethical consideration regarding images generated by children is the dissemination of such images across schools participating in empirical projects in this study. As discussed in Chapter 2, Web 2.0 technologies are increasingly utilised for communication and interaction

purposes between schools in international school twinning projects. Similarly, this study suggests a Web 2.0 platform for children to upload their visual materials and have interactions with their counterparts. The chosen digital platform provides teachers with secured online classrooms for their students to have collaboration as registration to the classrooms can only be done through invitation from the classroom teacher. Since the created digital classroom is completely restricted from outsiders, except the participants and the researcher, it does not expose any potential dissemination risk of images to the public domain.

In confronting ethical issues within visual research, researchers are advised to work closely with participants and stakeholders in evaluating and managing privacy expectations and research itself (Allan, 2005; Pauwels, 2008; Wiles et al., 2012). Despite granting consent forms regarding the involvement of children's images in the research, I have strictly pursued the obligation of asking children and teachers about any possible concern of any photograph involved in this study throughout the research. Moreover, any suggestion from the children and the teachers were taken into account in adjusting research process or involving any particular image.

5. INTERVENTION I

This chapter describes the first of two intervention programmes, including a brief rehearsal of the stated research aims and questions in the light of the relevant literature reviewed. Next, consideration is given to the research method that is applied throughout the study. Then the chapter provides key details of research context, covering participants, research procedure, data collection, and data analysis of this first intervention. Thereafter, the findings are reported. The chapter ends with a discussion section reflecting on the results and their implications for structuring a second intervention.

5.1.Introduction

Prior to discussing findings from this first intervention, it is helpful to recall the purpose of this opening empirical study, in the light of relevant existing literature discussed earlier. In this way, the manner in which Intervention 1 was shaped and planned to satisfy the general aims of this project and thereby answer its research questions can be revealed.

As indicated in Chapter 2, school twinning has evolved into a common practice serving both pedagogical and cultural ambitions. Being one of the earliest formats in the tradition of educational sharing, international school twinning links geographically and culturally distanced schools for exploring cultural exchanges. In aiming for children to develop a stronger sense of cultural diversity, international school twinning was considered a useful context for the aims of the present project. The literature describing the practice of international school twinning indicated that the nature of interaction between schools has significantly shifted with the emergence of digital technology.

The digitally-mediated interaction between geographically distanced schools through school twinning became attractive with the rise of synchronous and asynchronous communication media. Such developments in digital technology have provided geographically distanced pairs and groups with the opportunity of interaction and collaboration. For instance, synchronous and asynchronous digital technologies were incorporated within several such reported school partnerships: deploying, in particular, email (Valentine and Holloway, 2001) and video conferencing (Austin, 2004), (Maitles and Gilchrist, 2006).

As noted in Section 2.6.3, while synchronous and asynchronous communication have enabled geographically distanced students and teachers to experience interaction and collaboration to some extent, the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has transformed such interactions towards another level. The engagement of users within Web 2.0 technologies involves "..individual and collective publishing; sharing of images, audio and video; and the creation and maintenance of online social networks" (Bennett et al., 2012, p. 524). These features of Web 2.0 technologies have been embraced by international school twinning projects to provide richer cultural interaction and collaboration between schools. As an example of one major long-term international school partnership project, European eTwinning provided schools from around 30 countries with a Web 2.0 platform named 'Twinspace' for cultural and educational interactions. Reaching over 450,000 users, Wastiau et al. (2013) stated that such popularity relies on the easy access and non-bureaucratic participation that Twinspace offers, with the consequent availability of a variety of online tools. The published potential of adopting a Web 2.0 platform in international school twinning for rich interactions provided enough evidence for embracing such platforms in the present project. Therefore, a Web 2.0

platform was integrated into Intervention 1 for maintaining social and cultural interactions between students from different schools.

An important dimension of Web 2.0 technologies is considered to be the richness of communication they afford. Common features of web 2.0 platforms allow users to interact through different formats of individual expression, such as through verbal, auditory and visual modalities. It is widely believed that students should readily exploit those expressive possibilities alongside traditional written language for constructing and conveying rich meaning – particularly recruiting the opportunities for *visual* expression within web-based activity (Crook, 2008a).

As reviewed in Chapter 3 Section 3.1, there have emerged new approaches to literacy in the 21st century: approaches that seek different modes of expression to be embraced by educators in order that students might convey rich meanings. Among those, the New London Group (1996) suggested the phrase 'multiliteracy' in reflecting on the demands of exploiting different forms of expression for communication. A framework that recognises the possibility of combining various forms of expression for representation and communication is reflected in the term 'multimodality'. In articulating multimodality, it is argued that it is no longer appropriate to conceive of literacy through only the linguistic component of communicative expression (Kress, 2003). In particular, the skilful combination of image and text can achieve significant power in conveying meaning (Jewitt, 2005). The role of images as a rich form of expression within multimodal texts validates the significance of images for both conveying, as well as conceiving, profound and complex meaning. Since this study aims to support children in developing a fuller sense of cultural diversity, limiting those children to expressing their cultural understandings through only verbal language can be a challenging task for them

to accomplish. Instead, providing children with different forms of expression particularly visual expression, in sharing their own cultural understandings and interpreting others could lead to more engaging cultural exchanges.

The richness of the visual format is also embraced within other research themes involving children. As stated in Chapter 3 Section 3.2, images have become a significant general communicative tool for allowing children to express their understandings (Thomson, 2008). In particular, drawing and photography have been the most common visual formats for such purposes. In relation to those, it is generally believed that reflecting life events through the subjectivity of photography can make photographic images an appealing and effective form of individual and cultural expression (Share, 2015).

As illustrated in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.2, photography has been utilised for exploring children's perception of science and maths (Katz, 2011; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005). As well as supporting science learning (Cappello & Lafferty, 2015), and confidence with its vocabulary (Jones, 2010), it has also been involved with the development of traditional literacy skills of children (Cavendish et al., 2016; Lilly & Fields, 2014; Wiseman et al., 2016). Those empirical studies demonstrate how photography allows children to reflect their understandings of traditional taught concepts as well as exploring their social and cultural identities. Moreover, some of the above research demonstrated that child-generated photographs could provide a rich space for classroom discussions. In this respect, the place of photography for carrying children's out-of-school cultural understandings and stimulating rich classroom discussions can make it useful for this project.

In Intervention 1, an international school twinning project is to be established in order to provide different cultural contexts for children to experience and explore. Moreover, a

secured Web 2.0 platform will be integrated with the activity in order for teachers and children to share their cultural understandings and interaction in relation to them. The ways in which children are invited to express their cultural understanding are going to entail the possibilities arising from combining multiple forms of expressions as digital multimodal designs. Within that effort, photography is adopted to be the core communicative instrument for children. Also, the photographs within those products can potentially be recruited into cultural discussions in a classroom or curriculum setting.

In the context outlined above, the following research questions will be investigated.

RQ1(a) How do children interpret the cultural content of photographs?

RQ1(b) How do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography and digital multimodality?

RQ 2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes

RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes?

RQ 4: How can effective dissemination of children's collaborative findings and interactions around them be achieved?

In addressing those research questions, the research context, including participants, research procedure, data collection methods and analysis will be described in the following section.

5.2.Research context

In the first intervention, an international school twinning project was initiated between a school from the UK and a school from Turkey. The UK is located in western Europe with a very culturally diverse society. As stated in Chapter 2 Section 5.2, the UK has been encouraging and guiding its schools to initiate projects with other schools all over the world for cultural exchanges as mediated through governmental and non-governmental organisations. On the other hand, Turkey is geographically situated between Asia and Europe. Moreover, being a part of both continents has led the country to develop a unique culture blending Middle Eastern and European cultural perspectives.

Establishing a school twinning project, the prospective school in the UK would have an opportunity to explore the exceptional culture of Turkey. Similarly, every school in Turkey would surely enjoy experiencing the widely-exhibited British culture through the lens of a school in the UK. Moreover, English is the most common second language taught in schools in Turkey and improving their English through possible interactions with students from the UK would be an outstanding opportunity for students in Turkey. Considering those possible benefits for schools both in the UK and Turkey, it was felt that schools in both countries could be inspired to work with each other. Another aspect of selecting those countries as sites for this project was my own familiarity with both cultural contexts, because knowing those cultural sites could assist me in finding participants and managing links among them.

Therefore, in this intervention, an international school twinning project was planned to be established between a school from Turkey and the UK. As described in Chapter 2 Section 3, the involvement of schools in school twinning varies depending on the project. While some projects aim to encourage schools to have collaboration in all aspects, such as administration,

training teachers, curriculum development, the more common international school twinning practice involves having collaboration in depth around one specific aspect. Moreover, as stated in the same chapter, Section 5, international school twinning projects tend to encourage collaboration on a smaller scale. As observed in the European eTwinning project (see Section 6.3.1 in the same chapter), the collaboration within such twinning projects often involves a single classroom or a teacher from each school. In this way, not only might the project be more feasible to carry out, but also deeper engagement might be achieved. Similarly, the school twinning project in this intervention is planned to be between single classrooms from each school.

In finding participants for a school twinning project between the UK and Turkey, I had established connections for reaching out to schools that might consider contributing in Turkey, while my supervisor supported me in finding a school in the UK.

5.2.1. Participants

Prior to seeking participants, cultural diversities in both countries were considered. The notion was that schools should come from a culturally defined area but one that might have cultural differences with the mainstream culture in the both countries. That way children could engage with more local cultures and have richer cultural differences to express. To achieve this, the main target was to reach out to cities and towns with locally distinct cultures.

For that purpose, a city with a unique ethnically diverse background located in the south-eastern region of Turkey attracted my attention. Being highly populated, the city reflects more distinctive cultural differences than are apparent in cultural representations of Turkey from outside. In this way, it was expected that the cultural exchanges between classrooms

might be richer, since it is unlikely for children in the UK to have any cultural knowledge about the city.

In selecting a school for this study, technology infrastructure was a major factor, as children would be expected to engage with Web 2.0 technologies and tablet devices. In addition, the quality of English teaching was also considered, so that children could have adequate English competency in order for them to have interactions within the Web 2.0 technologies. Once official permission from the local educational office was granted, I contacted several schools through my personal connections.

After reaching out to several schools, one was judged to be an ideal school in the city to participate in this project. Being a private school, it had a strong digital technology infrastructure: all children owned a tablet device and all classrooms were equipped with wireless Internet and projection. Moreover, the school had an additional focus on English teaching. Finally, the population of each classroom was around 15 children, which is way lower than the average in this country but more suited to this project. Although choosing a private school in Turkey may raise questions regarding class differences, the above characteristics of the school was vital for this project and they could only be found in private schools in the city. Moreover, matching a state school in the UK and a private school in Turkey is not considered a constraint, since students in that private school still share the distinct culture of their city.

In inviting the school to take part, an information sheet was given to the headteacher and details of the study were explained in a face-to-face meeting. Following that, the headteacher allowed me to meet the teachers and provide them with details about the project. Since the age group of this study was to be 10-11-year-olds, the teachers managing that age group of

students were given information sheets. One English teacher agreed to participate in the study with 16 children in a year 5 classroom, with the main motivation being to improve children's English practices. The teacher was in the late stage of her career and looking for new educational activities for teaching English. Although she was not familiar with integrating digital technology into her teaching, she considered this project as an opportunity to enrich teaching English. To overcome unfamiliarity with digital technology, the teacher planned to seek help from the ICT teacher in the school. Following the discussions over this project, the teacher was provided with the consent form (translated in Turkish) and there followed a discussion regarding the appropriate way of preparing the consent forms (translated in Turkish) for parents. The teacher expressed a preference for opting out decisions as being a better choice for parents - based on previous experiences.

In finding a school in the UK to contribute to this project, a local area nearby the researcher's university was the target. Following contacts with several schools, a school that was a close distance from Nottingham agreed to participate in this study. That school was a catholic elementary school. Being a catholic school and located in a town that was considered to be culturally distinctive, it was judged suitable for this project. The teacher that was willing to participate had a year 5 classroom with 15 children with 8 girls and 7 boys around 9-10-years old. After delivering the information sheet to the teacher, the project was explained to her in detail. The teacher was in late stage of pregnancy and she stated that she might have issues in allocating time for the project. Despite that, the teacher approached this project to widen the cultural perspectives of her pupils. After explaining what was involved, consent forms for the teacher (Appendix 1 Section C) and the parents were provided. The teacher proposed an opting out decision in relation to the consent forms and their request for the children's

participation in this study. In fact, the teacher took an initiative and edited the parental consent (Appendix 1 Section A) form for better elaborating the project for parents.

An important demand of this project was that the technology infrastructure in the school should be adequate. The classroom was equipped with an interactive white board (IWB), although children did not have tablet devices. Accordingly, throughout the research, the children were provided with tablet devices from the University of Nottingham.

5.2.2. The Role of the Participant

As stated earlier, the international school twinning project characteristic of this intervention is based on the participation of a teacher and a classroom from each school. Moreover, the main empirical focus of this intervention for answering the research questions is the school in the UK, since I could only undertake the logistics of the one school in my own location. The role of the school in Turkey was to engage in exchange of photographs and digital interactions between the children in both schools - but without such close orchestrating support from a researcher. Besides, such a role was clearly agreed with the school in Turkey in advance and the teacher accepted that I could only visit the school at the beginning of the project for elaborating on procedural details. The teacher considered this project as an opportunity for enriching English teaching, therefore providing her with space to take advantage of the project was a reasonable prospect for her. Because the school in the UK is the main focus of this intervention, the detail of activities that are planned to take place will be provided in relation to that site.

In Intervention 1, the research procedure was planned to be formed from weekly cultural discussions involving the researcher in the British school, along with more extended

interactions through the Web 2.0 technologies. In the beginning of Intervention 1, I conducted a meeting with the teacher and the children in the UK school in order to discuss details of management for this study. In this meeting, we considered the purpose of the project in terms of international school twinning, their own contribution to the project, the possible weekly activities, the digital technology, and the context of the partner school.

While the children were provided with the necessary general information about this project, they were given several details in order to both clarify their roles in this intervention and motivate them for participation. Among those details, the children were told that they would be taking photographs of their personal and cultural environment. It was indicated that they could suggest any topic describing how they live and what they do here that they wished to discuss and take photographs of. In addition, they were given information about the school in Turkey and it was explained that they could have personal interactions on a digital platform. Also, the children were told that they could ask about specific cultural themes or elements from the other school. Another significant detail to motivate the children was the feature of digital multimodality. The children were informed that they could enrich their photos with text, drawing and voice recordings by producing digital multimodal materials through tablet devices.

To be involved with the above activities, the children were informed that there would be weekly sessions within classroom time. It was explained that in each session, the photographs taken by the children would be discussed through comparisons with the photographs of the same cultural theme as represented by their partner children. After that, the children would be encouraged to combine their photographs and create digital multimodal products through tablet devices that would help express and share those discussions. The teacher in the UK

school was invited to integrate the photographs from the other schools for possible curriculum purposes. Moreover, the teacher was reassured that I would work with them in developing appropriate recruitment of the images into curriculum themes. The teacher suggested at this point that the cultural photographs might potentially be exploited for history and geography.

Initially, the proposed cultural themes chosen were 'Easter', 'My School', 'My School Playground', 'My Neighbourhood', 'My Town', 'Food', 'Parks, and 'Transportation'. Although the children shared their positive reactions to those themes, the teachers raised some concerns regarding time management. The class teacher expressed the view that only a few of those topics could be addressed before end of the school year. Moreover, the teachers suggested that having Easter as a cultural topic could be problematic because Easter is mainly about spending time with family and asking the children to take photographs of their family meetings could raise privacy issues. The teacher also suggested that 'My School' and 'My School Playground' could be combined for saving time. After those discussions, it was agreed that the cultural themes would be 'My School', 'My Neighbourhood' and 'My Town'. In negotiating those cultural topic, the plan was to carry out activities involving the children to engage with images of those themes on weekly basis. In order to do this, a certain time period was allocated in every week as a session for the children to experience a cultural topic through photography. In the following section, the research procedure of this project, mainly comprised of weekly sessions, is described.

5.2.3. Research Procedure

In this intervention, those cultural themes were carried out in four sessions in the British school. The sessions are briefly described and the further details of each session will be provided in the Findings.

Session 1

At the end of the initial meeting, the children were invited to take photographs of their 'neighbourhood' as the cultural theme for the first session. Session 1 took around 60 minutes with participation of the entire classroom which comprised 8 girls and 7 boys, 15 children. At the beginning of the session, the children were invited to share the purpose of the photographs then taken individually. Following that, some images contributed were selected for discussions, with participation of all the children. After that, the children were introduced to the neighbourhood photographs that were provided from the school in Turkey. After the discussions, several images were matched for further discussions and cultural inferences.

At the end of session 1, the children were next invited to take photographs of their towns and send them to their teacher.

Session 2

The cultural theme of this session was 'My Town'. Session 2 was carried out with 7 girls and 6 boys, 13 children taking 90 minutes. For this session, the children did not manage to provide any photographs of their town. To overcome that obstacle, the children were allowed to look for photographs on the Internet. Subsequently, the culturally significant images were discussed with the class. Then the children were invited to produce digital multimodal materials through tablet devices. Since 4 tablet devices were ready to use, the children were

divided into 4 groups - 3 groups of three and 1 group of four. In doing this, the children were suggested to use a tablet application called 'Bookcreator'[18] which allowed them to combine images with text in creating short visual books for conveying richer cultural expressions. During the production process, the groups were invited to explain their purposes for choosing photographs and how they then produced digital multimodality. Later, the images of the city in Turkey that were shared by the other school were discussed and several images were matched with the ones that the children found on Internet for further discussions and cultural inferences.

Session 3

The cultural theme of this session was 'My School'. Session 2 was carried out with 8 girls and 7 boys, 15 children taking around 60 minutes. In this session, the children were provided with tablet devices and invited to take photographs of their school environment. In order to do this, the children were evenly divided into 5 groups of three. Prior to capturing images, the school culture was briefly discussed with the children in order to stimulate their thinking about topics for the photographs. After that, each group presented their photographs and some of these were briefly discussed with all the children. Due to time constraints, the rest of the 'My School' cultural theme was carried out in the following session.

Session 4

This session took 60 minutes with participation of 8 girls and 7 boys, 15 children. Continuing 'My School' cultural topic, this session began with inviting the groups that were already arranged to generate digital multimodal products through the Bookcreator app on the tablet devices. During the production process, each group was asked several questions regarding

[18] https://bookcreator.com/

the selection and content of the images, as well as the ways in which images were assembled. Since the school in Turkey did not send the photographs of their school environment, I searched for photographs of common schools in Turkey based on my teaching experience and the cultural discussion of school culture with the children in the previous session. Following that, the photographs of school environment in Turkey were discussed.

Edmodo

In order to allow the children to share their photographs, a secured Web 2.0 technology, Edmodo[19], was judged to be a suitable digital platform for this study. In integrating a Web 2.0 platform, the expectations of the children in both schools were considered. In this way, the children in the UK could have further cultural interactions while the children in the Turkish school could potentially practice their English. In selecting Edmodo, safety was considered as much as technical features. After the platform was verified as protecting any activity or information about digital classrooms from outside scrutiny, the teachers were introduced to Edmodo. While the teacher in the UK suggested that she could register by herself, the teacher in Turkey was unfamiliar with Edmodo, so she was registered and allocated with a digital classroom. Following that, teachers were provided with unique codes for their students to sign in. Also, parents could follow the interaction on the Edmodo through a code shared with them. After registrations, the technical features of Edmodo were explained to the teachers and to the children, in order to enable them to engage with the software.

As an educational Web 2.0 platform, Edmodo allows teachers to set up 'digital classrooms'. With the participation of students in their digital classroom, both the students and the teacher can upload materials in several formats, such as text, images, or videos. Those materials can

[19] https://www.edmodo.com/

be shared with only the teacher and those in the classroom. Moreover, Edmodo allows the classrooms to be connected, whereby the children in both digital classrooms can have access to the other classroom space. For instance, a pupil can upload an image on the other digital classroom space for cultural interactions. In participating with Edmodo, its interface shares similarities with Facebook and it is an uncomplicated platform to manage for students and teachers. Having users from all over the World, Edmodo allows teachers to write digital blogs and participate in communities.

5.2.4. Data Collection

As stated in Chapter 4 Section 4.5, participant observation was the preferred research method in this study. Within this, my own participant role was to orchestrate children towards engaging with photography for the purpose of developing a stronger sense of cultural diversity. In order to do this, I was required to have close interactions with the children and to observe such interactions at the same time. Moreover, the main focus of my observation was on pinning down children's verbal expression as taking place within their engagements with photographs.

Although the verbal reflections of the children regarding images could have been audio recorded, the teacher raised ethical concerns, despite the agreement of the consent forms. Therefore, in capturing the children's verbal comments, I took field notes for each of the image discussions. When images were available prior to the session, I numbered the photographs and took notes of the children's significant comments regarding those images. Since I was also overseeing the sessions, writing the *exact* words of the children's talk was challenging and could have hindered the flow of the sessions and even cause wariness among the children. Instead, I wrote short notes that were feasible to manage and yet still captured

the essence of the commentaries. In this way, I was able to capture the children's interpretations, engagement, and understanding in relation to each image. In only in a few cases did I wrote down the exact words of the children – that is, when they were very short but nevertheless interesting. In the Findings below, these cases are presented in quotation marks. On the other hand, not all images were available for coding prior to the sessions. In those situations, I was writing a brief description of each image that could be identifiable later on. Following that, I applied the same strategy as described.

Apart from the images, I also carried out conversations with the children during their production of digital multimodality. Since the children were working in groups, I numbered each group and image. For instance, when working with group 4 image 3, I placed those numbers at the top of a page and wrote the comments of the children beneath them.

The teacher was also central to the events of this intervention. In particular, the teacher was invited to have informal conversations during breaks, regarding possible recruitment of images towards curriculum purposes. Considering earlier ethical concerns raised by the teacher regarding audio recording, again I took field notes during the discussions with this teacher. However, the teacher, in the end, did not find time to use the images for classroom discussions, so no data indicating the teacher's pedagogical exploitation of the cultural images shared by the school in Turkey was collected.

While the primary source of data was verbal discussion with the children, a second important target for analysis was to be digital interactions between the children in the two school contexts. In particular, the intention was to document how photography mediates cultural discussions through text associated with photographs. Since those interactions were already

available on the digital platform, no further method of data collection was needed to achieve this.

5.2.5. Data Analysis

In analysing the data from this research, different approaches were applied. For analysing the children's engagement with photography in the classroom, the presentation here is in terms of the recurring steps characteristic of each session structure. It was within these that the form and direction of such engagements were identified. The images that the children encountered and their comments were analysed within each of those recurring steps.

In essence, the children are *curating* these images (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013) to reflect their own cultural understanding. The first stage of this invites the children in *selecting/capturing* images illustrating the cultural aspects of their environment. The second stage would be *discussing* those images in identifying their purpose for illustrating those cultural aspects. In this stage, the role of the image and the prompts in stimulating the children will be crucial to investigate. The final stage is discussing the images from Turkey and the UK in *comparative* terms. It is intended that cultural understanding is drawn out further at each stage.

5.3.Findings and Analysis

In this section, the findings of Intervention 1 are presented in narrative form, based upon the field notes taken throughout the sessions. In doing this, the sessions conducted in the UK school will be presented in detail as successive units of representation to express the narrative character of this intervention. In doing this, the common phases, illustrating the children's 'journey' in developing cultural understandings through photography, are identified within the sessions in the light of the data gathered. The images and cultural

discussions around them within the phases of each session are presented. As stated in Section 5.2.4, the sessions could not be audio-recorded, which was perhaps the greatest limitation for this intervention. Therefore, the main data will be the pictures themselves and then my field notes capturing the children's indirect and occasionally direct responses as they were associated with each discussed image. Nonetheless, this intervention is particularly concerned with the ways in which those responses were shaped around the images. Thus, in presenting the findings, the researcher's prompts and the responses of the children within the discussions around images are presented here in a spirit of conversational exchange. That exchange represents the *core* of the conversation; detail (such as pleasantries of encouragement or repeated queries are omitted). However, such conversations are partially presented with direct quotation marks - when exact words were available in notes. In sum, the majority of the discussions will be presented here simply to best capture the underlying semantic and pragmatic structure of exchanges recorded in the field notes.

After a documentation of these children's journey of cultural reflection, this section offers insights regarding the obstacles for the teacher in pedagogically exploiting visual cultural materials for curriculum purposes in such a British school. The section ends with complications concerned with the dissemination of the visual materials through Edmodo between the schools.

As indicated above, the narrative describing children's journey in exploring this sensitivity towards cultural diversity is presented through what I term key 'phases' within each session. For identifying these phases, the various engagements of the children around photography was the primary source. When all such engagements within the sessions were reviewed, the proposed recurring phases became the following:

- Children expressing their cultural understandings through photographs captured
- Children acting with images to create digital multimodal designs
- Reading cultural elements from photographs from the partner school site
- Drawing cultural inferences through comparing the images from both schools

In the next sections, the findings of each session are presented through the framework of those phases with appropriate sub-headings.

5.3.1. Session 1

The cultural theme in the first session was ‘my neighbourhood’. As a significant cultural topic reflecting intimate cultural perspectives, this theme was considered as the important first step for embarking on learning about the culture in Turkey.

Purpose: Cultural expressions through children taken images

Cultural topic: Neighbourhood

Purpose: The role of photography in stimulating the children to express and understand cultural meanings

Pictures: 21 images from the school in the UK, 7 images from the school in Turkey

Participants: 8 girls and 7 boys

Duration: 60 minutes

Images shared by the school in Turkey

Detached House	Doghouse
	
A picture of a detached house.	A picture of a doghouse.
The detached house culture in Turkey was discussed.	The pet culture in Turkey was discussed.

Table 5.3-1. Pictures of a detached house and a doghouse in Turkey

Apartment Complexes		
		
A picture some apartment complexes.	A picture of an apartment complex.	Several pictures of an apartment complex.
The apartment culture was discussed.	The details of the apartment complex were discussed.	The various parts of the apartment complex were discussed.

Table 5.3-2. Pictures of apartment complexes in Turkey

An Apartment Complex	A Single Apartment
	
A picture of some apartments.	A picture of an apartment.

Table 5.3-3. Pictures of some apartments in Turkey

Images shared by the school in the UK

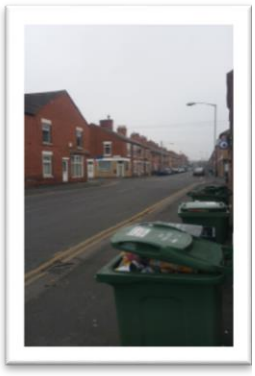
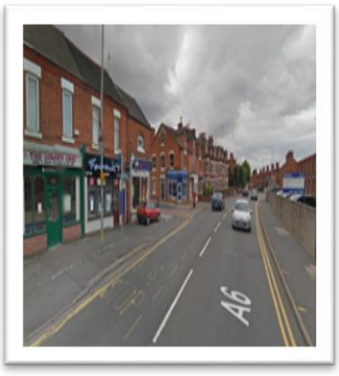
Rubbish Bins		Local Shops	Detached House
			
A picture of various kind of rubbish bins. Different kinds of rubbish bins and collection were discussed.	A picture of some rubbish bins.	A picture of some local shops. The local shops and street signs were discussed.	A picture of an ordinary detached house. The detached house culture is discussed.

Table 5.3-4. Pictures of rubbish bins, local shops and a detached house in the UK

Apartments



A picture of an apartment.

The apartment culture in the UK was discussed.



A picture of an apartment from another angle.

Table 5.3-5. Pictures of an apartment in the UK

Front Gardens



A picture of a semi-detached house with a front garden.

The front garden was discussed.



A picture of some houses with a front garden.

Table 5.3-6. Pictures of houses with front gardens in the UK

Houses with Parking Space

		
A picture of houses with parking space for cars. The parking space for cars was discussed.	A picture of several attached houses with a parking space in front.	A picture of a house with a driveway.

Table 5.3-7. Pictures of some houses with parking space in the UK

Streets

		
A picture of a regular street. The common street culture in the UK was discussed.	A picture of a street. The street style and houses were discussed.	A picture of a street with attached house. The similarities in housing structure in the street were discussed.

Table 5.3-8. Pictures of some streets in the UK

Houses

			
A picture of a house.	A picture of house doors.	A picture of a house. The common characteristics of a house were discussed.	A house with a driveway.

Table 5.3-9. Pictures of various kinds of houses in the UK

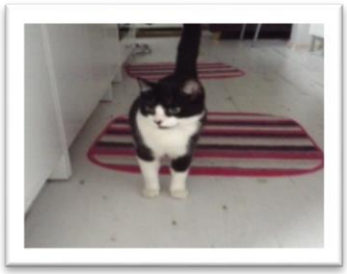
Pets	**Parks**	**Pavements**
		
A picture of a pet. The pet culture in the UK was discussed.	A picture of a park in neighbourhood.	A picture of a pavement.

Table 5.3-10. Pictures of a pet, a park and an ordinary pavement in the UK

5.3.1.1. Neighbourhood: Children expressing their cultural understandings through photography

In order to develop an understanding of each child's intentions in taking their photographs, two methods were applied in discussing these images that reflected UK neighbourhood culture. First, the children - those who furnished the images - were provided with an opportunity to select a photograph and briefly share the purpose and cultural content of the image in one to one with the researcher. Following that, the images I judged to be reflecting richer cultural aspects of neighbourhoods in the UK were designated for discussions with participation of all the children in the classroom.

Individual explanation of images

The content and the main focus of the images were queried with each individual child. In doing this, each child was invited to answer the researcher's queries about their contribution. The first question was always concerned with the content of the image, while the second focused on the purpose of taking the image. Depending on the image and the child's responses, further questions were occasionally asked. A representative selection of the images is presented here with the responses of children. In reporting the individual discussions around the images, researcher is referred as 'R' while each child and the teacher were stated as 'C'. Question wording is not conversationally exact, but reflects intent.



Figure 5.3-1. A picture of a detached house in the UK

R: Could you explain the content of the picture?
C: “This is my house”.
R: What are some of the details in this image?
C: It is a detached house.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey would understand from looking at this house?
C: They can see the detached houses in my town.
R: Do you think it is big, small? Does it have anything special?
C: hmmm….No. It’s a detached house like all houses on my street. It’s an OK house.

The responses of the child indicate that the child has certainly provided a legitimate photograph of his neighbourhood environment. However, the child was not sensitive to what we might term “the cultural aspect” of the house and its appearance in the image. Further prompting in this exchange did not achieve more, as the answers given were simple labels for the features depicted. Despite my direct interest in the boundary conditions, I was also hoping for discussions directed towards aspects such as number and size of windows, an alarm box, chimneys, surrounding hedges etc; since these features normally characterize local ways of living. Not actively soliciting such directions of attention might be perceived as a lost opportunity, but I rather look at it as a task for further research: in the sense of being more concerned here with what children spontaneously do and don’t do - and to be thus further

aware of the work that the teacher/researcher/parents has to do if photographs are to be considered as sites for the (social) exploration of cultural meaning.



Figure 5.3-2. A picture of a street with driveways in the UK

R: Can you explain the content of the picture?
C: This is the street where I live.
R: What was your purpose in taking this image?
C: I wanted to take a “big photo of my street”.
R: Is there any particular details that you wanted to highlight?
C: It is a street with houses and cars.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this image?
C: They can see a street, houses and cars in our town.
R: Do you think this is representative for a street in UK?
C: Yeah, I think so. Most houses and streets look the same in my town.

The discussion with the child shows an aim to capture an illustration of a personal context: one that was faithful to the task. Although, through prompts, the child could point out some of the visual aspects in the image, there was very little awareness of the most culturally significant details: such as private driveways for cars in front of the houses, few or no fences at all between neighbours, or the scarcity of people out in the street. It felt like, in the mind of the child, the world was reduced to the child’s town/street.



Figure 5.3-3. A picture of a terraced houses in the UK.

R: Why did you take this photograph?
C: My house is in that street.
R: So, what are some of the details in this image that you think could interest the children in Turkey?
C: There are terraced houses all attached to each other and a lorry.
R: What else?
C: There are some street signs.
R: Can you tell me more about the street signs in the image.
C: There is one for bikes and the yellow signs is for no parking.

This image points out several characteristics of a UK street (road signs and markings, type of houses and facilities etc). Although the initial understanding of the photo was restricted to "My house is in that street", some further prompting led the child to reflect on some of the more specific details in the image. This illustrates how the communicative possibilities of these images need to be drawn out by discussions if they are to be effective in identifying relevant cultural features.



Figure 5.3-4. A picture of a pet in the UK

R: Is that your cat?
C: “Yes, it is my cat”.
R: Why did you take a picture of your cat?
C: We have pets in our houses, do they have cats and dogs in Turkey too?
R: Yes, people have cats and dogs in Turkey.

In providing a picture of her cat, the child was carried away from the main cultural topic to a more personal feature of her world. Perhaps she wanted to stress the fact that pets play an important role in people’s lives in the UK, and in doing that, she demonstrated her sensitivity to the ambitions of the task – by expressing her curiosity regarding pet culture in Turkey. To be more specific, Figure 5.3-4 embodies a space within which the child could share her personal life and interest regarding a particular cultural concept that might exist elsewhere. Yet if this is indeed an intent – it was not easily solicited in conversation.



Figure 5.3-5. A picture of some local shops in the UK

R: This is a different street. Could you tell me about the content of the picture?
C: There are some local shops.
R: So, you wanted to show the local shops in your neighbourhood.
C: Yes, these are the shops on my street.
R: What other details are there in the image?
C: You can see houses, cars, a bus stop. A normal street
R: It seems like an image taken from the Internet.
C: Yes, I don't have a camera, so I took the image from Google Maps.

Several prompts were needed during this conversation, but in the end, the discussion demonstrates an awareness of some relevant culturally distinctive aspects. The rather-easy-to-spot details (local shops, houses, bus stop) are a simple indication of the child's capability for highlighting from an image relevant cultural details, but my expectations entailed more specific cultural items - like the mail box, or the rooms above the shops and the road markings. Unfortunately, the child provided no easy reflection around the way such things might enter into everyday life and structure experience.

These images and the re-constructed discussions around them show a tendency of the children in taking images of their neighbourhoods without having a clear intention for highlighting particular cultural concepts in the images. On the other hand, some of the

children did identify and label several potentially culturally significant aspects of these neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, it was always the prompts within the discussions around images that stimulated the children to express some awareness. This awareness was at reduced levels though and generally was connected with obvious concepts depicted in their images.

On the positive side, prompting occasionally unravelled some of the children's genuine interest about the culture of everyday life in Turkey. Also, throughout the discussions, the children were cooperative in expressing more meaningful cultural aspects of their neighbourhood.

On the less positive side though, despite being engaged with the general idea, the children showed lack of orientation in perceiving the 'cultural' implications of their neighbourhood environment – the visual signs of 'how we live here'. This reticence was related partially to their unfamiliarity with this kind of activity - in terms of reflecting on the images individually, partially to a nervousness related to what was expected of them, and partially to the time restrictions. In order to provoke the children to become more aware of the cultural content of the images, they were therefore invited in group conversation to analyse them in respect of further cultural detail.

Classroom discussions around images from the UK

The individual reactions of the children did not yield depth of analysis; therefore, in this step, the study moved from a personal level to a group stage. Classroom discussions were carried out around the images; the children were asked about the content of the images and how they represent 'the way we live here'. I regarded the class discussions as the arena in which modelling the kind of "reading" of a photograph would open up new lines of curiosity. To this

purpose, the conversation was repeatedly worked around the issue of how significant were the details in the images and how children in Turkey could potentially make sense of such cultural elements.



Figure 5.3-6. Pictures of some local shops in the UK

R: We already briefly discussed this picture, but there are more details that could show neighbourhood life in the UK to children in Turkey. So, can you identify some such details in this picture.
C: There are local shops.
R: So, why are local shops useful to show the children in Turkey.
C: You sometimes go to local shops because shops like Tesco or Sainsbury's are far away.
R: So, it shows that local shops are important for neighbourhood life in the UK? What else you can see in the image?
C: There is a bus stop sign.
R: Why this sign?
C: No car can park there.
R: Any other sign?
C: There is double yellow sign.
R: What about it?
C: Cars cannot park there.
R: How can the children in Turkey understand that cars cannot park on the street from the image?
C: The red car is parked on the pavement because it cannot park on the street.

The discussions conducted around this image still suggest that, with prompts, the children can find and reflect on further culturally significant details. They locate local shops, bus signs and parking conventions and can recognise the meaning of those details for everyday life. Moreover, they located the children in Turkey by how they reflected on some of the features in an image.



Figure 5.3-7. A picture of some rubbish bins in the UK

R: What does this picture tell us?
C: There are rubbish bins.
R: Why are the bins are outside.
C: It can be for collection.
R: But we do not see them in front of all the houses.
C: Some people keep the bins in front of the house.
R: Why is that?
C: They may not have a place to put them.
R: So, what do you think the children in Turkey can understand about such rubbish bins in the UK.
C: They can see what the bins look like here.
R: Is this the only kind of bins in your houses.
C: We have green and brown ones.

R: Why different colours.
C: Green one is for general waste and the brown one is for recycling. There is also another brown one for garden waste.
R: But we can see different colours of bins.
C: So we need to show all kinds of bins.

The discussions around this image led to some elaboration - on the topic of local waste in UK neighbourhoods. The prompts drew the children into providing a little more detail on different bins around their houses. Moreover, the children started to use this discussion to think about how to extend the potential of an image - understanding that a different image showing different colours of bins would be better for the children in Turkey as a starting point for understanding this aspect of daily life.



Figure 5.3-8. A picture of a street in the UK

R: What do we see in this picture.
C: Cars are parked.
R: Why are they parked on the street.
C: They can because there is no double yellow line.
R: Nice detail. What else?
C: There are some attached houses.
R: What about the similarities between the houses?
C: They all look alike except the one on the right side.
R: So, what would the children in Turkey see in this image.
C: They can see how cars are parked and they can see the attached houses.

Such discussion at least illustrates the possibility of highlighting a feature such as parking as a familiar detail of local life that can seed reflection. Curating different images led them to reflect – albeit superficially – on potentially distinct cultural aspects of their environment. The children were also aware of the break from pattern of one house in the image. But not to develop this visual feature into a point for reflecting. The children judged the image as a fair illustration of streets in the UK. However, they could not use it to explore such matters as the presence of absence of gardens or the habits of parking in relation to homes, or even the difference in types of houses.



Figure 5.3-9. A picture of a street with driveways in the UK

R: What do you see in this picture and what are the differences from the previous one.
C: The houses look different.
R: What else?
C: The cars are parked in front of houses not on the street.
R: Why is that?
C: Because they have parking space in front of the houses.
R: Well, should we conclude then that not all cars are parked on the street in the UK.



Figure 5.3-10. A picture of an apartment in the UK

R: What do you see in this picture?
C: This is an apartment.
R: Yes, what does it tell us about neighbourhood in your town.
C: It shows that not all people live in houses just with their families. Some live in apartments, many families in one block.
R: So, what can the children in Turkey understand from this image.
C: They can see how apartments look like in our town.

The children managed to identify a different aspect of neighbourhood design in the UK to that in other illustrations. Moreover, they recognised the idea of possible cultural inferences that children in Turkey could draw from this image. But this only as a principle of inference and no great cultural meaning or implication was given.

Discussions around the images indicate that the majority of them did not spontaneously extract specific cultural details in the captured images. Children were often uncertain in terms of expressing the culturally distinctive aspects of their neighbourhood. It was prompts within

discussion that stimulated a little more reflection on the meaning of details in the images for how people lived and thought. Although the children were able to keep in view their partners in Turkey when addressing possible cultural differences, curating images illustrating various aspects of their environment did not seem enough to raise awareness about cultural features relevant to the planned exchange.

Following the discussion around the images taken by the children in the UK, the session moved on to analysing the images taken by the children in Turkey, with the expectation that the tension created by imposed contrasts would be more enabling of insight.

5.3.1.2. Neighbourhood: Reading cultural photographs of the other school site

After the discussions over the images captured in the UK, the photographs of 'neighbourhood' that were shared by the school in Turkey were introduced to the children. The following images were discussed with the children.

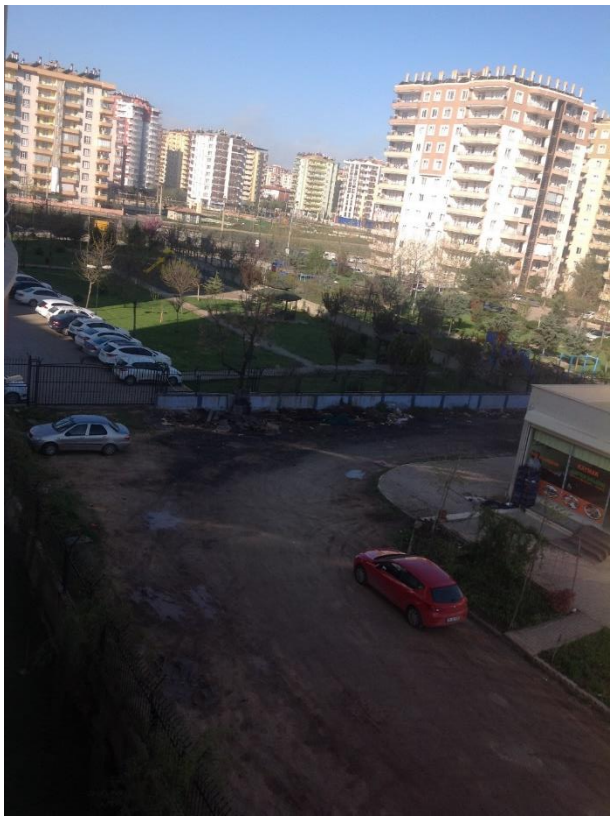


Figure 5.3-11. A picture of several apartment complexes in Turkey

R: What do you see in this picture? (Figure 5.3-11)
C: Wow! They are very big!
C: The apartments are colourful.
C: How many people live in each apartment?
R: I do not know, but many.
R: What are other details in the image?
C: Is that a park in the middle?
R: What makes you think that?
C: Well, it looks like a park.
R: Let's focus on the details of the green part. What do you see?
C: There is a small wall around.
R: What else?
C: There are cars parked.
R: Nice detail, what does that tell us?
C: I do not know, but it looks like a parking space for cars.
R: Do you see the gate?
C: Yes, there is a gate on the left.
R: Does it look like a park considering the cars and the gate.
C: Maybe.
R: Well, it may not be too clear in the image, but the green part belongs to the apartments. Why do you think they have a big garden like that for the apartments?
C: For people.
R: Yes, because too many people live in each apartment, they need a garden to play and relax in.

C: Why is the street dirty?
R: I think it is still under construction, which may be the reason.

The discussions indicate that the children reacted to relevant details in the image. The children raised several pertinent questions leading to further understanding of the cultural context depicted by the image. Prompting them to assign different meaning to the green part, for example, helped them identify further visual features consequently used in re-interpreting its cultural meaning.

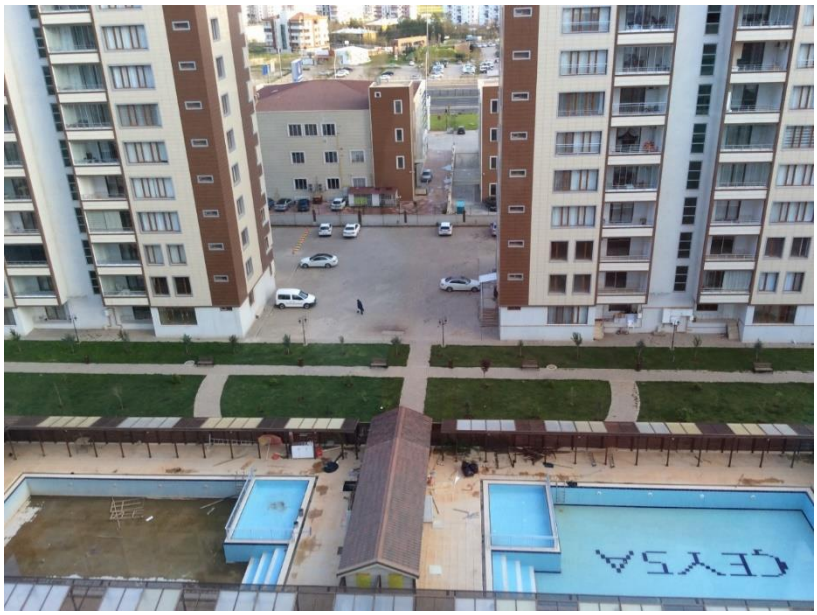


Figure 5.3-12. A picture of an apartment complex

R: What do you see in this picture? (Figure 5.3-12)
C: There are two swimming pools.
C: It is great to have swimming pools.
R: What else do you see?
C: They have balconies.
R: Yes, they had in the previous image too.
C: Why the apartment in the middle is smaller?
R: Does it look like other apartments?
C: It does not have any balcony.
R: It may not be an apartment. It looks like an office building to me.
C: Does everybody live in apartments in Turkey?
R: Yes, the majority of people in cities in Turkey live in apartments.

The children identified significant details in the image. Some of which allowed reflection on several cultural aspects and raised simpler questions regarding broader neighbourhood culture in Turkey.



Figure 5.3-13. A picture of an old apartment complex in Turkey

R: The student who sent this image combined some photographs illustrating different parts of the neighbourhood. What do you see in this picture? (Figure 5.3-13)
C: It is an apartment with gardens like in other ones, but the apartment looks older.
R: Yes, this is an old building. What else you can see?
C: They have nice seats and colourful paths in the garden.
R: Any other detail?
C: The cars are parked on the street.
R: Because it is an old apartment complex, they may not have parking space.

Multiple images may stimulate fresh perspectives in reading the cultural detail in images, and spotting differences was more straightforward.



Figure 5.3-14. A picture of a road with some apartments in Turkey

R: There are some interesting details in this picture. Could you tell us some of them? (Figure 5.3-14)
C: There is a road. It looks like a big road.
R: How do you know its big?
C: Because it is divided into two.
R: What else?
C: There are some apartments.
R: What is the difference between these apartments and the ones in previous images.
C: They are too close to each other.
R: What else about apartments?
C: We cannot see any gardens, do those apartments have gardens?
R: Not all apartments in the city have gardens. Any other detail?
C: There are some cars and shops.
R: Anything else that catches your eyes?
C: Errhm…there are no people in the street.

The children could easily read the main details of the images and they could spot some differences in relation to previously discussed photos. Nevertheless, their investigation did not have important differences in view, such as road safety related issues (uneven pavements, canal lids higher than the rest of the street, no inclined pavement area for disabled people, high sidewalks).



Figure 5.3-15. A picture of a doghouse in Turkey

R: One of you asked about pets in Turkey. What do you think about this picture? (Figure 5.3-15)
C: I asked. It is a dog. Is that a doghouse?
R: I think it is, yes.
C: Do they always keep dogs in doghouses outside?
R: Not every apartment has a garden, so they keep dogs inside their homes as well.
C: Farms keep dogs outside here.

Figure 5.3-15 depicted a pet cat in a UK home. Similarly, a child in Turkey shared a picture of her/his dog. Discussing the image from Turkey allowed the child to gain some insight of pet culture in Turkey, yet the children's interest did not go too deep so as to offer us more meaningful data of analysing their cultural awareness.



Figure 5.3-16. A picture of a detached house in Turkey

R: Unlike previous picture, we have a house in this one. What do you see in the picture? (Figure 5.3-16)
C: It looks like a detached house.
R: How do you know that?
C: That thing in the middle makes it like two houses next to each other.
R: Maybe, although we cannot be sure. What else do you see?
C: They have hedges like our houses.
R: Yes, what else?
C: There is car parked on the street.
R: How do we know it is a street?
C: It looks like a street.
R: How about the house?
C: It does not look like ours. We have bricks, but they do not.

The classroom conversation made the children read several interesting visual details in the image. Comparing the photograph elements to their reality back home, the children were able to make analogies and to issue assumptions (semi-detached property) proving an increasing level of engagement with the subject. Discussions around the images reflecting neighbourhood culture in Turkey indicated that the children can identify some of the relevant elements within the images. Throughout the discussions, although it was mainly around the shape and size of apartments, children were observed to be appealing repeatedly to the neighbourhood culture in Turkey in order to cement their cultural awareness. Prompts could

sometimes lead children into analysing the images from different perspectives and occasionally interpret a cultural feature based on their background knowledge of their own cultural context, as well as other images.

After looking into neighbourhood culture in the UK and establishing some initial understanding of neighbourhood culture in Turkey, images were matched together with the purpose of prompting further cultural comparisons of neighbourhoods between the two countries.

5.3.1.3. Neighbourhood: Drawing cultural inferences through comparing the images

In comparing similar images from both cultural contexts, the intention was to go beyond the content of the individual images and beyond discussion that they might ground in isolation. In order to do that, children were invited to pick images that reflected similar content, as an initial step for thinking about broader cultural inferences. One item the children suggested for comparison was the traditions of detached houses in both countries. So images containing such detached houses were matched. Moreover, it was agreed that the streets with houses lined up should also be matched. In deciding on a third comparison, the children suggested that the images containing shops look good for contrast.



Figure 5.3-17. A comparison of the detached houses in the two countries

R: What are the similarities and differences between the two pictures? (Figure 5.3-17)
C: Both of them look like detached houses.
R: How about the details?
C: Both of them have hedges.
R: Anything else?
C: The house in the UK has more windows and the other one looks like it's very private.
R: What do you mean by private?
C: They have less windows like they do not want people to see inside.
R: What else?
C: The house on the right looks newer.
R: Yes. So, how often can we see houses like the one on the left in your neighbourhoods and like the house on the right in Turkey? Think about the images from Turkey that we discussed.
C: We have mostly houses like detached or attached.
R: What do you think about Turkey?
C: It seems like they have more apartments than houses.
R: So, we say that neighbourhoods in the UK have more separated houses while the ones in Turkey have more apartments?

As seen from the discussion, with the help of prompts, children could identify useful structural similarities and difference between the two houses in Figure 6.3-17. Moreover, the children interpreted some of these details and expressed beliefs regarding the "openness" of the houses, identifying in this way a feature that could call for cultural divergence. On the same note, with the aid of previous images, the prompts have facilitated children's acquisition of knowledge in terms of understanding the significance of each house in the broader context (neighbourhood and country).



Figure 5.3-18. A comparison of the common accommodation style in the two countries

R: What can you tell about the two pictures? (Figure 5.3-18)
C: "We have more organised streets. Why they don't have streets like us".
R: Well, there are streets on the right too, but not as ordered as the left one. How about the houses and apartments themselves?
C: We have similar houses in streets, but they have different houses.
R: In Turkey, people build apartments and houses as they wish. How about in the UK?
T: Councils build houses here, so they are very similar in each street.
R: That explains the difference between the two cultures? What else?
C: The street on the right is dirty whereas we have clean and tidy streets.
R: The street is probably under construction, but yes it should have been concrete. What else?
C: There are front gardens for car parking in the left side image, but they have bigger gardens.
R: Well each apartment complex is like a street on its own, so big gardens are reasonable.

Discussion suggested that, having direct comparison between neighbourhood cultures through images did allow broader cultural inferences. More specifically, the children identified several useful visual features in one image and issued an interpretation describing cultural differences, which opened a door for the researcher to provide the children with more information meant to explain the cultural differences between the two countries in discussion. But, although the children benefited from matching images depicting two cultural contexts, they still very often needed prompts and further clarifications in order to look at things from a different angle and to understand the motives underlying such cultural similarities and differences.



Figure 5.3-19. A comparison of the local shops in the two countries.

R: We have two interesting pictures. What can you say about this comparison? (Figure 5.3-19)
C: We have street signs like bus stops and double yellow lines, but they do not have these.
R: How common are the street signs in the UK?
C: We have a lot of street signs like bus stops, bikes, zebra crosses.
R: Well, there are traffic signs, but there are street signs in Turkey perhaps as many as the UK. What else?
C: The cars are going different ways.
R: Yes, cars run on the right side of the road in Turkey. What about the houses and apartments?
C: They look like they are next to each other like our houses.
R: Although we discussed earlier, not all apartments have gardens and the majority of them in Turkey are like the ones in this image. What about the shops?
C: They do not seem different.
R: It is not clear in the picture, but the local shops in Turkey are bigger than the ones in the UK. Why do you think, it is like that?
C: It is because of big apartments.
R: Yes, too many people live in apartments and they need bigger local shops.

The children identified similarities and differences in the two images and drew out some broader cultural inferences. Matching images allowed them to pin down the differences in reflecting on them. In doing this, prompts played a role in stimulating the children to go beyond the straightforward differences.

5.3.1.4. Outcome of session 1

The children in the UK provided more photographs than the Turkish children that reflected varying aspects neighbourhood culture; the more limited number of pictures demonstrated only a small part of the neighbourhood culture in the city in Turkey. Despite that, individual

discussions at the beginning of the session indicated that the children were not greatly alert to the significant cultural details in their images. Moreover, the children were tentative in sharing their cultural understandings through highlighting significant cultural elements embodied in these images. In bringing such cultural aspects into view, the prompts allowed children to look at their images from a slightly different perspective and thereby identify cultural characteristics. Through classroom-level discussions, the children expressed more cultural awareness, but still not sufficiently significant for meaningful cultural discussions. Finally, they were modestly aware of the possible cultural inferences that the children in Turkey could draw from the discussed images.

In interpreting the images from Turkey, the children looked more engaged by identifying visual features arising from the distinctive housing pattern in Turkey. Moreover, they occasionally worked at interpreting those details through prompts. In facing the struggle of drawing out cultural inferences, the children raised their own questions regarding the cultural meaning of visual features in the images. Through comparison between relevant images, the children drew out some further cultural details with prompting. At the end of the session, the curation of images reflecting characteristics of neighbourhood culture in the UK and Turkey had allowed the children to be become slightly more aware of different neighbourhood living. Such experiences were modest in scale, but they can be considered as a sensible step towards developing a sense of cultural diversity, in this case around the topic of neighbourhoods.

5.3.2. Session 2

In this session, the children were invited to illustrate the significant cultural aspects of 'their town'. Although it was expected that they would take photographs of the town and bring them to the classroom, the children did not manage to provide any images. The teacher

expressed the view that the children could not take any photographs because it required them to travel within the town and that was difficult for the children to manage. So, in order to obtain photographs of the town, the children were randomly divided into groups and each group was provided with a tablet device in order for them to curate images on the Internet. The children were told that images reflecting interesting characteristics of 'our town' would be useful for this session. Following that, some of the images were discussed with the children for the purpose of identifying their cultural awareness of the town and the role of images in revealing such reflections on life there.

As indicated in the previous session, the children were struggling in going beyond a 'labelling' of their images and thus limiting meaningful cultural discussions. Although, the prompts within the classroom discussions around the images led the children to gain slightly different perspectives on their images, it could not meet the expectations for rich cross-cultural discussions. In order to enable the children to construct more meaningful cultural expressions, the children were invited to incorporate them into a digital multimodality, in addition to the cultural discussions around the images. Through the creative demands of image manipulations within digital multimodality, it was hoped that the children could reveal richer cultural implications that could be exploited for elevating cultural discussions.

The children were invited to use the 'Bookcreator'[20] app for generating digital multimodal artefacts on tablet devices. During the production, I visited all the groups and asked several questions in conversations regarding the cultural meaning and purpose of the images as well as the design features of their multimodal artefacts. Also, I repeatedly invited the children to consider how the children in Turkey could understand what living in the town was like from

[20] https://bookcreator.com/

their digital designs. After that, some of the images reflecting cultural characteristics of the city in Turkey were discussed.

Purpose: The role of creative challenges in constructing digital multimodality on children's awareness of the cultural content in their images

Pictures: 18 images from the school in the UK, 6 images from the school in Turkey

Cultural topic: Town

Participants: 7 girls and 6 boys

Groups: 4 groups of three and 1 group of 4

Duration: 90 minutes

Images shared by the school in Turkey

Historical Places

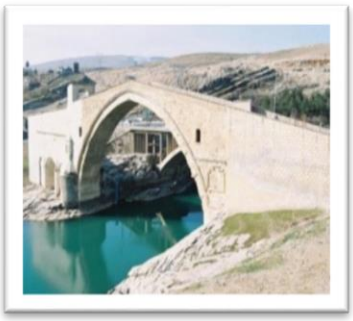
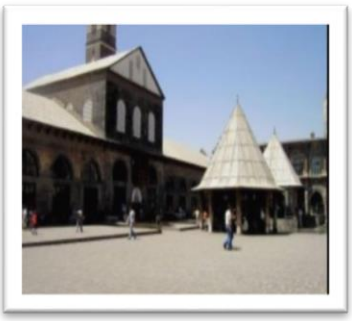
		
A picture of a historical bridge.	A picture of a historical mosque.	A picture of a historical church.
The history of the bridge was discussed.	The significance of the mosque was discussed.	The significance of the church was discussed.

Table 5.3-11.Pictures of historical places in the city

City Walls		Famous Fruit
		
A picture of the historical city walls.	A picture of the old city within the walls. The history of the walls was discussed	A picture of a watermelon bigger than a child. The climate for leading the size of the watermelon was discussed.

Table 5.3-12. Pictures of the walls and the famous fruit in the city

Images shared by the school in the UK

Monuments

			
A picture of a monument in the town centre.	A picture of a historical bell in the town centre. The significance of the bell for the town was discussed.	A picture of a museum in the town centre. The significance of the museum for the town was discussed.	A picture of a sculpture in the town centre. The significance of the sculpture for the town was discussed.

Table 5.3-13. Pictures of some monuments in the town

Railway

		
A picture of the train station in the town.	A picture an old train. The use of old trains in the town was discussed.	A picture of a platform and a train. The significance of railways was discussed.

Table 5.3-14. Pictures of railway service in the town

Parks

			
A picture from a park located in the town centre.	A picture of a playground in a park. The significance of the playground and the park were discussed.	An image of a theme park located in a nearby town.	A picture of the theme park located in the nearby town.

Table 5.3-15. Pictures of some parks in the town

Historical Town Structures

			
A picture of the canal in the town.	A picture of the university in the town.	A picture of a historical factory in the town.	A church in the town.

Table 5.3-16. Pictures of historical structures in the town

Some Personal Pictures

		
A picture of cricket match.	A picture of some cadets.	A picture of a popular shop in a nearby town.

Table 5.3-17. Pictures of a cricket match, some cadets and a popular shop

5.3.2.1. Town-Children expressing their cultural understandings through photography

Classroom discussions around images from the UK

Following the search for images on Internet, some of the images were discussed with the children. Each group was invited to share one image reflecting a significant cultural aspect of their town for classroom discussions. As indicated, classroom discussions provided richer cultural perspectives than individual discussions. Through these discussions, it was intended that the children could explore further details of the content on the images and how they represent the culture of the town, such that the children in Turkey could have some understanding of the culture of their town.



Figure 5.3-20. A picture of an historical bell in the UK

R: What is this image about?
C: This is a big bell in our town.
R: What does it tell about your town.
C: The town was famous for making bells and this bell was built for a cathedral in London. Now, it is back in our town.
R: So, it shows an historical aspect of the town. How about the other details in the image?
C: There are flowers and tress because it is located in a park in the town centre.
R: Why is it in the park and what is the park important.

C: There are many things in the park. It is a very nice park.
R: What do you think the children can understand from this image?
C: They can see the park and the bell.
R: All I can see is an old big bell.
C: It is a bell, but it is put there for people to see. (I was expecting the children to associate the bell and the 'publicity' of the park).
R: Do you think the children in Turkey can only understand by the picture?
C: Yes.

The children showed more interest in discussing the park than the bell in the image (Figure 20). Moreover, during the search for the image, it was observed that the group looked for additional information regarding the significance of the cultural concept in the image for the town. Although the children associated the bell with the history of the town, they could not share rich insights regarding the location of the bell and the significance of that location for accommodating the bell. In this respect, the prompts aiming the children to become aware of the association between the bell and the 'publicity' of the park did not lead to fuller clarification. Also, they thought the image itself would be enough for the children in Turkey to perceive that meaning from the image.



Figure 5.3-21. A picture of a playground in the UK

R: Why did you pick this picture?

C: It is a well-known playground in the town centre.
R: Do you feel safe when you play there.
C: We feel safe because we have grownups with us.
R: What would be significant about this playground for the children in Turkey.
C: Because the playground in the same park the bell in the previous image.
R: You said earlier that it is a very nice park. Tell me more about the park?
C: It is a very nice park with flowers, a museum and ducks. Everybody in the town visits the park.
R: Yes, but can we see all those in this image?
C: Maybe, a bigger picture can show that.

Discussing the playground and the park aroused more enthusiasm among the children. I prompted the children to reflect on the safety elements (fences and soft flooring) that are evident in the image (Figure 5.3-21), but they directed the question towards the adults in charge of them rather than pointing out the apparent fences or the soft floor in the image. On the other hand, the children were more receptive to the cultural implication of the park and they were aware that the image does not show that meaning.



Figure 5.3-22. A picture of a memorial in the UK

R: Why did you select this picture?
C: The tower in the picture is a memorial for World War I and it is important for the town.
R: What else you can tell about the tower?
C: There is a museum in the tower and people go to the museum when they visit our town.
R: Do you know much about WWI and have you visited the museum.

C: Everybody has been at least once, we had to climb to many stairs.
R: Any other details in the image?
C: There are benches, a pavilion and trees. It is in the same park in the town centre.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this picture?
C: They can see that the tower is important for the town.

The children seemed to have straightforward general opinions about the tower. Despite the prompts, the children could not provide satisfying insights regarding the possible meaning of the image (Figure 5.3-22) for them and the town. The discussions indicated that the children focused on more visual features rather than the cultural connotation reflected in the image.

Following the discussion of some of the images that the children found to illustrate the characteristics of their town, the session moved on to the production of shared material through modest digital multimodality.

5.3.2.2. Children producing digital multimodal designs

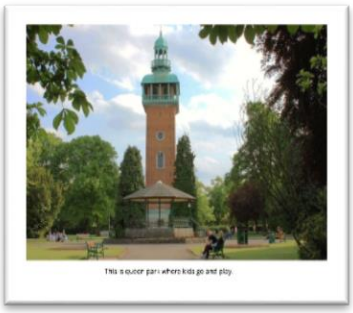
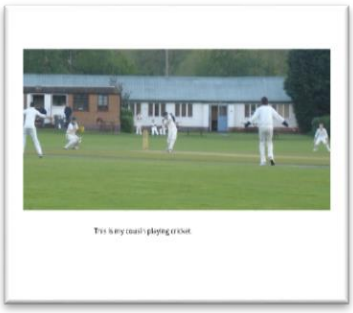
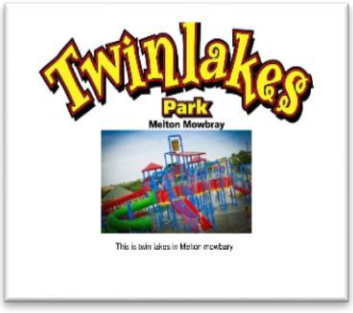
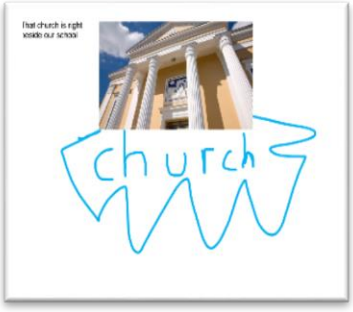
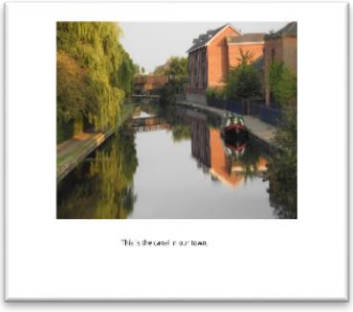
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Table 5.3-18. Digital multimodal products of the town generated by the children

The children were invited to produce digital multimodal artefacts with the images that they wished to reflect their cultural understandings of their town. The production of digital multimodality was carried out in the same groups. The children were advised that they should select the images which were personally and culturally meaningful to them. While children were generating such digital multimodality, I was visiting each group and asking several questions for the purpose of understanding their intentions in producing multimodal materials. Moreover, I took field notes based on each discussed image. Some of the images and the children's understandings are presented in the light of the field notes.



This is my cousin playing cricket.

Figure 5.3-23. A picture of cricket match in the UK

R: Can you explain this image?
C: "It is a picture of my cousin playing cricket".
R: I thought you found that image on Internet. How do you know it is your cousin?
C: My cousin showed me on Internet.
R: Can you tell more about the meaning of the image?
C: My cousin and his friends play cricket.
R: So, why do you want to share this image with the children in Turkey?
C: I wanted to show that we play cricket in our town.

The fact that it was his cousin playing cricket in the photograph made the child discuss it with more enthusiasm. However, the prompt inviting the child to relate the sport to the culture of

the town did not achieve its objective as the child did not build on it. Moreover, the child did not take advantage of the affordances of digital multimodality in terms of generating more creative and meaningful design.

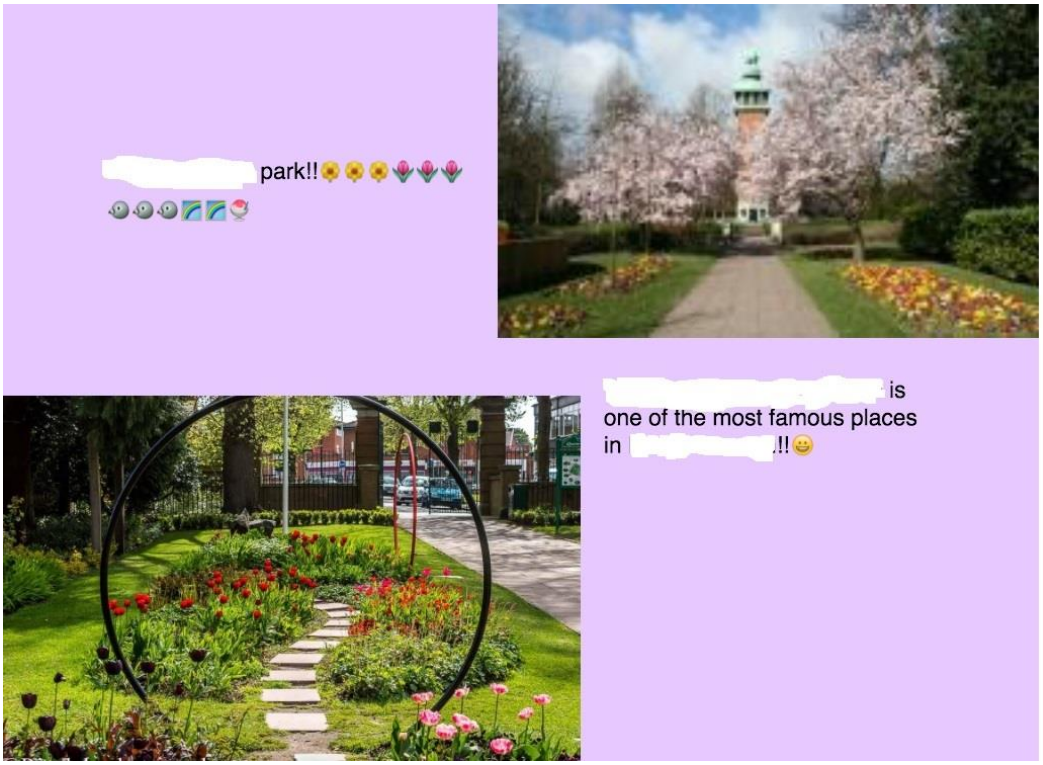


Figure 5.3-24. Pictures of a park in the UK

R: Can you explain why do you have those two images together?
C: We wanted to show that the tower is in the park.
R: Yes, but how the children in Turkey can know that.
C: Yes, because it says there is a park and a tower.
R: Maybe, you should have written that the tower is in the park underneath the image on the right side. What more you can tell me about the picture on the top right hand side.
C: It is the tower.
R: What else?
C: There are flowers and trees.
R: What do you think about the trees.
C: There are many trees.
R: How about the emoji? Why did you use them?
C: We put flowers and duck because you can find them in the park.

The children's eagerness towards the park led them to combine two images (Figure 5.3-24) reflecting various parts of the park in order to point out that the tower is located in the park.

I prompted the children to identify the visual details in the images for the purpose of pointing out that the park, and thus the country, is green not only in spring, but in most of the seasons. Despite identifying some visual details in the image, the children could not recognise the spring season in the top left hand side image. Moreover, the efforts of the children in constructing rich meaning through multimodality were adequate and did not completely meet the expectations.



Figure 5.3-25. Pictures of some trains in the UK

R: Can you explain the content?
C: There is an old train and new train.
R: Why did you put them together?
C: We have both trains in our town.
R: How about the text?
C: We wanted to explain that we have old trains.
R: Why did you need to show the trains in your town?
C: We wanted to indicate that we have great central railways with both old trains and new trains.
R: How do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this image?
C: They can see the images of the trains, and the text and understand that we have great railways in our town.

The children were observed to be interested in expressing the railway culture in their town. The combination of these then/now images (Figure 5.3-25) - and the text - allowed the children to raise a topic relating to the significance of the railway for the town. My aim was to go beyond the railway in the town by leading the conversation towards the old railway culture in the country as a significant cultural aspect, but the creative process did not seem to trigger further depth of reflection from this theme.



This is the canal in our town.

Figure 5.3-26. A picture of a canal in the UK

R: Can you explain this image?
C: It is the canal in our town.
R: Why did you put an image of the canal?
C: We wanted to show that we have an old canal.
R: Any other detail in the image?
C: There are houses and a boat.
R: What we understand from the boat.
C: People have boats in the canal.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this image?
C: They can see we have a canal with houses and boats in our town.

Similarly, the digital multimodality generated by the children (Figure 5.3-26) seemed not effective in terms of discussing the significance of the canal for the present or history of the

town albeit the observed conviction from the children towards expressing the canal culture in their town.



Figure 5.3-27. A picture of some shops and a theme park in the UK

R: Can you explain this page?
C: I live in an another town and it is about my town.
R: What do you show about your town here?
C: My town is famous for pork pies and a theme park. There are pictures showing both of them.
R: What about them?
C: I love pork pies and I sometimes go the shop to eat.
R: And the theme park?
C: It is for fun.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from these images?
C: They can understand what my town is famous for because I explained the pictures with text.

My impression was that the child wanted to stress that he is living in a nearby town by providing images (Figure 5.3-27) of his own town. The multimodal design task did again allow a move of 'juxtaposition'. However, this did not open up any deeper meaning-making around the topic since the child could not adequately reply to the prompts in articulating further

insights of the shared cultural concepts for the purpose of richer cultural implications. After the production of digital multimodal artefacts, the session moved on to the discussions around the images reflecting the city of the school in Turkey.

5.3.2.3. Reading cultural photographs of the other school site

It should be noted that the children in Turkey searched for the images on the Internet rather than taking photographs themselves. Moreover, the children added short details about the images, but they were not assembled like the ones in the British school. Instead, the images were put in place in a pdf file. Therefore, I attached the scripts to the slides in presentations. In this section, the findings of the cultural discussions of some of the photographs take place.



Figure 5.3-28. A picture of city walls in Turkey

The attached script: “Our city ramparts”.
R: What do you think about this image?
C: It looks like a castle wall.
R: It is actually a wall surrounding the city in Turkey.

To give more context, I showed Figure 5.3-28 from Internet for illustrating a broader view of the walls and richer cultural discussions.



Figure 5.3-29. A picture of a city surrounded by old walls in Turkey

R: This is the walls of the city from a wider angle. What do you see in this image?
C: The wall is very long. Does it go all around the city?
R: Yes.
C: Why do they have walls?
R: The wall is very old and it was used for protecting the inner city.
C: How old?
R: More than 2000-year-old. What else do you see?
C: There are buildings outside of the walls.
R: It is the rest of the city.
C: Is this all the city?
R: The city used to be only within the walls, but now the small part is in the walls.
C: It must be a big city.
R: Yes, it is way bigger than your town. What else do you notice? Think about the images in the previous session.
C: Similar apartments.
R: Yes, similar apartments, but there is a difference.
C: They are big.

The children found the longs walls surrounding the city quite interesting. The children identified several visual features in the image (Figure 5.3-29) that led to relatively meaningful cultural discussions. Moreover, I prompted the children for recognising the apartments in the image and share differences with the apartment complexes that was discussed in the previous session. However, the children could not distinguish the apartments in the image.

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Figure 5.3-30. A picture of an historical mosque in Turkey

The attached script is: “Big Mosque”.
R: What do you see in this image?
C: What is mosque?
R: A mosque is where Muslims pray.
C: Like church for Christians.
R: Yes, what else?
C: Is Turkey a Muslim country?
R: Yes.
C: What are the tent like things in the middle?
R: People wash their faces, hand etc. in those things before praying.

Although the children seemed to be interested in the religious temple in the image, I observed that the religious cultural environment in the classroom inhibited richer discussions. Therefore, although this seems to touch on very different ways of living, the contrast was not developed spontaneously.



Figure 5.3-31. A picture of an historical church in Turkey

The attached script is: “St Marry Church”.
R: What do you see?
C: It says it is a church, but there is not any Cross on the building.
R: I do not know why, but it is a church.
C: Do they have Christians in Turkey.
R: Yes, many Christians used to live in Turkey.
C: How about now?
R: There are still some Christians in Turkey, but only a minority.

The children’s familiarity with a basic cultural concept that is illustrated in the image led them to identify a missing symbol: one that defines the religious building. Moreover, such familiarity seems to inspire some further questions. The discussions indicate that the children gained an opening onto the diversity of religions in Turkey. The implication being that this requires more scaffolding to develop, rather than assuming its own momentum of curiosity.



Figure 5.3-32. A picture of an overgrown fruit in Turkey

The attached script is: “We have very big watermelons”.
R: What do you see in this image?
C: “Is this a balloon?”
R: It is a real watermelon.
C: How can it be that big?
R: What do you think the reason is?
C: Maybe they grow big there.
R: Any other reason? Think about what makes vegetables and fruits grow bigger.
C: It is the weather?
R: Yes, the hot weather in the city allows the watermelons to grow bigger.

The children were observed to be amazed by the size of the fruit, simply attributed to their unfamiliarity with fruit of this sort. Moreover, prompts allowed the children to infer a broader cultural inference regarding the climate in the city. Thus a vivid image such as this can open up a significant cultural feature but it seems to need significant development from outside (not pursued here), rather triggering natural curiosity or hypothesising.

5.3.2.4. Outcome of session 2

Allowing children to search for images on the Internet led to a satisfying number of images demonstrating various aspects of their town with potential cultural significance. In finding images, it seemed that some children picked images that emerged from a search of their town, while some others looked for cultural concepts that they already had in mind. Moreover, such a difference can also be observed from the images that the children used in their digital multimodal products.

The discussions with the children around the images indicated that they were conscious of the cultural elements of their town. However, the children could not adequately reply to the prompts inviting them to go beyond labelling the visual features in the images by expressing richer cultural connotations for further discussions. Since similar reactions were observed in the previous session, digital multimodal production was introduced to the children as a potential *instrument* for more meaningful cultural expressions. However, the children stuck with annotating the images in their multimodal designs rather than conveying richer cultural implications, so the potential stimulus of multimodal assembling and expression was not enough to significantly open up further diversity of questions. Moreover, the children were not adequately receptive to the deeper cultural meanings in the images in the multimodal products and the prompts aiming at such objectives did not lead to further cultural discussions. In interpreting the images shared by the school in Turkey, the discussions showed that the children would need significant scaffolding to extract relevant cultural details from the images that could open up richer understanding. Moreover, they should be prompted for going beyond the visual features in the images for drawing broader cultural inferences. Despite those complications, the children were showed interest in engaging with the images

reflecting their own and the other cultural context. The consistency of the children's conviction regarding experiencing cross-cultural exchanges through photography proves that more sensible approaches in further sessions could meet their expectations.

In an attempt to solicit richer cultural insights and discussions, in the following session organised cultural discussions were planned to be carried out *prior* to taking photos.

5.3.3. Session 3

As indicated in the previous section, there were several complications inhibiting rich cultural discussions with the children around the images, albeit their enthusiasm for the activity. One aspect of that was observed to be a lack of cultural awareness from the children regarding the cultural implications that could be read from their own images. In attempts at extracting richer cultural insights from the images, children were often prompted in order for them to go beyond labelling the visual core in their images. Moreover, the children were enabled into producing digital multimodality – active exploration of material that might afford the construction of fresh cultural connotations. Designing activities that could provide opportunities for more meaningful cultural discussions through prompts during the production. However, the previous session delivered evidence that the children mostly added annotations to the images in their multimodal designs *rather* than taking advantage of creative affordances of multimodality design for more expressive cultural implications. Consequently, stimulating the children through discussing images and digital multimodal products through prompts were useful, but rather modest in outcomes. In this respect, the findings of Session 2 were parallel to Session 1 which shows that a further steps ares needed for enriching cultural discussions in this session.

Despite the lack of cultural insights in discussing the images of their own, the children's cultural awareness of their own cultural context is most likely to be broader than that. In this respect, providing the children with conditions for exploring those richer understandings *prior* to capturing or discussing images could be useful for applying them later during the discussions of their images. This might create a schema to underpin the later work. It might assist the children in two ways. First, the children might reflect on those initial cultural discussions for expressing richer cultural implications in replying to the prompts around their own images. Second, the children might interpret the images shared by the children in Turkey from the perspectives that were shaped during the opening cultural discussions.

In doing that, inviting the children to elaborate on their cultural context might potentially lead them to be more receptive towards both their own and the images of others. Moreover, such receptivity can also be helpful for the prompts to achieve their objectives for having more meaningful cultural discussions. Therefore, the children were invited to express their awareness and understandings of the cultural theme concerning their own environment in this session.

The cultural theme in this session was 'My School'. As indicated earlier, I carried out brief discussions with the classroom about illustrating their school culture. In doing this, the children were asked to describe their school setting and their experiences within that setting. The first thing that was shared by the children was the physical environment of the school. They mentioned their classroom, the library, the playground and the classroom. In order to obtain richer cultural awareness and understandings, I further suggested the children to share their experiences as they took place within the school setting.

In doing this, I encouraged them to express the part of the school culture that they most enjoyed. One child mentioned that she likes playing the musical instruments in the school. I suggested that music culture in the school was a good idea and invited them to provide more of their experiences like this. The children discussed how they have a room for performing music and singing. In considering the music culture as an important part of the children's school life, I encouraged the children to capture photographs for demonstrating their exposures to music in the school.

Following that, the children suggested some of the displays on the classroom walls. In considering the displays as a significant part of the school culture, I asked children to elaborate on their experiences with those displays. The children indicated that they sometimes were asked to put their art work and assignments on the displays. During the discussions about the displays, the children were observed to be eager in sharing their experiences, so I invited the children to capture displays in the school that mostly interest them. It should be noted that there was a limited time spared for this session, so the discussions were brief rather than extensive.

In having such discussions, I judged that the cultural aspects of the school that were mentioned could be allocated between groups. Moreover, there were a limited number of tablet devices for the children to take photographs, so I randomly divided the children into five groups and invited every group to choose a category. In doing this, I tried to avoid assigning a category that might entail discouraging them to work on something they wished not to. Following this, I invited each group to share their images with the classroom.

Purpose: The effect of preliminary cultural discussions on the children's awareness of the cultural content in their images

Cultural topic: My School

Pictures: 27 images from the school in the UK

Participants: 8 girls and 7 boys

Duration: 60 minutes

Images shared by the school in the UK

School Setting

			
A picture of IT room in the school.	A picture of a hall for school plays.	A picture of a first aid corner.	Another picture of the hall for school plays.
			
A picture of the school library.	Another picture of the school library. The school library was discussed.	A picture of the school reception.	A picture of a room in the school.

Table 5.3-19. Pictures of the school setting in the UK

Music in the School

		
A picture of some musical instruments. The musical instruments were discussed.	A picture of a room for performing music.	Another picture of the music room. Children's experiences with the room were discussed.

Table 5.3-20. Picture of music culture in the school in the UK

School Displays

			
A picture of a display for the school play.	A picture of a display for art work.	A picture of display for children's art work.	A picture of a display for children's activities.
School play in the display was discussed.		The display and art work were discussed.	The activities on the display were discussed.
			
A picture of a display showing cultural codes.	A picture of a display and throphies.	A picture of a display for English learning.	
The content of the display was discussed.	The content of the display was discussed.	The content of the display was discussed.	

Table 5.3-21. Pictures of school displays in the school in the UK

Classroom Setting

			
A picture of a classroom setting. The classroom setting was discussed.	A picture of a coat peg in the classroom.	A picture of the classroom door.	A picture of books in the classroom.

Table 5.3-22. Pictures of the classroom setting in the school in the UK

School Playground

		
A picture of the school playground.	A picture of a bench in the school playground. The value of the bench was discussed.	Another picture of the school playground. Children's experiences in the playground were discussed.

Table 5.3-23. Pictures of the school playground in the school in the UK

School Values

	
A picture of a religious figure.	A picture of a painting. The content of the painting was discussed.

Table 5.3-24. Pictures of some values in the school in the UK

5.3.3.1. Children expressing their cultural understandings through photography

In this section, the ways in which the children express their cultural understanding through photography are illustrated. In developing this, the discussion around some of the images is presented.

Group 1

The first group reflected on the physical setting of the school. They took photographs of their classroom, library and the IT room. The group selected the image of their classroom and library for sharing with the school in Turkey.



Figure 5.3-33. A picture of a school classroom in the UK

R: What is the content of this picture?
C: This is a picture of a regular classroom in our school.
R: Is this your classroom?
C: No, we took a photograph of an empty one for not showing any children.
R: Good. So, what do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this image?
C: They can see our tables and chairs.
R: Why are the chairs are on the top of the tables.
C: Every Friday afternoon, we put our chairs up because the cleaning lady cleans our classroom.
R: I can see your classroom is very colourful.
C: Yes, our teacher put our work around the classroom for everyone to see.
R: What do you think your classroom would seem to them?
C: They would see that we have a colourful and friendly classroom.

The children provided an image illustrating significant aspects of their classroom. They could have photographed their class in a regular form, but for reasons unknown to me they have chosen to do this during the cleaning time. Some of the features identified and labelled were not discussed in terms of how they form the basis of classroom activities. But although it might be considered that the children did not pay too much attention to details by photographing the class in what could be qualified as a bit of unusual arrangement, it suggested in the end that the significance of the image is closely related to a school ritual-the cleaning of the classrooms, which further on entails a certain cultural awareness.



Figure 5.3-34. A picture of a school library in the UK

R: What is the content of this image?
C: It is our library.
R: Why did you take a picture of your library?
C: Our library is important for us, so we wanted to show them how it looks like.
R: How often do you visit your library?
C: Quite often. We have a comfy reading corner with big pillows.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can see in this picture?
C: They can see that we have a nice and tidy library.

The children certainly presented a significant part of their school culture. But confronting the image did not raise rich reflection on what can go on in a space like this – and why. I was trying to help the children open up in a conversation about the importance of reading in UK schools.

Group 2

The second group took photographs reflecting the music culture in the school. The children captured two images and presented to the classroom.



Figure 5.3-35. A picture of a school hall for performing music in the UK

R: What is the content of this picture?
C: We have some musical instruments here.
R: What kind of instruments?
C: There is a piano and some keyboards on the shelves.
R: What else you can tell about the image?
C: We perform some music in this room.
R: So, what are the musical activities that you do in your school?
C: We practice once a week. We have a girl choir and school orchestra.
C: We perform at the at the of the year in front of our parents.
C: Sometimes, we also perform for our Christmas play.
R: How can the children in Turkey understand that from the picture?
C: We have a big display about music and many musical instruments.

From the engagement of the children, we can see the importance of music in their school life with clear purpose (musical plays). The dynamism in the conservation indicates that the image (Figure 34) alongside the prompts paved a way for the children to express their understanding of the musical experiences in the school, as music was one of the topics targeted in the preliminary discussions. An improvement can be noticed yet the children's answers do not give much room for an in depth analysis.

Group 3

This group took several photographs of the displays on school walls. Two of the images were shared by the group.



Figure 5.3-36. A picture of a school display in the UK

R: What is the content of this picture?
C: This is a display where we show our successful activities.
R: What kind of activities?
C: Like school trips, charity events, competition events with other schools.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey would understand from this picture?
C: They would see that we have displays and we do great activities.
R: How can they know about your activities?
C: You can see some of our activities on the display.



Figure 5.3-37. A picture of a school display in the UK

R: What is this image about?
C: Every week, each classroom write something about a saint and we put on this display.
R: Why do you put them on display?
C: We show other children and we learn about saints.
R: Why is it important for you to learn about saints.
C: Saints are teaching us to be good people.
R: How do you choose the saints of the week?
C: We choose the saint which is closest to our classroom activities in that week.
R: Why "starts of the week"?
C: Because starts are bright.
R: What do you have on the shelves?
C: We also have our school trophies.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this picture?
C: They would see that we have our school trophies and a display for saints.

In our preliminary discussions, the concept display was approached. The children showed their school culture through a religiously oriented display. Figure 5.3-37 alongside adequate prompts come to prove the affinity of the children towards saints as role models. The children showed a superficial understanding of the image without going very deep into the underling concepts.

Group 4

This group also provided images of the displays on their school walls.

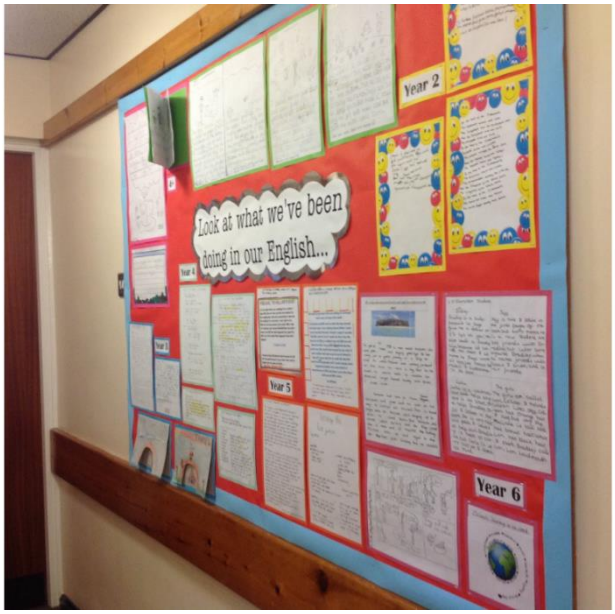


Figure 5.3-38. A picture of a school display for English learning in the UK

R: What is this display about?
C: We put our English works on this display.
R: Is this for school or your classroom.
C: It is for the school and every classroom put their best English work there.
R: What the children in Turkey would see in this picture.
C: They could see that we learn English and we put our finest work on this school display.
R: How would they know that this is a school display and not a classroom one?
C: You can see that there are works of different years on the display.



Figure 5.3-39. A picture of a school art work displays in the UK

R: What is this image about?
C: This is an elephant on our school display.
R: What is special about this picture?
C: We worked together to make this elephant

C: We have displays in our school for our art work.
R: What the children in Turkey can understand from this image?
C: They can see love art and our teachers put them on displays.
R: Group 3 also had displays. What is the difference between your displays and theirs?
C: We talked before taking pictures. We decided to show displays of art and English work and they showed the ones for school activities.

Having discussed displays before taking photographs provided the children with a perspective of associating the display with the art work which in turn shows us a satisfying level of cultural awareness.

Group 5

This group provided some images of the playground in the school. The group presented two of the images to the classroom.



Figure 5.3-40. A picture of a bench in a school playground in the UK

R: Can you explain this picture?
C: It is 'friendship bench' in our school playground.
R: What does it mean?
C: We sit on that bench with friends. Also, when we have problems we sit to talk.
R: That is very nice. Do you think the children in Turkey can understand that from the picture?
C: It is 'friendship bench'. They should have one there as well.

Despite the straightforward message in the image (Figure 39) and the additional prompt, the children did not go into the details about the value of friendship in their school and their lives.



Figure 5.3-41. A picture of a school playground in the UK

R: Why did you take this picture?
C: We wanted to show how our playground looks like.
R: What are the details in the picture?
C: We have pavilions and playground.
R: What are the shapes on the playground for?
C: They are for the games we play in breaks.
R: Do you think the children can understand from this picture?
C: They could see that we play games and we sit in the pavilions with friends.

The conversation around this image was one of the poorest in terms of children self-input. Prompts were needed even for the rather obvious elements in the image, such as markings on the playground floor, and concepts like friendship and relaxation were not even mentioned. But the children were not reluctant in giving answers and they engaged in the conversation, they just lacked cultural insights.

5.3.3.2. Outcome of session 3

In this session, the discussions around the images indicated that the children seemed more aware of the content and the meaning in their images. A factor that seemed to animate this more was having discussions of school culture *prior* to taking pictures. In this way, the children seemed to establish ideas and put in place a cultural schema that they then sought to reflect through images. In doing this, the discussions revealed that the children were somewhat more conscious of meanings of the visual features within the images, the local features that they wished to represent and how they might appear to the children in Turkey. What remained limited was a drawing out of cultural inferences relating to how these features were experienced.

The point is only that all these images contain enough clarity of identity or enough variety of features to invite a deeper reading of the cultural context that they represent. Although the attitude of the young photographer might be to go into the place that is given as the theme (classroom, home, neighborhood etc.) and point the camera at it, their attitude as *readers* of images captured in that way must still be cultivated.

Discussing school culture, taking pictures and analysing those pictures exceeded the time allocated for this session. Production of digital multimodality and discussing images reflecting the school culture in Turkey were moved to Session 4.

5.3.4. Session 4

As indicated in the previous session, the children showed signs of more awareness regarding the cultural content of the images. This also can imply that the children's responsiveness towards the cultural details in the images might allow them to convey richer meanings

through creative affordances of digital multimodality. In this respect, inviting the children to reflect on their cultural understandings through the communicative opportunities of digital multimodality might lead them to be more expressive in terms of stretching the content of the images towards broader cultural discussions. In addition to that, the expected purposeful cultural expressions may also stimulate the children for interpreting the images shared by the school in Turkey from a more culturally sensitive perspective. Therefore, the children are invited to produce digital multimodality through the images that they already captured in the previous session prior to discussing the images reflecting the school culture in Turkey.

Purpose: The effect of preliminary cultural discussions on the children's digital multimodal products and interpretation of images shared by the school in Turkey

Cultural topic: My School

Pictures: 15 images from the school in the UK, 3 images from the school in Turkey

Participants: 8 girls and 7 boys

Duration: 60 minutes

Images shared by the school in Turkey

School Setting		School Playground
		
A picture of a common primary school classroom. The details of the classroom were discussed.	An ordinary school corridor in Turkey. The corridor was discussed.	A conventional state school building. The structure of the building was discussed.

Table 5.3-25. Pictures of a classroom and school playground in a school in Turkey

5.3.4.1. Children producing digital multimodal designs

During the production, I repeatedly visited the groups, inviting them to elaborate on their digital artefacts and what they were designing. In the following section, some of the images selected from the digital multimodal materials are presented in the light of the taken field notes.

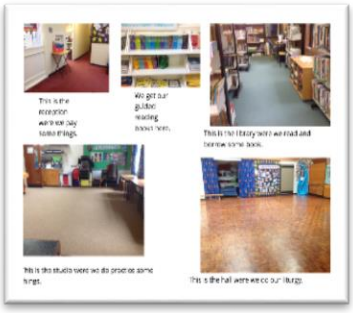
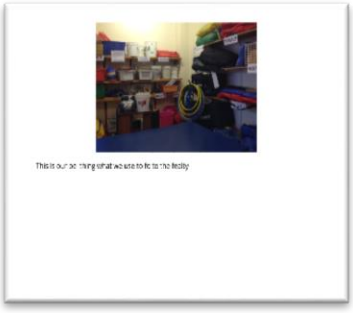
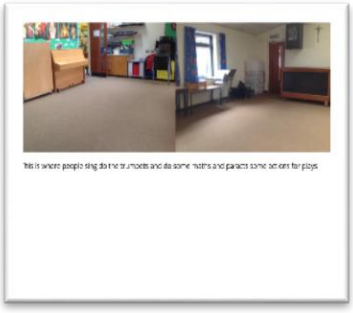
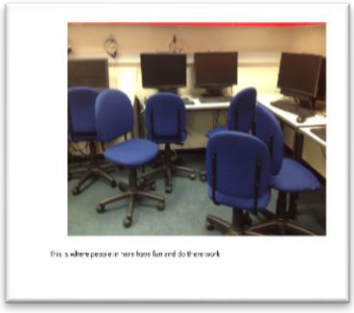
	1	2	3
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			

Table 5.3-26. Digital multimodal products reflecting the school culture generated by the children

Group 1

In the previous session, group 1 provided images of various parts of the school setting. The conversation with the group during the production of digital multimodality mainly focused on the following images.

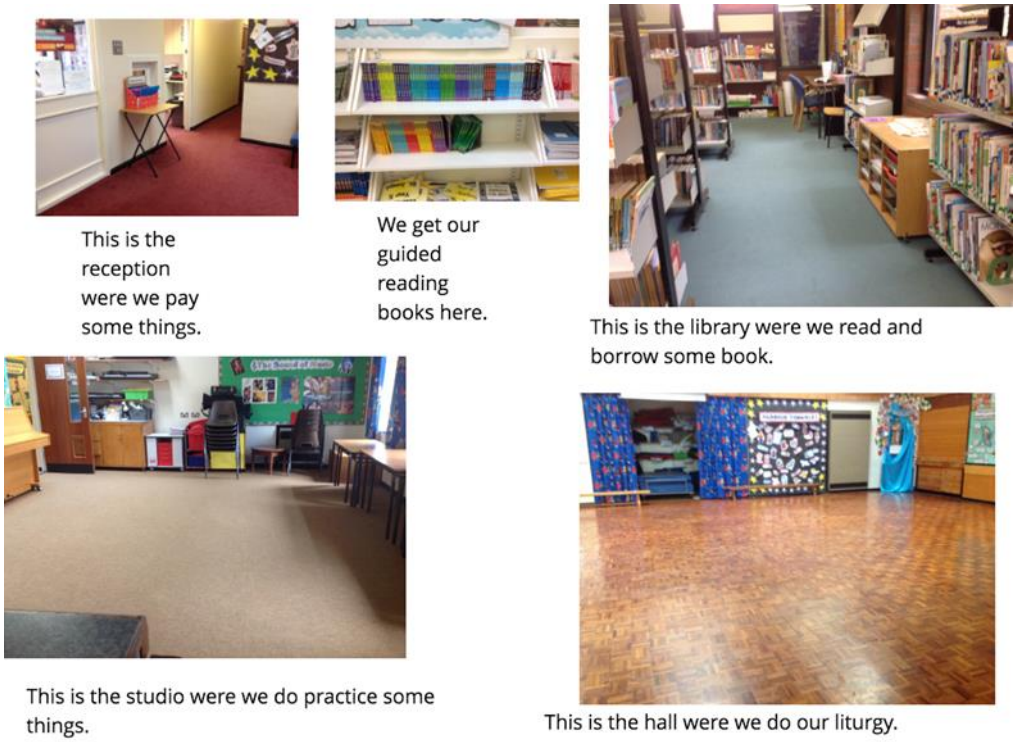


Figure 5.3-42. Some pictures of a school setting in the UK

R: Can you explain the pictures in this page?
C: We put picture of places in our school.
R: Why did you do that for?
C: We wanted to show what we do in some parts of the school.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this image.
C: They can see what do we do in the school.

Coherence among the images show that the children purposefully assembled them together. Moreover, they were aware of some constructed meaning thereby for the children in Turkey to have an understanding of their school setting.

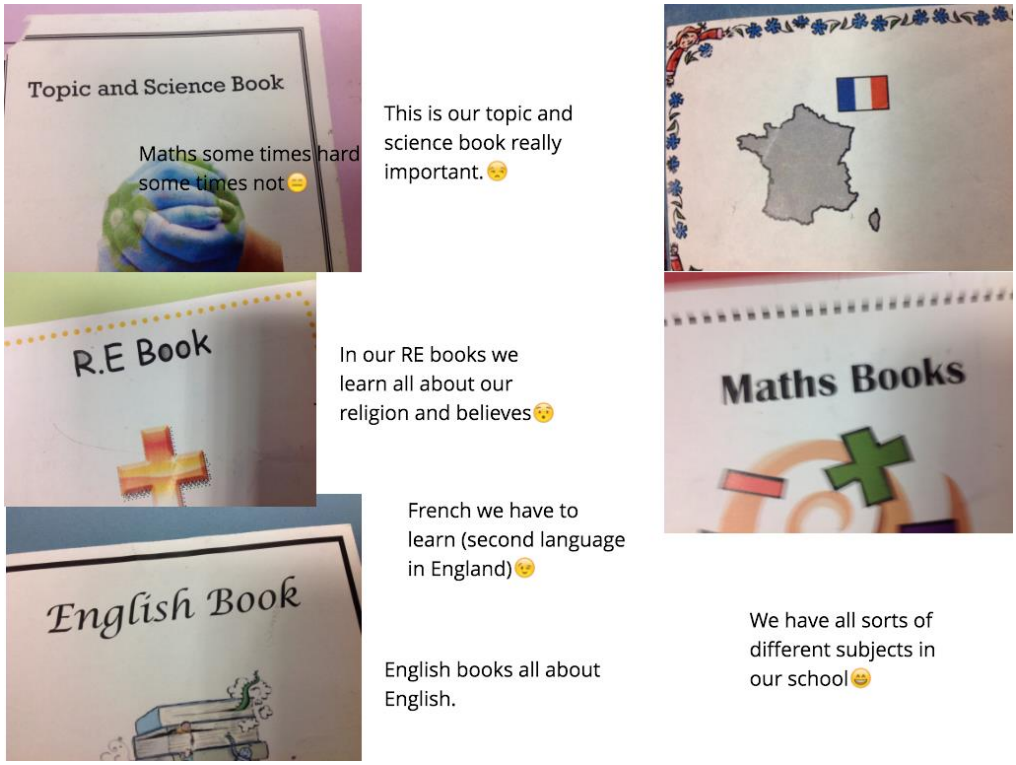


Figure 5.3-43. Some pictures of school subjects in the UK

R: What do you want to express with those pictures?
C: We put the subjects that we study at school.
R: Why was your intention?
C: We wanted to show what subjects we study.
R: Can you explain why did you choose different emoji?
C: We used emoji to show how do feel about the subjects.
R: What do you think this page would tell the children in Turkey?
C: They could see the subjects we study and how do we feel about them.

The children assembled several pictures representing their school subjects in a coherent format. Moreover, the children took advantage of emoji for expressing their feelings and experiences of each school subject. This may be an indication that conveying richer meaning can be developed through multimodal activities.

Group 2

This group took photographs of the music activity in the school from the previous session.

The following images were discussed with the group.



Figure 5.3-44. Picture of some school halls in the UK

R: Can you explain why did you use those pictures?
C: These are the rooms where we do some extra activities in school.
R: What do you do in each room?
C: We play sing in the one room on the left side and we do other things on the right one.
R: How do you think the children would understand that from this page?
C: They can understand because we showed picture of the rooms and wrote what we do there.

The children assembled two images for illustrating the room where they perform some music as well as other activities. A coherence between the pictures shows that the children were trying to create a focus for activities typical of school life. They considered the perspective of children in Turkey in constructing meaning through this simple multimodal design.

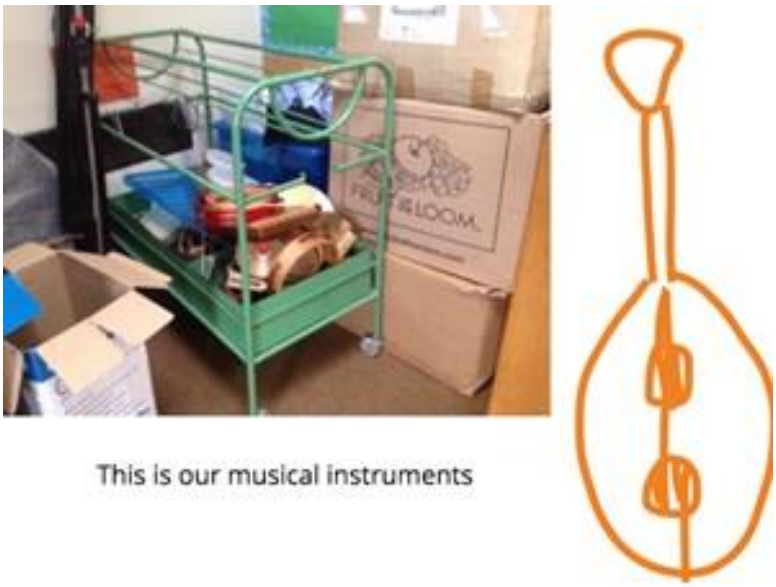


Figure 5.3-45. Some school musical instruments in the UK

R: What do you want to express in this page?
C: We shared our musical instruments.
R: How about the drawing?
C: We draw another instrument for making the page more about music.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey would understand from this page?
C: They would see that we love music and our musical instruments.

The children illustrated a part of their school music culture. The drawing alongside indicated that the children's idea for combining not only image and text, but also a homemade drawing for constructing the meaning of this theme. The result might suggest the playful affordances of the medium overcoming the closer consideration of what could achieve useful meaning.

Group 3

This group focused on displays in their school from the previous session. Two images within the digital multimodal design are presented.



Figure 5.3-46. A school display in the UK

R: Can you explain this page?
C: We described our school activities and trips.
R: Can you tell me more about the details?
C: We used the display where we show our successful activities.
R: What else?
C: We wrote about our teachers and how they help us for our school activities.
R: Do you think the children in Turkey would understand your successful school trips?
C: Yes, because we used a picture of the display and we wrote about our teachers and school activities.

The text shows how the children acknowledged the effort of their teachers. Within the drawing, the children, again playfully, replaced the word 'love' with the heart. While such 'fun' with the image could be seen as at the price of using multimedia tools for drawing out richer cultural meanings, the tools might, on the other hand, create a more willing

engagement of interpretation of meaning in the recipients. Sadly, being able to track this possibility was beyond the scope of the present project.



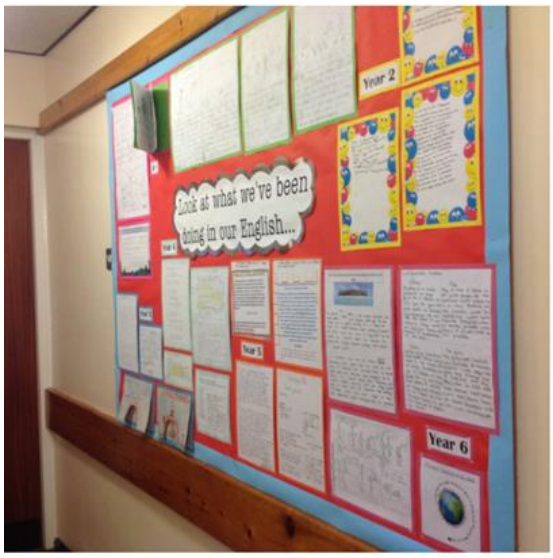
Figure 5.3-47. A school display showing a school play in the UK

R: What is this page about?
C: We have a school play every year and this year we are going to play 'Aladdin Trouble'.
R: Do you think the children in Turkey can understand that from this page?
C: Yes. We put a picture of the play and we wrote about it.

The annotation is helpful but in design terms not as accessible as it might be. More media design experience may be an important pre-condition of achieving a return on this idea.

Group 4

in the previous session, this group also shared the display culture in their school.



This is some of our English work.



This is some of our Art work.

Figure 5.3-48. Some school displays for children's work in the UK

R: Can you explain this page?
C: We showed some of the displays where we put our work.
R: Why did you use these two pictures?
C: Because we use these two displays for sharing our work with other children at the school.
R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this page?
C: They would see that we have displays for our English and art work.

This is a more orderly construction. While it does not facilitate significant inward reflection.

It is well considered as a format that could well prompt discussion among recipients.

Group 5

This group took several photographs illustrating the playground in the school.



Figure 5.3-49. Some picture of school values in the UK

R: What is the content of this page?
C: We showed some values in our school.
R: What kind of values?
C: Friendship and St Marry.
R: Why these values are important for you?
C: We love friendship and St Marry in our school.
R: How do you represent these values in the page?
C: We show two pictures of friendship and one picture of St Marry statue.
R: What else?
C: We explained the pictures on the page.
R: How do you think the children in Turkey would make sense of this page?
C: They could understand the values from the pictures and text.

Here the children reflected on something more abstract: the values of their school. In doing this, they linked two pictures endorsing the friendship in their school and one picture showing a religious figure. Moreover, the discussions indicate that the children purposefully aimed to express those values. Although the significance of these concepts seems appreciated, it is more difficult for them to construct an expectation of how they will create meaning at their destination.

5.3.4.2. Reading cultural photographs of the other school site

Although the school in Turkey was invited to share photographs reflecting the school culture, no images were received. So, in having discussions of a school setting in Turkey, I searched for some appropriate images on the Internet. Two factors were considered in these. First, my own familiarity with schooling in Turkey arising from my two years teaching experience allowed me to look for images more confidently. Second, I reflected further on the images captured by the children in the British school and the discussions carried out around those images. In the light of those considerations, several images illustrating classroom setting, school corridors, displays, playground and school from outside were selected for cultural discussions with the children. The images and carried out cultural discussions are presented.



Figure 5.3-50. A picture of a school classroom in Turkey

R: This is an ordinary classroom from Turkey. What do you see in this picture?
C: They have different desks and seats.
R: What do you think about them?
C: They look uncomfortable for the children?
R: How do you know?

C: Their foot does not touch the floor.
R: What else?
C: Do they always sit in that order?
R: Yes, mostly.
C: They have smaller displays.
R: Yes, what else about the displays?
C: They look less colourful than ours.
C: It looks like they put mostly writings on the displays.
R: Why it could be like that?
C: Maybe, they do not do art work as much as us.
R: I think so. Any other detail?
C: They do not have carpets on the floor.
R: Yes, there are carpets only for kinder garden classrooms.
C: It looks very tidy.
R: How?
C: It looks like the children do not move around like us.
C: They have uniforms like us.
R: So, what is your general impressions about this classroom?
C: It looks less comfortable and friendlier than our classroom.

Discussions around the image show that the children identified telling visual features. They often interpreted those features for constructing some basic understanding of cultural context as defined for the classroom. In addition, the children also stressed the *absence* of some common classroom features. In doing this, the children frequently made comparisons between the image and their own classroom in the ensuing discussion. Through

interpretation of this image, the children seem to acquire a broad understanding of difference through the reference points of their own experience.



Figure 5.3-51. A school corridor in Turkey.

R: This is the corridor of the school. What do you think about this picture?
C: The walls look very empty.
C: They do not have displays like our school.
R: What else?
C: What is the picture on the wall?
R: What do you think it can be?
C: It looks like a soldier.
R: I think the school was named after that soldier.
C: There is another display.
R: What about it?
C: It looks like some art work.

The children emphasised more the *absence* of visual elements rather than what was present. In doing this, they often referred to the reference point of their own school setting. In particular, they expressed concern regarding the lack of displays on the walls. Although they did point out the two displays within the image and raised questions regarding the content of

those displays. The exercise illustrates a readiness to do a contrasting interpretation – but not to take the output from that very far into deeper considerations of disparate experience.



Figure 5.3-52. A school playground in Turkey

R: This is the school from outside. What do you think?
C: “It is very big”.
C: How many students go to this school?
R: It should be around 1000 and most of the schools in Turkey are like that.
C: It looks like a secondary school.
R: What else do you see?
C: They do not have any benches or pavilions on the playground.
C: What are the lines on the playground for?
R: The children get in line for the ceremony before the school. Don’t you wonder what kind of ceremony they have every day before the school?
C: What ceremony do they have?
R: All the children in the school get in the line and say an oath stating their appreciation for the country. How about you?
C: We don’t do that. We just enter the school.

The children evidently found the school structure unconventional and interpreted it as a secondary school. Moreover, they emphasised the absence of some common features in the school playground. Although I explained that the lines on the playground were for an oath

the children say every day before the school, the children did not raise further questions about this. This suggests the difficulties that would be attendant on a researcher/teacher building substantially on these perceived surface differences.

5.3.4.3. Outcome of session 4

In this session, the children generated digital multimodal materials and interpreted some images reflecting the common school culture in Turkey. Throughout the production of digital multimodality, it was observed that the children were quite focused and enthusiastic in shaping their multimodal designs. The discussions carried out during those production periods indicated that the children usefully expressed their school context. In doing this, they maintained a coherence among the images used within the multimodal designs and extended them with text. However, the meaning in their multimodal products were still at the modest level in terms of leading to richer cultural discussions.

In engaging with the images representing school culture in Turkey, the children pointed out helpful visual features in the images, along with the absence of others. The discussions around the images allowed the children's focus on *absence* of certain details in the images to emerge from ready comparison. It was less obvious that they were drawing deeper conclusions about the implications of difference.

5.3.5. Teacher's Pedagogical Exploitation of Visual Materials for Curricular Purposes

As stated in the introduction section, this intervention intended to consider possible pedagogical exploitation of visual exchange materials for curriculum purposes. In doing this, the main focus was to provide the teacher in the British school with opportunities for her to

use the images of the Turkish school for classroom discussions. Although this intention was declared at the outset of the intervention, the teacher seemed reluctant to take up such pedagogical openings. Throughout the research, I carried out several discussions with the teacher around this. Insights from teacher discussions as well as my informal observations indicated the following factors affecting the lack of pedagogical take up of the cultural images for curriculum purposes.

One major factor hindering exploitation of the visual materials shared by the other school for classroom activities was time. At the beginning of the intervention, the teacher stated her concerns regarding possible problems in allocating time for the research. During discussions for deciding the cultural themes, the teacher proposed to limit the number of themes for the project. In suggesting that, she pointed out the short period of time available towards the end of school year. Moreover, she noted that there were several exams and a school play ahead of the children. Also, the teacher postponed two sessions due to health issues.

Another factor was carrying out these sessions in classroom time. Occupying the classroom hour might have led to further challenges of allocating time, in this case for exploiting the images for curriculum purposes. In addition, the teacher raised concerns regarding the participation of all the children in the classroom. When invited to discuss for possible pedagogical use of the images for geography, the teacher noted that the children already engaged with those images and using the same images for them with the classroom can be challenging.

5.3.6. Cultural Interactions on Edmodo

As indicated in Section 5.1.2.2, Edmodo was integrated into this project in order to allow the children in both schools to have culturally-linked interactions. In achieving this, the teachers were invited to register in Edmodo. While the teacher in the UK created an account by herself, the teacher in Turkey was provided with an account and a code for the children to participate due to her unfamiliarity with digital technology. Moreover, the technical aspects of Edmodo and how the teachers, and the children could use it were explained to the participants in both schools at the beginning of this intervention. Both teachers were informed how to guide the children in uploading their images to Edmodo. The idea was that the children would upload their images to Edmodo prior to each session.

In session 1, the children in the UK took photographs of their neighbourhoods, but they did not upload them to Edmodo. Instead, the children emailed their images to the teacher. When I asked the teacher about whether the children shared their images on Edmodo or not, the teacher stated that the children could not create account on Edmodo. Following that, I showed the children how they could register to Edmodo once again.

In session 2, the cultural theme was 'My Town', but the children did not provide any photographs. During the session, I allowed the classroom to search for images on the Internet. Since several tablet devices were available in session 2, I tried to guide the children in creating accounts on Edmodo. However, the children could not succeed due to technical challenges and time constrains.

Following that, I asked the teacher whether she was still willing for the use of Edmodo. She did not think that the children could participate to Edmodo. When invited to discuss the

reasons for that, she judged that some of the parents raised concerns regarding uploading images to Edmodo.

Similarly, the teacher and the children in the Turkish school did not provide any images for the secured digital classroom on Edmodo. In a phone conversation with the teacher regarding the use of Edmodo she explained that she was expecting the ICT teacher in the school to assist her in creating accounts for the children on Edmodo. But she did not receive adequate support, despite still sharing willingness of engaging with Edmodo.

To summarise, privacy concerns and technical incapability caused lack of integration of Edmodo in this project and the cultural interactions between the children in both school could not occur.

5.4.Discussion

In this section, the findings reported above are discussed with respect to each of the research questions.

5.4.1. RQ1(a) How do children interpret the cultural content of photographs?

This research question is concerned with children's interpretation in relation to the cultural content of images. The findings revealing such experiences of children are derived from their engagement of images that were provided from the school in Turkey. The findings indicated that the children showed interest towards the visual elements embodied in the images. This can imply that the capacity of photography in depicting objects, physical or social settings played a role in attracting the children's attention and orienting them to task (Burke, 2008;

Lapenta, 2011). In this respect, the children were receptive to the visual captivation of the images.

In being attracted to the images, findings showed that the children were interested in the apparent visual features in the images leading them to identify and express those details. However, it was expected that they could be more receptive towards the cultural implications in the images by sharing more cultural understandings of their own context and life within it. Photography was considered to be a useful instrument in allowing children to interpret the implications of the visual content and exploiting it for expressing more social and cultural insights (Collier & Collier, 1986; Lapenta, 2011).

On the other hand, the children's awareness of visual details paved a way for them to be stimulated in terms of reaching out to the broader cultural meaning of the images. In fact, scaffolding prompts within the discussions around photography are suggested to be vital in allowing the children to reflect on different aspects of the content of the images that could potentially lead to richer insights (Lapenta, 2011). The findings indicated that the modest prompts encouraged the children to have some limited cultural interpretations, but still at a modest level - considering the meaningful cultural details in the images that is visible to an adult, particularly in the first two sessions.

As indicated in the beginning of Session 3, Section 5.3.3, the structure of the session was slightly altered by carrying out brief cultural discussions prior to taking and interpreting images, in order to allow the children later to read the photographs in more cultural terms. The findings (Session 4) from discussions around the images shared by the school in Turkey indicated that the children were slightly more receptive towards the prompts for interpreting the cultural content of the images. Moreover, that led to a marginal extension of cultural

inferences drawn by the children in reading those images from Turkey. In this respect, the initial cultural discussions seem to provide the children with a schema that underpinned some elaboration of cultural awareness for the topic: one that might influence their perspective in reading images from the school in Turkey. Moreover, although bearing in mind the limited time allocated for the initial cultural discussions, carrying out more extensive cultural exchanges at the beginning of sessions might lead to richer interpretations. This might be considered as a necessity in designing further interventions with young people in this age group.

In summary, this research question reviewed the children's interpretations of the cultural content embodied in the images shared by the school in Turkey. The children were observed to be effectively captivated by the content of the images, but their interpretations were limited to identifying surface visual features rather than those affording richer cultural inferences. Moreover, prompts were slightly more effective when the children gained more cultural awareness through cultural discussions. Considering those factors, this intervention did not provide sufficiently satisfying findings for answering this research question by reporting a well-developed willingness to read pictures for their clues about lifestyle. But the project did show signs for better conditions to be maintained in further interventions.

5.4.2. RQ1(b) How do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography along with digital multimodality?

As basic to the aims of this intervention, the children were invited to express their cultural understandings through photography. This research question is related to the children's awareness regarding the cultural implications of subjects depicted in their captured photographs. Moreover, the conditions in order for this research question to be answered

rely on the individual and classroom discussions around the images as well as digital multimodal products. In this intervention, the children provided numerous photographs with useful cultural connotations.

Findings indicated that children captured various relevant physical aspects of their social and cultural environment. That was also suggested in several other empirical studies indicating that children's photographs mostly rely on their physical surroundings (Lilly & Fields, 2014; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005). In addition, such photographs might potentially represent children's social and cultural identities: as has been observed in some other studies (Kendrick & Jones, 2008a; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Although children's photographs can potentially reflect meaningful social and cultural perspectives, the present findings show that they were not strongly aware of such rich connotations as embodied in their images. Particularly in Session 1 and Session 2, the children's explanation of their images were limited to labelling the surface visual details rather than reading those details for cultural meanings.

Other studies (Coles-Ritchie et al., 2015; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005) have indicated that discussions can play a role in stimulating children to have more articulate insights of the rich cultural content in images. In particular, prompts within those discussions were considered to be vital for leading the children to reflect their social and cultural understanding through photography. The findings of Session 1 and Session 2 indicated that the kind of prompts within the individual and classroom discussions aiming the children to reflect on the cultural meaning in the images would not lead to strong insights from the children. As an attempt towards enriching those reflections and extending creative cultural expression from the children by combining their photographs with text (Jewitt, 2005; Lilly & Fields, 2014; O'Halloran, 2011), they were allowed to produce digital multimodality. But, once

again, cultural awareness and communication was not easily released by this device of allowing active manipulation of images towards new design constructions: the children mostly annotated their photographs with simply textual titles.

One the other hand, the findings of Session 3 and Session 4 regarding the children's awareness of the cultural connotations within their photographs indicated a slight advance of inquiry. Similar implications were also observed from the discussions with the children around their digital multimodal products, but their multimodal designs still seemed to fall short of the expected creative stimulus of multimodal meaning making. Moreover, the findings from classroom discussions around the images in Session 3 showed signs of the influence of cultural discussions carried out at the beginning of the session. This might imply that beyond the modest prompts in discussions around the images, advance cultural discussions can potentially prime the children's cultural awareness when reading images later. The findings of Session 3 and Session 4 suggested that the children's slightly extended cultural awareness and their reflections in expressing their own cultural context through images were related to those initial discussions.

Considering the marginal progress in Session 3 and Session 4 regarding the children's awareness and representation of their cultural understanding through photography, it is therefore suggested that having cultural discussions prior to taking images is a useful step for extending the nature of scaffolding that seems necessary. Therefore, the practical and conceptual value of carrying out cultural discussion prior to engaging with photography can be taken into account for designing further interventions that prompt deeper reading of material such as that studied here.

5.4.3. RQ2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes?

Photography is the main medium in this study for allowing children exposure to cross-cultural discussions in which they might develop a stronger sense of cultural diversity. Although the research questions were partially concerned with the role of photography as the central medium for cultural discussions, this second research question considers the use of photography in a slightly different approach for further investigation. In doing this, this research question combines the children's experiences with photography in the first two research questions from a broader perspective.

One common observation for the sessions conducted in this intervention indicated is that the children were genuinely interested in the discussed images throughout the episodes. As stated in studies reviewed (Burke, 2008; Lapenta, 2011), images prevented a possible monotony that could hinder the desire of the children to contribute to any cross-cultural discussion. They provide a tangible medium for communicating over a shareable baseline. In doing this, photography succeeds in "maintaining concrete and explicit reference points" (Collier & Collier, 1986) for the children to express their thoughts. As suggested in the findings, cultural elements that could be challenging to discuss, and vague for the children to identify and focus on, became more vivid as a platform for cultural discussions. Although the quality of the exchanges is limited, the cultural content of the discussions either emerged from a visual feature in the images or a broader cultural concept that was stretched out of a detail in the image. Findings indicated that the power of photography in depicting and providing real life objects, social and cultural settings maintained both interest from the children and at least started those more concrete cultural discussions that would have been demanding to

expect from the children without photography as a shared visual medium (Burke, 2008; Leitch, 2008; Moss et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008).

Another aspect of photography in visualising cultural concepts is the depiction of the children's own social and cultural context. Findings demonstrated that the photographs that were provided by the both schools reflected various cultural perspectives that would be difficult for the children to express and receive without the strength of photography in representing the authentic and familiar contexts.

Again the extent of the cultural awareness and gains is debatable Perhaps it was somewhat improved towards the end of the study, but it was evident that the images provided the children with opportunities (Kendrick & Jones, 2008b; Lilly & Fields, 2014; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005; Vasudevan et al., 2010) to exploit an achievement of richer cultural exposure. The fundamental role of photography was to allow the children a tool to reflect the social and cultural aspects of their lives. Considering the cultural content within the images in this intervention referring to both participating countries, photography should still be valued in future interventions. However, the possible design journeys that emerged from the first two research questions should be taken into account for better exploitation of photography for prompting more meaningful cultural awareness and inference.

5.4.4. RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes?

As indicated in Section 5.2.5, this research question was concerned with the teacher in the British school. The teacher had not carried out any sessions in relation to exploiting the shared photograph of the school in Turkey. Several issues were observed to be preventing the use of

images for curricular purposes. One major issue was time management. The teacher shared her concerns regarding exams, a school play, and the closeness of the school year in allocating time for integrating images in her classroom context. Another major issue was the teacher's apprehensions regarding the difficulty of using the images for curricular purposes due to accumulated familiarity of the children with those images. Therefore, this research question could not be answered in this intervention.

5.4.5. RQ4: How can effective dissemination of children's collaborative findings and interactions around them be achieved?

Although it was expected to be challenging - as indicated in some other studies (Gouseti, 2013a; Wastiau et al., 2013) - the digital interaction between the children in the two schools could not take place. One problem preventing the use of the digital platform for dissemination and interaction between the children was shared by the teacher and reflected parents' concerns about sharing images on digital space. On the other hand, the unfamiliarity of the teacher with digital technology and lack of support from the ICT in the school were stated issues causing abundance of dissemination and interaction on the digital platform in Turkish school. For those reasons, no significant findings were available for answering this research question.

6. INTERVENTION II

6.1.Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, useful cultural differences emerged between Turkey and the UK for the participating children to help them notice cultural diversity. Moreover, the international school twinning maintained a satisfying level of cultural material exchange between the two groups. From this perspective, persisting with school twinning is a sensible choice for this second intervention. On the other hand, another school twinning project with the participation of two new schools would be needed. Simply because children in the first intervention were already exposed to cultural differences of the other country to a significant extent, a new twinning project between Turkey and the UK was planned to be established, with participation of a new school from each country. Prior to initiating the link, the practical and theoretical implications emerging from the first intervention should be considered in relation to designing the second intervention.

6.2.Reflections on Intervention I for Shaping Intervention II

As stated in Chapter 4, Section 4.3, an attitude of Design Based Research was adopted for possible design alterations in further interventions that would best serve the aims of this study. Accordingly, several practical and conceptual implications drawn from the results of the first intervention were considered in designing the second intervention. In this section, the following modifications were identified for designing a more sensible intervention and, hopefully, a more successful study.

As indicated in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.4, there were two major constraints causing a lack of exploitation of the visual cultural materials for curriculum purpose. The first one was the time issue. It was indicated that carrying out sessions in classroom hours made allocating time for using images for pedagogical purposes challenging. The other issue was possible complications arising from executing weekly sessions with the entire classroom. In this regard, the concern was pedagogical difficulties in introducing images that the children were already familiar with. In overcoming this obstacle, sessions in the second intervention were planned to be conducted in out-of classroom hours. In this way, teachers could allocate more classroom hours for the integration of images for curriculum purpose. In addition, the number of children participating to sessions was intended to be less than in the previous intervention and students taken from more than one classroom. In this situation, teachers could have the rest of their classroom for pedagogically exploiting images while the research sessions could be carried out in a smoother way and with a limited number of children.

Another shortcoming of intervention 1 was the lack of dissemination and interactions through the Web 2.0 platform. As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.5, teachers stated several issues in abandoning Web 2.0 such as: privacy concerns, unfamiliarity with digital technology, and lack of support from the school. Considering those challenges and the difficulty of managing such activities with the children, adopting a Web 2.0 platform for dissemination and interactions between the children in participant schools was rejected for the second intervention.

Although a fair quantity of images was exchanged between the schools in Intervention I, several practical complications were encountered. One problem was the absence of images of the ‘My School’ cultural theme. Considering the significance of school culture for the

children, not having images from the school in Turkey could have denied useful insights from the UK school. Moreover, a limited number of cultural topics were introduced to the children. In the second intervention, the quantity of cultural themes was planned to be increased for fuller cultural inferences. However, the project did encounter issues in maintaining the exchange of images between the schools in the first intervention, despite the limited number of cultural subjects. This challenge was borne in mind for Intervention II. In this situation, it is more likely to experience missing images for more than one cultural topic. To avoid this, a research assistant was planned to be involved for managing the school twinning part of the project in Turkey.

Another practical challenge had been inviting the children to take photographs of their out-of school environment. As indicated Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2 and Section 5.2.4, the children in both schools occasionally did not provide images relating to out-of school contexts. In overcoming this, images of the relevant cultural themes were sought on the Internet. In order not to encounter such problems, the children were invited to take photographs other than those arising in their own school environment. Ito compensate this limitation; I would provide the children with photographs of cultural topics relating to out-of school contexts.

Digital multimodality

In addition to the practical alterations discussed, one conceptual implication was derived from the results of the first intervention for the design of this one. As illustrated in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3 and discussed in Section 5.3.2, having cultural discussions prior to taking images led the children to provide richer insights regarding their own cultural understandings. Moreover, such discussions could potentially lead the children to themselves capture more purposeful images. Also, considering my role in providing the children with photographs

concerning an out-of school cultural context, identifying children's cultural awareness is crucial in reflecting those understandings through images. In this way, both the quantity and quality of the photographs might be increased in this intervention for richer cultural exchanges.

Those practical and theoretical implications for design also influence the possible research questions for Intervention II. In particular, eliminating the integration of Web 2.0 technology entails no longer addressing the research question concerning effective dissemination and interaction on digital platforms. Accordingly, the research questions aimed for investigating in this intervention are the following:

RQ1(a) How do children interpret the cultural content of photographs?

RQ1(b) How do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography?

RQ 2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes

RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes?

In answering those research questions, participants, research procedure, data collection methods and analysis take place in the following section.

6.3.Research Context

6.3.1. Participants

As stated earlier, since the school twinning in the first intervention provided useful cultural exchanges between the schools, a new project was planned with participation of two new

schools. Similar to the first project, the criteria in selecting schools for this second intervention was planned around distinctiveness of local culture. For a prospective school in Turkey, an ordinary town located in the western part of the country was judged a convenient choice, while another town in the East Midlands also seemed suitable.

The search for schools to participate began with finding a school in Turkey. As indicated in the previous section, a fellow researcher was to be involved in this project for managing the school in Turkey. In this respect, a different approach was followed. In the first step of finding a participant school, several researchers were contacted and a fellow researcher who had studied at the University of Nottingham agreed to be involved. The researcher was doing his PhD in a university located in a town in the western part of Turkey. Considering the aim of finding such a town, finding a school in the location of the fellow researcher was ideal for this project. The town had a unique conservative local culture, with a population of around 70.000.

Following the granting of official permission from the local educational office in the town, I visited several schools with the fellow researcher. One head teacher found this project valuable and agreed to discuss the details. The school was a state religious middle school with a religion-oriented curriculum. The reason that a middle school was chosen was because the local educational office only allowed schools middle and above in the town to participate. The motivation of the head teacher was based on advice from the local educational office suggesting that schools should participate in international school projects. After that, we gave out translated information sheets describing the purpose of the project to teachers who had 10-11-year-old students, because that age group was central to this intervention. An English

teacher agreed to participate to the project with her two classrooms. Following that, the consent forms for the teacher and parents were provided.

Following the school in Turkey, my supervisor looked for a school in the East Midlands area. A town state primary school agreed to participate. In visiting the school, details of the project were explained to the head teacher. The head teacher introduced me to two Year 5 classroom teachers. The age group of both classrooms was 10-11-year-olds. I provided the teachers with information sheets and details of the project. Once the teachers agreed to participate, consent forms for the teachers (Appendix 1 Section C) and parents (Appendix 1 Section B) were circulated. The school had taken the initiative for them to be based on opting in.

6.3.2. Research Procedure

While the collaboration within the school twinning in the previous intervention was carried out between two classrooms, the collaboration between the schools in this project was slightly altered. As stated in the previous section, executing sessions in classroom hours caused issues for the teachers in allocating time for exploiting images around curriculum activities. Moreover, the familiarity of all the children in the classroom with those images had led the teacher to share hesitations in using images for pedagogical purposes. To prevent this, a limited number of children were selected from two classrooms for involving in this project, so the collaboration between the two schools was based on a group of children from each school.

In the British school, the two teachers were invited to provide 5 children from each classroom, so 10 children aged 10-11-years from two year-5 classrooms participated to this project. In the school in Turkey, the teacher was teaching English to several classrooms, but only two

classrooms in each age group, so the teacher spared 10 children aged 11 to 12from two classrooms. At the beginning of the intervention, I carried out a meeting with the participating children in both schools. In explaining their roles, the children were told that, as a group, they would represent various aspects of their cultural context: how they lived in this place. Following that I invited the children to name their group. The discussions led to 'School Ambassadors', as the phrase defined their roles in this intervention. It was suggested that they could share their experiences and work in a school assembly at the end of the project. I stated to the children that they will create exchanges of photographs with the other school and that they were free to suggest any cultural topic to learn more about the other cultural context. I also provided brief information regarding the life, schools etc. in both towns. Following that, I introduced some cultural themes for the children. At the end, the common cultural topics were decided to be 'My School', 'My School Playground', 'Neighbourhood' and 'Transportation'. The children were told that there would be weekly sessions focusing on a cultural theme. The sessions in the school in Turkey were carried out during the lunch time at the school. In the British school, the sessions took place during afternoons, during free activities, so the children did not miss core courses.

The sessions that were carried out throughout this intervention were similar in both schools. While the fellow researcher was responsible of managing the sessions in the school in Turkey, I was executing the sessions in the British school. A typical session started with introducing a cultural theme. Following that, the children were invited to discuss the cultural elements of the topic. Moreover, the direction of those discussions were towards identifying key cultural components and how they could be best represented through photography. The next step was taking photographs of the acknowledged significant cultural themes. For 'My School' and

'My School' playground themes, the children were invited to take photographs of their school setting. For the rest of the cultural topics, I was providing the children with around 20 images based on the suggestions volunteered by the children. At the end of the research, the children were offered an opportunity of presenting their experiences throughout the project in a school assembly.

For the sessions carried out in the Turkish school, the fellow researcher was invited to encourage the children to take photographs. In the absence of images, the researcher allowed the children to search on the Internet. In doing this, the fellow researcher identified time issues during the sessions, since carrying out discussions around many images provided by him could take significant time.

In this intervention a year-5 teacher who spared 5 children from his classroom for participation, was invited to recruit images shared by the school in Turkey for pedagogical reference in their classrooms. It was suggested that the cultural characteristics depicted in the images can potentially be used to draw children to engage with broader pedagogical concepts from the curriculum: in particular, geography and history.

Since five children from the classroom were participating in the research project and thus exposed to the shared images, the teacher agreed to not to involve those children in the classroom discussions. Consequently, they engaged with different activities at that time with the help of the assistant teachers. Then, several cultural topics were introduced to the teacher for negotiating sensible cultural themes for possible pedagogical uses The teacher suggested that beginning with the 'My School' cultural topic would be useful for the children. In realising that, their approach was based on introducing images that were more familiar to the

children's daily life experiences, so that the children could have an easier transition to more demanding cultural themes.

The teacher suggested three sessions. Due to time issues that were brought forward by the teacher later on, two sessions were actually carried out. During those sessions, the teacher demonstrated the images of 'My School' and 'Neighbourhood' topics to the children for pedagogical purposes.

In the following section, the data collection methods used in those sessions are described.

6.3.3. Data Collection

As in Intervention I, participant observation was the central research method. Within this, my own participant role was to orchestrate children towards engaging with photography for the purpose of developing a stronger sense of cultural diversity. To do this, I was required to provide the children with necessary prompts and to observe such interactions at the same time. While the verbal reflections of the children regarding images were audio recorded, I was also taking field notes by observing the children's engagements throughout the research. The field notes were digitised following the sessions.

The teacher was also central to the events of this intervention. In particular, the teacher was invited to have informal conversations during breaks, regarding possible recruitment of images towards curriculum purposes. Since the conversations with the teacher occurred during break times in several parts of the school, audio recording was not an option. Instead, field notes were taken during the discussions and they were digitised after the sessions.

6.3.4. Data Analysis

In analysing the data, key stages that defined the narrative in which the children curated images through cultural discussions were the primary concern. Since the cultural topics introduced were across the sessions, the first partition was based on the themes. Following that, each session that provided the phases of the cultural themes were analysed. In this way, the presentation here is in terms of recurring steps characteristic of each session structure. It was within these that the form and direction of such engagements were identified. The images that the children encountered and their comments were analysed within each of those recurring steps.

6.4.Findings and Analysis

In reporting findings, the cultural themes are considered to be the unit of representation of the narrative. The underlying rationale is that the cultural themes often exceeded more than a session. So that presenting findings based on the sessions can sometimes be limited due to difficulties in maintaining a clear structure and picture of the children's experiences that took place in this intervention. However, the sessions are not neglected in this reporting, because they deliver a sense of time and space for the activities. In benefiting from both dynamic features in this intervention, the sessions are considered as entities for offering a more vivid structure for reporting the findings of each cultural topic. In the following sections, the findings of each cultural theme are indicated.

6.4.1. My School

Cultural topic: My School

Purpose: Allowing the children to express their own cultural awareness, illustrate this through photographs and reading the cultural images of the twinned school

Participants: 5 girls and 5 boys, 10 children

Number of images: 7 images from the school in Turkey and 10 images from the school in the UK

The first cultural theme was 'My School' - taking two sessions. In opening with this l topic, the aim was to allow the children to have a smoother beginning through a more familiar cultural context. The photographs that were captured by the children are shown in the following tables.

Images shared by the school in Turkey

School Corridors

	
A picture of school corridors.	A painting on the walls.
The cultural difference regarding the noticeboard, and the speaker were discussed.	The painting and the writing on the wall were discussed.

Table 6.4-1. Pictures of school corridors in the school in Turkey

School Classrooms

		
A picture of a classroom.	Another picture of the classroom.	A picture of another classroom.
The board and portraits on the over the board were discussed.	The seats and the decorations were discussed.	The displays and the classroom setting were discussed.

Table 6.4-2. Pictures of classrooms from schools in Turkey

School Displays

	
A corner for a display.	Another corner for a display.
The flowers and the displays on the walls were discussed.	The content and purpose of the display were discussed.

Table 6.4-3. Pictures of some school displays in the school in Turkey

Images shared by the school in the UK

Studying Areas in the School

	
Studying area.	Open plan area.
The ways in which the children study outside of classroom areas are discussed.	The open plan for children to study and perform activities are discussed.

Table 6.4-4. Pictures of the studying areas in the school in the UK

Reading Areas in the School

	
Reading corner in the classroom	School library
The reading corner in classroom for children to read books is discussed.	The library and it's use for the children are discussed.

Table 6.4-5. Pictures of the reading areas in the school in the UK

Music at the School

	
Some musical instruments.	Nationwide bus service.
The music culture in the school was discussed.	The children's experiences with music are discussed.

Table 6.4-6. Pictures of music in the school in the UK

Displays at the School

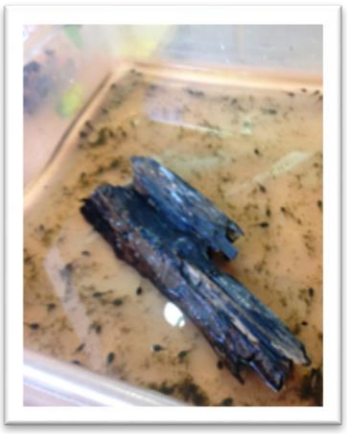
	
A display for science.	A display for literacy.
The display culture in the school was discussed.	The children's involvement in presenting their works on displays was discussed.

Table 6.4-7. Pictures of some displays in the school in the UK

Animals in the School



A box for animals.



Some tadpoles.

The children's experiences with the animals in the school were discussed.

Table 6.4-8. Pictures of animals in the school in the UK

6.4.1.1. Session 1

In the first session, the school culture was discussed with the children in order to identify significant cultural concepts to be shared with the children in Turkey. Following this, the children were invited to discuss possible ways for illustrating those cultural concepts through photography. The session ended with the children taking photographs of relevant parts of their school environment. The first findings from this session concerns the discussions of the school culture.

Children's expressing own cultural contexts

At the beginning of the session, the children were invited to express their school culture in which their constructive experiences take place. The underlying notion was to stimulate the children to identify the significant aspects of their school culture to be illustrated through photography. Once the intended cultural concepts were established for sharing, the ways, in

which those cultural meanings can be demonstrated through the mediation of photography were discussed. So that, more culturally rich images could be then captured by the children: allowing the partner children to have a more comprehensive understanding of the school culture here.

To prompting the children to express richer cultural concepts, discussions began with the school setting, in order to make an easier transition to more abstract concepts. To do that, the children were invited to name some of the areas in the school.

R: What do you have around this room?

C6: We have a library.

R: What about the library?

C6: It is quiet.

C9: When we all are settled down, it's nice and peaceful and quiet.

The children pointed out the library that was visible from the room. I associated the words 'peaceful' and 'quiet' with reading and prompted the children to share the reading habits in the school as a more fundamental part of the school culture.

R: So, how do you feel when you read? How can you describe it?

C8: We all share idea, correspond.

C9: It's peaceful.

C6: You are reading a book and thinking, oh like you're taking all in.

C4: We do like as a classroom one book and when we read it, we stop and talk about it and share ideas.

The children responded the prompt and described their experiences in reading books. I then invited them to share the reading space in the school for further explanation of their reading patterns.

R: Where do you think it's the best place to read, the library, the classroom?

C1: We don't really read like the library. We just get the books.

C9: Then go back to classroom and read.

R: Where do you read in your classroom.

C1: We have quiet area.

C9: That would be meaning has a thing like small extra room quiet area.

This led them to mention the quiet area in their classroom for reading. A quiet area can be a significant concept to be shared with children in Turkey, because they are less likely to have such space in their classrooms for reading.

I invited the children to express the ways they study in the school as another fundamental part the school culture.

R: Ok, how about studying, how do you do study.

C1: in year 5 and 6 we have classroom, we have tables, but outside, if you are not working very well you can just like, there is place outside, like go outside and work quiet.

R: So, there is a place for working.

C9: it's like an extra area for people, so if they like misbehave, there is a place where you can work like an area.

The above discussions led to a description of the open plan nature of the school. I further prompted the children to share their ways of studying in the open plan area.

R: how about, do you study individually or in pairs, groups

C3: We can individually or in groups

C9: It'd be somebody next to them, you're either sit next to someone on certain table and to that lesson do like literacy or something, you moved your literacy seat.

C4: Like we work in pairs and if like there are numbers on the table like 7, there will be like 3 so everyone.

Following reading and studying topics, I invited the children to think of other activities that they experienced in their school. In doing this, the purpose was to prompt them to widen their perspective school culture.

R: reading and studying, how about other activities

C7: We have got a music teacher, she is doing and she like piano, she's doing right now.

C1: They are doing music now and doing music thing, I really like music.

C7: Can me and her do the music.

C7: We can go to conservatory and take a picture from the side

C1: No but she might not like, you have to go and say it,

R: So if we can't take photos of them, how else we can show the music in your school?

C3: we can take a picture of our instruments

Hearing the music from the conservatory prompted the children to point out the music culture in the school. Moreover, they started to discuss how to represent the music in their school through photography. Although the initial idea was to take a picture of the teacher and the children performing music, Child 1 raised ethical concerns. After that, the children suggested different approaches and captured two alternative images.

Following the children's enthusiasm over these other activities in the school, I prompted them to express more ideas of this sort.

R: Ok, now we have discussed those, what else do you want to tell about your school. What is very interesting that you?

C5: Some classes have class animals.

R: But that's the cages outside.

C7: They are in the class in the room.

R: Real animals, wow you can do that. So what do you see, what people do with those animals.

C7: We feed them.

C7: Sometimes, in class we have snails and like they have got whole wall of pictures.

The children shared their experiences with animals as a unique aspect in school life. Although ways that the children could illustrate animals were not discussed, some ideas were exchanged regarding their experiences with animals. The children took two pictures representing animals in the school.

While assigning the children to take photos, two children seemed to be interested in taking pictures of different parts of the school other than those discussed ones.

R: So, what would you two want to do?

C1: We, could do the displays.

R: What about them?

C8: I want to show our works on displays.

C1: We could do amazing scientists in reception.

R: Any other display?

C8: We show the novel display about Shakespeare.

These prompts allowed the children to express their own interest. Moreover, these children shared the displays that they wanted to illustrate: they provided three pictures representing various displays in their school setting.

6.4.1.2. Session 2

Children discussing their own photographs



Figure 6.4-1. A picture of a school reading corner in the UK

R: Great, and now yours (Peter reading a book), so what do you see here?

C4: Peter reading a book.

C1: Peter with a blanket.

R: What does that blanket show you.

C1: it's all comfy and snuggly.

……

R: what else do you see

C4: there is a display

C6: and books on the shelves

R: so can we say it is a kind of reading corner

C1: yeah, we can say that

The children reflected on their initial plans and represented them in the image. Moreover, other children showed awareness of the visual features and the meaning of them in the image. However, the images are not fully indicating the reading corner as it is focused and missing a full view of the classroom setting.



Figure 6.4-2. A picture of a school library in the UK

R: How about that image?

C1: There are books and shelves.

C7: It is showing the library where you can get books.

R: Why did you take this one?

C3: We took it to show library and our books.

The children taking photographs representing a reading culture in the school also provided an image (Figure 6.3-2) of the library. The discussions showed that the children considered the library as a complementary to the previous image (Figure 6.3-1)



Figure 6.4-3. A picture of a groups children studying in a school in the UK

C4: They look very concentrated like they are helping each other

R: So, how do they look?

C1: Peter looks confused cause I know that Anna is helping.

R: How about John in it, so what does John tell us here

C4: It is showing use like you can work alone, and you can lay on table to concentrate.

The children illustrate how they study outside of the classroom. Discussions indicated that the children read the image as demonstrating practices of studying in pairs or alone in an area allocated for studying.



Figure 6.4-4. A picture of a school open plan in the UK

R: How about that picture?

C4: This is the area for group studies like literacy and other stuff.

C2: We do some painting there.

C4: It shows the tables, the area and door for our classrooms.

R: Why did not you take the first picture there?

C1: We thought that is a more quiet area.

R: What do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this picture?

C1: They can see the area for studying and other activities

Discussions indicate an awareness of open plan for doing art work and studying. With this image, the children expressed a significant feature of study practice in this school – although not one articulated in the terms of this description. Yet the image furnished the terms for potentially finding that concept.



Figure 6.4-5. A picture of a child playing musical instrument in a school in the UK

C2: Lily is playing with tambourine.

R: Ok what else?

C6: And there is a guitar at the background.

R: What the background tells us?

C6: Guitar, shelves, drums.

C3: In the background, it looks like it is actually from school music.

R: Ok, how about Lily herself?

C3: She is happy. She is having fun.

C3: yeah, she looks, she likes whatever this instrument.

Discussions around the image (Figure 6.3-5) indicated the children as conscious of key visual features that reflected their school music culture.



Figure 6.4-6. A picture of a school musical instruments in the UK

C1: There is another one from music.

R: Ok, so what do we see here, what is the difference here?

C1: There are drums and a guitar.

C2: It looks like there is more space in this one.

R: What does it tell us.

C4: It tells us that it is a music room because you can see different instruments like guitar and stuff.

Having a separate area for music activities, with appropriate equipment, as clearly evidenced by the image, completes the expression of a music culture in the school.



Figure 6.4-7. A picture of a couple of child and school animals in the UK

R: So what does this show?

C1: Mark is like here is the goldfish.

C7: They are not goldfish they are tadpoles.

C6: They are both excited and like showing what is going on.

R: How about this one?



Figure 6.4-8. A picture of some school animals in the UK

C8: It's the tadpoles.

C1: Oh, look at them.

R: What does this tell us?

C7: We can see the tadpoles.

R: How the children in Turkey can understand from these two pictures?

C9: They would see animals and how we like them.

With this picture (Figure 6.3-8), the children identified the kind of animals that they have inside their school. Discussions showed that the children were aware of the potential of those two images (Figure 6.3-7 and Figure 6.3-8) for sharing this involvement with animals.



Figure 6.4-9. A picture of a school science display in the UK

C1: This one is a science display and it shows the amazing scientist.

R: What can you see in the picture?

C1: Well, you see some scientist and their inventions.

Discussion indicated that the child's aim to illustrate a display about science and how it is addressed in the school.



Figure 6.4-10. A picture of a school literacy display in the UK

C8: I took this one. It is a novel display about Shakespeare.

R: Who did that?

C8: We painted some of them.

The child took a picture (Figure 6.3-10) of a display showing a sense of how an historical writer and literacy are endorsed in the school. Also, the child indicated that it was them who did the paintings and this a reflection on ownership. The discussions and the images suggest that allowing the children to express their school culture prior to taking pictures led to richer insights and images.

Reading cultural photographs of the other school site



Figure 6.4-11. A picture of a school corridor in Turkey

C4: What is that white thing on the wall?

R: That one, guess what is it.

C9: Speaker.

R: Yes, speaker, what do you think it is for?

C3: I think it is for do you know like in there is like bells to tell you to get back to the class.

R: Wow well done. So unlike here that the bell tells you when finish the class and get in the class.

…

C9: Yeah, and on the right wall, a chart board, we would not really have that.

C6: Because we have big displays.

R: What about displays?

C4: There is like empty walls, not many displays like ours.

…

C1: It's like a long corridor and there is like a load of doors I think they lead classrooms.

C6: You know the classrooms. they don't have like split of. It's just like a wall and a door.

R: What does this tell us?

C4: They don't have like the open area for studying like in our school.

R: So, unlike here, they don't have open plan just corridors, no tables in corridors.

C6: It doesn't look like our school maybe a secondary school.

R: Well, they are year 5, but it is a middle school not primary school.

C6: We have year 5 and 6 here then you go to secondary school.

In expressing their understanding of this image (Figure 6.3-11), the children were observed intrigued. They pointed out many visual features in the image, although only the most culturally significant ones are illustrated. The discussions indicated that the children interpreted several visual details and the prompts led them to look from different perspectives. For instance, the speaker on the wall led the children to identify ringing bells for break time in Turkish school. Moreover, the children reflected on details and how they depicted comparisons with their own school setting. In this respect, they became conscious of the displays and open plan nature of their school.



Figure 6.4-12. A picture of a classroom in Turkey

C4: It looks like they have a picture of someone special who they are learning about.

R: Which one?

C4: The one above the white board.

R: Ok, so what that can be?

C10: It can be probably the head teacher.

C6: Is it a photo of the teacher or like president like something?

R: It is not head teacher, but maybe president.

C9: Hmm, two things, probably their class teacher or on the side that could the teacher graduation.

R: No, that's the founder of Turkey, and these are the decorations, what do you notice about students.

The children identified several visual details in the image (Figure 6.3-12), such as the uniforms of the children, the lockers, and the water bottle and bags and they interpreted these. The



Figure 6.4-13. A picture of a classroom in Turkey

most significant visual feature that attracted attention was the portrait above the whiteboard. Moreover, the children seemed to be curious about that portrait. The prompts allowed the children to investigate the meaning of the portrait which led them to some understanding of how people value their founder in Turkey.

R: Yeah, decorations are for the national children day in Turkey

C8: What is national children day

R: It is the National Children's Day every year in April, something that you celebrate for children, even prime minister and ministers they give their chairs to children for a day.

C6: They must be very happy celebrating their day.

R: Yes, children decorate their classrooms, they have school plays, they read poems.

C6: It would be good to have children's day here too.

…

C3: I thought they have high chairs. They look uncomfortable.

R: So what else you see?

C8: They don't sit on chairs like ours they sit on benches.

…

C4: The classroom is smaller than ours and there are more children.

C1: It's like they don't have a reading corner like us.

R: I don't think they have

The children identified several visual elements in the image (Figure 6.3-13), such as a lack of displays, coat hangers, the ways the children sit, and how some of them are significantly taller The most culturally significant observation concerned the decorations: this led them to learn about the Children's Day celebrated in schools in Turkey. Moreover, they commented on benches and found them uncomfortable for the. The discussions around this image allowed children to become more aware of the cultural fabric of Turkish schools.

Although this image (Figure 6.3-14) was not depicting the classroom in the other school, a child contributing to the project in the Turkish school shared this picture. The richness of the classroom in the image was appealing for the children to have cultural discussions.



Figure 6.4-14. A picture of a classroom in Turkey

C6: They have got a quite small display, but it's really, really long.

C2: It is more like plain, so like white instead of different colours.

R: Why do you think it is like that?

C2: Maybe they don't paint thing like we do.

R: You mean that you have do more art work?

C2: Yes, and then we put them on our displays. Because like they write things and put them on their displays.

…

C3: They have got white walls and we've got colourful walls.

R: Yeah, but colours. Which one is more colourful, your classroom or their classroom?

C1: Their classroom is just white.

C4: And that space is a lot smaller, like they don't have reading corner or something for books.

C2: Not much space for children to move around and there are many children.

R: So, what does this tell us?

C2: I think we have more comfortable and friendlier classrooms.

The children identified several visual details in the image (Figure 6.3-14). Once the children shared their understandings of those details, prompts invited considering broader cultural differences. For instance, to investigate the lack of colours in the displays: this led them to become aware of their own art works. Moreover, the discussions around the classroom setting allowed them to recognise that their classrooms are more child-friendly than the one depicted for comparison in the image. In exchanging ideas grounded in the image, children learned about a different classroom context but also seemed to shape their perspective on their own classrooms.

6.4.2. My School Playground

Cultural topic: My School Playground

Purpose: Allowing children to express their own cultural awareness, illustrate them through photograph and reading cultural images of the twinned school

Participants: 5 girls and 5 boys, 10 children

Number of images: 6 images from the school in Turkey and 8 images from the school in the UK

'My School Playground' was the second topic that was introduced to the children to express their experiences and illustrate them through photography. As another familiar cultural context for the children, the aim was to prompt them to share their school playground

features and activities. This cultural theme covered two sessions. The photographs that were taken by the children are presented in the following tables.

Images shared by the school in Turkey

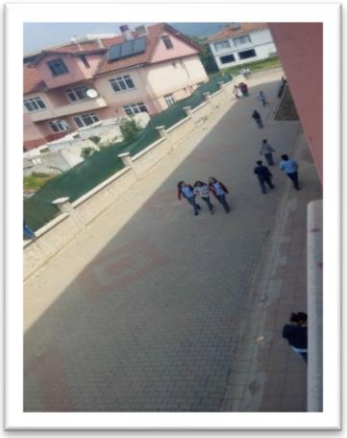
School Playground	
	
A picture of school playground. The flag poles and school playground were discussed.	A picture of the other side of school playground.

Table 6.4-9. Pictures of the playground of the school in Turkey

Reception	Quiet Area
	
A picture of school reception. The groups of the children and the reception were discussed.	The quiet area in the playground. The quiet area was discussed.

Table 6.4-10. Pictures of the reception and the quiet area in the school in Turkey

School Playground Games

	
A picture of children playing sports.	A picture of volleyball net.
The basketball court in the picture was discussed.	The games that the children play were discussed.

Table 6.4-11. Pictures of the playground games in the school in Turkey

Images shared by the school in the UK

Children Playing Sports

	
A picture of children playing sports.	A child playing basketball.
The discussion focused on how girls and boys play sports together.	

Table 6.4-12. Pictures of children playing sports in the school in the UK

School Playground Games

		
A picture of school playground.	A picture of school playground.	Children playing with 'Trim trail'.
The games painted on the playground for the children were discussed.		The discussion focused on how children experience some of the games in the playground.

Table 6.4-13. Pictures of school playground games in the school in the UK

Animals		**Quiet Area**
		
A picture of children holding an animal.	A picture of quiet area in the playground.	A picture of children resting in the quiet area.
The discussion was based on how children experience animals in the playground.		The children's experiences with in the quiet area in playground was discussed.

Table 6.4-14. Pictures of animals and quiet area in the playground of the school in the UK

6.4.2.1. Session 1

In this session, the school playground was discussed in order to identify significant cultural features to be shared. Moreover, the children were prompted to consider possible ways for

illustrating those details through photography. The session ended with the discussions of the photographs taken.

Children expressing their own cultural contexts

At the beginning of the session, the children were invited to express the physical parts of the school playground where their experiences take place. For the purpose of prompting, the discussions began with the school setting in order to make an easier transition to more abstract concepts. To do that, the children were invited to name some of the areas in the school.

> *What is the most interesting thing you have in your playground that you want to share with others?*
>
> *8: we have animals in cages in the playground.*
>
> *10: we have chickens, rabbits, guinea pig*
>
> *H: what do you do with them*
>
> *4: we feed them, we love them.*

The children believed that the animals in cages in the playground would be a significant part of their school playground to share. And they provided insights of their experiences with the animals.

I then invited the children to express their thoughts around other parts of the school playground that they could share.

> *R: Ok, let's move to next one, so what can we show, any ideas?*
>
> *C4: The chess board.*
>
> *C3: The chess board in the playground.*
>
> *C9: Maybe the clock, there is a clock on the floor.*
>
> *R: So, which one is more interesting?*

C4: The chess board.

The children believed that a chess board painted on the playground would be an interesting part of their activities in the playground to share. Towards the end of discussing the chess board, one child shared an idea regarding a play area.

C4: I have got an idea we could do the trim trail.

C3: Yeah, I could be on trim trail.

I then prompted the children to express their favourite activities in the playground.

H: So, let's think of the next one, what you mostly like to do in the playground?

3: The boys can be little bit playing football.

1: Oh yeah, football.

H: Do girls play football too?

3: Yeah, girls can play; girls can play everything that boys can.

Discussions indicated that the children identified football as a common activity. Considering the first response, I prompted the children to consider whether girls play football. That led to discussing a significant cultural aspect of playground culture in UK schools

Invited to share more experiences with the playground, one child pointed out that a photo of somebody playing basketball could be good to share.

C10: How about basketball cause we got basketball; we can do like somebody is defending and somebody trying jump over defender and trying to score it.

C3: I think girls playing basketball is interesting too

Discussion indicated that the children had reflected on the previous discussion and now suggested that showing girls playing basketball would be good to share. Following that, I prompted children to express more details about their school playground.

H: is there any are for you to sit and chat with friends in the playground?

10: Oh like a rocking chair

H: like a comfortable area

9: we have an area in playground where there is like benches and trees, you are not allowed to run there, it is like to sit down

8: and there is table as well but you can put your sheet there and write as well

4: quiet area

8: we call it quiet area

The children pointed out a quiet area where they sit and relax with friends in the playground.

6.4.2.2. Session 2

Children discussing their own photographs



Figure 6.4-15. A picture of a couple of children holding an animal in a school playground in the UK

R: What would you tell about this image?

C7: Matilda and Elizabeth are holding a guinea pig.

C5: They love it and stroke it.

R: What else?

C5: You can see the cages behind them.

R: What would the children in Turkey understand from this picture?

C7: They would see that we have animals in our playground and we can love them.

When the image (Figure 6.3-15) is analysed, it is apparent that the children fairly reflected their shared experiences with the animals in their playground. Moreover, the discussions indicated that they were conscious of the visual meanings in the images for representing their engagement with these animals.



Figure 6.4-16. A picture of several children playing in a school playground in the UK

R: This is about trim trails right?

C4: Yes, I took this picture.

R: So what does the picture tell us?

C4: It tells us that we have a trim trail in the playground and we pull the ropes and play.

C5: It shows, we have fun.

R: Do you think the children in Turkey can understand that?

C4: Yes, because they are playing and having fun.

The children illustrated the trim trail in their playground by taking a picture of them playing around it.



Figure 6.4-17. A picture of girls playing basketball in a school playground in the UK

R: I thought you were going to show girls and boys playing together.

C1: We were going to, but she said girls playing basketball is better.

R: Does it really look like you play together?

C3: I told him we were not around, but he did listen me.

C1: There is football too, see there, it is just you didn't pay attention when I took the photo.

R: That's fine, what do you think the children in Turkey can understand from this image?

C10: They can see that girls play basketball.

Although the children aimed to illustrate that 'girls and boys play sports together', they became aware that the image did not effectively show that. Nonetheless, they managed to capture how girls play sports in the school too. Moreover, the previous discussions regarding the children's experiences in the playground led the assertion and representation of a significant cultural feature of a UK school, namely that both girls and boys are exposed to, and given equal opportunities in, the same activities.



Figure 6.4-18. A picture of a couple of children resting in a quiet area in a school playground in the UK

R: So, you took this picture for showing the quiet area in your playground.

C2: Yes, Jessica and Emily are sitting and resting in the quiet area.

R: I though we discussed that you could show children chatting.

C8: This is ok too. They are peacefully resting.

C7: It shows our quiet area.

C4: It would mean something like we have a place for resting and reading in the playground.

The image (Figure 6.3-18) indicated that the children reflected on previous discussions of their playground by taking a picture of the quiet area there, aiming to illustrate how they have an area in a playground that is purely for resting and reading quietly.

Reading cultural photographs of the other school site



Figure 6.4-19. A picture of several children and a school reception in Turkey

> *C8: There is like different groups of people, some are over there, some in the middle and you can some children around the reception*
>
> *R: What else?*
>
> *C3: Like Lily said, there is a group of people like what like girls in all one like, you can see just a bit of boys in one*
>
> *R: You think girls and boys are in different places. Why do you think they are not talking or hanging with each other?*
>
> *C8: Like they don't feel friends like they don't recognise each other.*

The child labelled several visual features in this image (Figure 6.3-19). Moreover, he reacted to some useful cultural details there. The discussions indicated noticing that girls and boys seemed to be distanced from each other. They interpreted such distance between genders and attributed it to a cultural code. Although such a cultural perspective is not now so common, this image seems to spontaneously embody that meaning. What is significant is the children's ability for drawing such cultural inference from the image: showing that they can deploy the image to reflect on relevant cultural detail.



Figure 6.4-20. A picture of a school playground with children in Turkey

R: What do you see in this picture?

C7: It's like they are ice-skating.

R: It is actually the concrete

C5: It can be dangerous for children and there isn't any green area for them

C3: Yes, we have green areas for playing and running.

R: What else?

C3: I don't see any games on the playground like our chessboard.

C8: Also, it seems like only boys play games, girls just chat with each other.

R: Why do you think that?

C8: I don't see any girl playing anything.

…

C3: There is a sort of office thing there

R: what kind of office?

C2: first aid or head office.

C7: No, it's reception.

R: Yes, it is reception. Why do you think the reception is there?

C5: We have it in the building.

R: Why do you think they have it next to the gate?

C5: Maybe because anybody can enter the playground, the reception is there like for checking people and stuff.

R: Good point, why do you have your reception in the building?

C6: We have fences you cannot go to playground. You have to go enter the building first.

R: So the point is to make sure right people enter the playground.

The children reflected on several visual details in the image (Figure 6.3-20). They noticed how reception is in a different location to that of their own school. They recognised the reason for such difference. The significant cultural interpretation from the children was the differing pattern between girls and boys in playing games in the playground. The children attributed this to a lack of variety in the games available for the girls to join. In drawing such inferences, the children also reflected on the previous image (Figure 6.3-19).



Figure 6.4-21. A picture of a school playground in Turkey

R: What do you see in this one?

C8: I see two poles.

R: What do you they are for?

C5: Like flags.

R: Why do they have national flags.

C5: They must love it very much.

R: Yes, Turkish people love their national flag.

…

C3: There is a construction area at the background, it can be dangerous for children.

R: Why do you think that?

C3: Because it looks open and the children might go there after school.

R: What about the construction sites in here?

C: You cannot go near them, there is like fences for protection.

Despite labelling several visual details in the image (Figure 6.3-21), two of them led to particular cultural discussions. The prompt arising from the children's reaction to the poles in the playground drew them to become aware of the national flag as a major cultural concept

in Turkey. In addition, the children pointed out a cultural difference emerging from the unprotected construction area and the possible danger to children in the school.

6.4.3. Neighbourhood

Cultural topic: Neighbourhood

Purpose: Allowing the children to express their own cultural awareness, discussing the provided images to be shared and interpreting cultural images of the twinned school

Participants: 5 girls and 5 boys, 10 children

Number of images: 6 images from the school in Turkey and 8 images from the school in the UK

Opening the project with 'My School' and 'My School Playground' as topics allowed the children to become familiar with exchanging familiar cultural understandings. Following that, 'Neighbourhood' was considered to be another cultural theme where a further part of daily experiences occurs. With this topic, it was intended that the children could gain a sense of different local cultures by engaging with images reflecting various features of the neighbourhood in Turkey. Considering the benefits of carrying out discussions prior to taking photographs in the first two cultural topics, the children were invited to share their cultural awareness for also this theme also.

In applying this strategy, several conceptual and practical considerations were taken into account. First, inviting the children to have cultural discussions was judged to be significant for exploring the children's established cultural understandings of this theme. By doing so, their maturity in conceiving relevant cultural aspects of the concept 'Neighbourhood' could

be potentially identified for scaffolding them towards recognising similarly mature cultural implications of this topic as witnessed in Turkey. The second factor arouse from not allowing the children to take photographs of their neighbourhoods - to avoid practical and ethical complications.

The 'Neighbourhood' cultural theme was carried out in two sessions. In the first, children were invited to express their cultural understandings and identify relevant details for their neighbourhoods, which they would later represent through photographs. In the following session, children were provided with numerous images reflecting their shared cultural concepts so as to select the richer ones what could be delivered to Turkey. In the same session, a set of images demonstrating various cultural aspects of 'Neighbourhood' culture in Turkey were introduced to the children for comparative discussions. The next Section indicates the findings of the children's established cultural understandings of their own neighbourhoods and the emerging cultural concept they wished to represent.

Images shared by the school in Turkey

Streets

		
A picture of a street.	A picture of a street corner.	A picture of another street.
The parking and apartments were discussed.	The apartment and the shops were discussed.	

Table 6.4-15. Pictures of streets in the town in Turkey

Gardens		Houses
		
A picture of a house with a garden.	A picture of a house and open garden.	A picture of some houses.
The garden and the walls were discussed.	The garden, growing vegetables and climate were discussed.	The housing style and the minaret were discussed.

Table 6.4-16. Pictures of gardens and houses in the town in Turkey

Images from the school in the UK

Streets		
		
A street with attached houses.	Street with different housing style.	A street with hedges.
The attached houses and some street signs were discussed.	The pavement, the street sign and the houses were discussed.	The hedges and pet walking culture were discussed.

Table 6.4-17. Pictures of streets in the town in the UK

Gardens

		
A picture of a front garden.	A picture of trampoline and gardens.	A back garden.
Nationwide busses are discussed as a choice of travelling within the country.	The games equipment in gardens were discussed.	

Table 6.4-18. Pictures of some gardens in the town in the UK.

Local Shops	**Parks**
	
Some local shops.	A picture of a park.
The importance of local shops were discussed.	The pavement and the cyclist in the picture were discussed.

Table 6.4-19. Two pictures of local shops and a park in the town in the UK

6.4.3.1. Session 1

In this session, the 'Neighbourhood' cultural topic was introduced for sharing cultural understandings.

Children's expressing their own cultural contexts

In inviting the children to express their awareness of a neighbourhood culture, they were invited to name the relevant parts of their neighbourhoods. This would allow them to start from basic cultural elements. Following their suggestions, they were prompted to share their relevant experiences as shaped around those elements. In airing their personal perspectives, the children were led to consider whether those experiences were significant enough for the children in Turkey to gain understanding of their neighbourhood experience.

The first discussed concept was 'gardens' in the UK, following a suggestion from one child.

C4: We might have different gardens because they might have small ones.

R: So gardens, let's start with gardens.

C10: there is like front garden and back garden.

C3: Trampolines in gardens.

R: What about them?

C3: I have one in my garden and jump on it when the weather is nice.

R: So, why do think we should show the children in Turkey.

C3: It would be like showing them what games we play in our gardens.

R: What else about gardens?

C4: Like fences or hedges around them.

C10: Yeah, sometimes cars park in front gardens.

Discussion indicated how the children shared various uses of the UK garden. Moreover, they expressed some of their personal experiences with their own gardens. It was apparent in the discussions that they valued games within their gardens.

Following this theme, one child pointed out the solar panels over the houses. I prompted the children to further share their ideas regarding housing features in their neighbourhoods.

C1: We have solar panels.

R: Yes, solar panels. How about the houses themselves?

C9: It may be different because some like separate and some are actually combined together.

C6: Attached.

R: Yes, what else?

C6: Semi-detached.

C9: Also with the houses, our houses right now, they are a lot different than other people in their houses because they are just probably like. I don't know like a piece of metal and clothe over the door the floor sand all.

This allowed the children to express various other details of houses in their neighbourhoods. One child stated that their housing style might differ from others and showed their serious interest in sharing their houses theme with the children in Turkey.

Another child suggested the feature of pavements. In considering their difference in Turkey, I prompted the children to think further about this for the UK.

R: What else?

C6: pavements.

C9: Some can be smooth and some can be bumpy.

…

R: So why are they different some are close to the ground some are high why?

C10: I don't know why.

R: What do you think it can be?

C9: Because probably cars.

R: What else?

C9: Pedestrians.

C1: Speed bumps.

R: What else?

C1: I know because if you go like on your bike.

R: Yes, bike, but it is about pedestrians, but what kind of pedestrians need lower pavement?

C10: Elderly people.

R: Yes, right? How can you on pavement if it is too high?

C3: Exactly, if you got a wheelchair, you cannot go on pavement.

C9: I know it because the pavement is like that big and there will be like small volume to go on, so if you run a bike or something you don't actually go like that, you will fly off.

Another child pointed out the street signs in neighbourhoods in the UK.

C3: No like bus sign says I can go with rainbow one and how many minutes and change.

R: What else?

C9: There are signs like triangle signs circle signs they all mean different things.

R: Yeah, like this is school area or no parking.

C4: Lolipop ladies.

R: Good one,

C10: Yeah but we don't have them in our street,

R: Yeah, but it is a common thing in the UK.

C6: There are some information signs to help people to get places.

R: And information signs what is very obvious one.

C7: The street name.

R: So signs in general. Yes.

C1: It is something different in neighbourhood. The yellow lines so if you go around the corner because you cannot park there because cars have to go around the corner, so you cannot park there.

9: Also the yellow line is one very way on the side so that the cars cannot pass the yellow line.

3: One more thing, you know the things that tell you how like what speed you go in.

6.4.3.2. Session 2

In this session, the children were shown numerous photographs that were taken based on cultural details shared in the previous session. They were invited to comment on how the images represented the cultural understandings discussed. Then a set of images shared by the school in Turkey were shown for discussion. Some of those images indicating the children's varying understanding are presented in the following section.

Children discussing their own photographs

The discussions carried out around some of those images shown in Table 5,6 and 7 are presented.



Figure 6.4-22. A picture of a street with some street signs in the UK

C5: There are lots of signs like the one give way 50 yards.

R: What else?

C10: There is "slow" one for cars.

C3: There is a lamp post.

C1: If you go too fast you can go like sort of go up in the air.

R: What else?

C6: There is different signs.

R: So, what do those signs tell us about street in your neighbourhoods?

C5: It's probably like for pedestrians and safety

C1: So like we wouldn't get hit by cars

Discussions indicated that the children were aware of several cultural details in the image (Figure 6.3-22). Moreover, the prompts allowed them to acknowledge cultural meaning embedded in the image.



Figure 6.4-23. A picture of a park and a cyclist in the UK

R: How about this one?

C2: There is a sign saying 20 miles per hour.

R: Good, the sign.

C1: There is a bus stop.

C6: There is like one those cyclist.

R: What about that?

8: There is light jacket for to spot you when there is a car running to you.

R: So it is for safety right?

8: Yes, and also helmets

…

C1: When you pass the road, it's not like just bad material, bricks instead.

R: What does that tell us?

C4: It's good for something like elderly people, wheelchair and bikes.

In discussing this image (Figure 6.3-23), the children labelled significant visual cultural features. Moreover, they reflected on some of those details that were thoroughly discussed in the previous session. For example, they could spot the low pavement and its cultural importance for certain people living in this place.



Figure 6.4-24. A picture of a trampoline in a garden and an alley in the UK

C3: Yay, trampoline.

C9: Basically you can entertain.

R: So, there is a garden you can put equipment.

C10: Swings and stuff for fun.

…

C4: It shows the bin and like, do you know over there (the background of the photo) there is like some people in back gardens, it's like it gives an idea what they would be like.

C1: There is an ally going down merely leading somewhere else.

R: Sorry?

C1: Do you know where the bin is, there is an ally leading there?



Figure 6.4-25. A picture of terrased street in the UK

R: What is difference here, why do you think I took this one?

C10: Is it because like it is just being built and also it's attached.

C2: They are all attached.

…

C8: Like the doors are different than the ones we have like they are not more than or normal doors.

C6: It looks as though they haven't got drive way like a really big one.

C4: What I think is that they have got like a square a bit of concrete and like a big bit grass in the middle and they don't have like number 6 said they may not have a big driveway.

R: Why do you think the driveway is small?

C4: Maybe, it was just built like that.

R: Ok, why do you think they did not make a big driveway when it was built?

C3: Some streets are like that, some have bigger driveways.

Discussions indicated that the children could identify some of the useful visual details in the image (Figure 6.3-25). Although they pointed out the narrow driveway in the street, yet they could not react to prompts for perceiving the traditional street structures.

Reading cultural photographs of the other school site



Figure 6.4-26. A picture of several houses in Turkey

5: It looks very sunny and bright.

6: It looks like quite a happy village, but some of the houses are like not much clean.

1: It looks like as it has been very, very long time, but houses like trees grown behind and have got taller than them.

2: It looks like it is a very big village, it looks really like big and there are lots of houses in the village.

…

1: I like the big tower.

H: Yes, what is that, have you seen it before?

1: Oh yeah, I have seen it. It's like there is really big centre and there is load of paths leading to different places, isn't that a clock tower.

H: Hmm, no. What do you think it can be?

2: Is it a place of like religion?

H: Yes, it is a place of religion. So have you seen old churches? They are pretty big and tall right? So this is a part of mosque.

…

1: But like more modern houses, I was like that one that we don't really have that type of house. Are there bricks because they don't look like bricks?

H: They don't look like bricks, I guess there is like bigger ones like the one is used for big buildings not for houses.

1: Yeah, but like rectangular.

H: No, I don't think there are bricks. Anything else, it looks colourful right. In here, there are not many colours in one neighbourhood; it's either bricks red or white….

1: Or creamy.

1: There is orange, blue, white……

H: So it seems like everybody….

1: Is it like independent houses?

H: Yeah right, it doesn't look like there is a clear structure like council saying look this is the structure you cannot change. It's like I am going to put a house there, it's my land right?

1: they just like design it on their own taste and colour.

R: So, why do you think they can build any kind of house they want in Turkey.

1: Because they have got more space to do what they want.

H: Imagine bigger picture of the country of culture in general. What would you think is different also?

1: There is probably a lot bigger country.

The children pin pointed significant visual details reflecting various culturally-specific aspects of the neighbourhood in the image (Figure 6.3-26). Moreover, they interpreted those visual features and drew some cultural inferences regarding the neighbourhood. The discussions indicated that the children were made aware of weather and religious building in the image. The prompts arising around the children's comments on the diversity of houses led them to realise that people are free to build different shapes and colours of houses in Turkey. In

addition, the children attributed the differences in housing culture between the two countries to the amount of land available. The discussions indicate that the prompts led the children to draw rich cultural inferences from the image.



Figure 6.4-27. A picture of a street and gardens in Turkey

C9: It looks sunny and bright.

C1: It's like big houses?

C3: They don't have fences or hedges on the left.

R: What do you think about the green garden on the left

C1: It's like very long grass or something, it looks like they are growing something there.

R: Well done, I think they grow some vegetables there.

C4: It's like fresh vegetables.

5: Maybe, because like they have space and nice weather

…

C1: The road looks like dirty and there isn't like any pavement.

R: Cell, I guess it is still under construction, but what about the kind of pavement on the right?

C10: It's like high, not like ours.

C9: You can't ride a bike or go with a wheelchair

R: Yes, it doesn't look like wheelchair friendly right?

…

R: How about the posts on the right?

C7: There are like wires, are they for phones.

R: No, it is electricity.

C7: We have only phone wires

R: What do you think about the electricity wires

C5: They can be dangerous like when it's like windy and storm

…

C3: They have balconies.

R: Why is that?

C4: Because it's sunny most of the time.

The children detected and labelled several visual features in Figure 6.3-27, more specifically the influence of the weather on the housing arrangements (balconies) or on the surrounding activities (people growing vegetables). Moreover, the children compared some of the visual details in the street with their own cultural context. For instance, the children recognised that the pavements are not as wheelchair friendly as theirs.

6.4.4. Transportation

Cultural topic: Transportation

Purpose: Allowing the children to create stories of relevant cultural concepts, discussing the provided images to be shared and interpreting cultural images of the twinned school

Participants: 5 girls and 5 boys, 10 children

Number of images: 4 images from the school in Turkey and 7 images from the school in the UK

As indicated in the previous cultural theme, the children could draw out some of the fundamental and culturally-relevant elements of their neighbourhoods. To develop on this, the children were encouraged to share experiences that were taking place around the shared features of their neighbourhoods. Although this led to useful insights about neighbourhood culture, the same approach might not have been so effective for the theme of transportation. Therefore, the aim was to allow the children to go beyond simply labelling elements of transportation, towards more culturally rich experiences. In the first session, children were invited to create stories around common transportation themes: these could potentially stimulate them to provide richer insights of life patterns in the UK.

In the following session, numerous photographs that were taken based on the children's shared stories were shown to them for reflection on the cultural themes within these images. In the same session, some photographs, reflecting various aspects of transportation in Turkey, shared by those children, were presented to the UK children discussions.

Images shared by the school in Turkey

Buses	**School Service**
	
Local minibuses.	A school service.
The purpose of minibuses for a town was discussed.	Going to school by a school service was discussed.

Table 6.4-20. Pictures of a minibus and a school service in the town in Turkey

Taxis	Cycling
	
An ordinary yellow taxi.	A picture of children cycling.
The taxi and parking spot allocated for the taxi were discussed.	The safety regulations for cycling were discussed.

Table 6.4-21. Pictures of a taxi and some cyclists in the town in Turkey

Images from the school in the UK

Buses	
	
Nationwide bus service.	Local bus service.
Nationwide busses are discussed as a choice of travelling within the country.	Local buses are discussed an option for going to school and travel within the city.

Table 6.4-22. Pictures of buses in the town in the UK

Railways



A platform in the city train station.

Trains are discussed as a fast and safe option for travelling within the country.



City tram service.

City tram service is discussed as a common option for travelling within the city.

Table 6.4-23. Pictures of railway services in the town in the UK

Taxis		**Cycling**
		
Modern taxis.	Traditional taxis.	Cycling to school.
The modern taxis are discussed as a fast travel within the city.	Traditional taxis are discussed as preserved culture.	Cycling is discussed as an environmental choice for going to school alongside safety precautions.

Table 6.4-24. Pictures of taxis and some cyclists in the town in the UK

6.4.4.1. Session 1

In Session 1, the transportation culture was discussed with the children.

Children expressing their own cultural context

In inviting the children to share cultural implications of transport in their town, they were challenged to identify the common transport options they know. Then, in order to get richer cultural discussions, the children were divided into groups and asked to create some scenarios that would depict the true features of their transportations choices. Some of the resulting discussions are presented below.

What do you understand from transportation?

1: A bus.

H: Why?

1: Because you can have big ones and small ones.

6: A tram.

9: Scooter or bike.

2: Car.

9: A jumbo jet, airplane

10: Airplane cannot get in city.

H: What else?

10: A car.

3: Taxi.

4: Motorbike.

H: But more public transportation.

2: Trains.

3: Trams.

H: So buses, tram, trains, cars,

9: It might sound silly but it's good feet.

6: Public transportation and feet?

3: A taxi.

H: Alright, what do we use to come to school?

2: I walk.

9: A car, a bus.

H: Bus yes, there is bus stop nearby.

2: you can go on a bike.

3: I got my scooter.

10: Skateboard.

As indicated in the discussion, the children characterized most of the vehicles that they travel on. I then invited the children to create some stories that would demonstrate people's experiences with those travelling options in the UK. In doing this, the children were divided into three groups of three.

C9: Well, in the first one, they are riding bikes or scooters to school instead of going with coaches.

C3: They are wearing helmets and yellow jacket for cars. chatting about how hard the test work.

C8: And they are chatting and happy about going school and play games, stuff like that.

R: So something about school, and anything they use on the any traffic lights etc.

C8: They use like zebra crossing stuff like that.

The children were responsive to the idea of creating scenarios and they needed only a short amount of time to come up with a story arising from their own experience. The story pinpointed some concepts, such as helmets, green vests and zebra crossing that are a part of travelling culture in the UK.

C1: So someone is walking to the bus stop and his two friends there are chatting, so he joins them and he catches the bus because they are going to school in morning.

R: Ok describe the bus stop.

C1: The bus stop is a not much crowded because it is in the neighbourhood.

R: And what kind of bus would be interesting.

C1: A double decker bus and they are checking the time from the timetable in the bus stop.

This group constructed a story reflecting another common travelling option to school in the UK. Discussions indicated that the children provided some useful details capturing the experience of travelling by bus in the UK.

R: What is your story?

C4: What are we doing is a lady and she is taking her first to on to the train and she's going from Nottingham train station to London.

R: What else?

C4: She feels happy that her train arrived on time.

C5: She didn't miss it.

C4: Because she might have a meeting and she doesn't want to be late.

R: So relieved what else?

C6: She is going to have a suitcase.

C4: Yeah, she's going to have a suitcase and she is going wear smart clothes.

The story that was created by this group focused on trains as an option for travelling to different cities.

The discussions indicated that the children could share various aspects of transport culture in the UK through creating stories. In doing this and in considering the variety of transportation choices, the children went beyond merely naming vehicles for travelling and expressed richer experiences that people could live. Also, the children constructing new stories because they completed their allocated story in a short period of time. Therefore, exploiting story making for drawing the children to be more expressive proved to be a useful approach for this cultural topic.

Following the construction of the stories, numerous images were captured aiming to represent the cultural details revealed through them.

6.4.4.2. Session 2

In this session, children were invited to comment on several photographs based on the shared stories from the previous session. Then the session was moved towards introducing some images shared by the other school and reflecting the transport practices in Turkey. In the following section, findings are presented from children's interpretations around the images demonstrating various aspects of the transport scene.

Children discussing their own photographs

In this section, the images in Tables 6.3.20, 6.3.21, 6.3.22, 6.3.23 and 6.3.24 were discussed with the children. The discussions carried out around some of those images are Illustrated below.



Figure 6.4-28. A picture of several students taking a local bus in the UK

R: Ok, what do you see here?

C5: People are getting on the bus.

R: What kind of people?

C5: I don't know.

C1: Oh, school kids. That's like our story.

C8: That's someone from our school.

C4: There is two people waiting for their bus.

R: So, these are students.

C10: They are three students, but one of them may not be student, it may be just a normal person getting the bus.

R: The one at the back?

C10: No, that one is definitely a student.

C1: It's a double decker bus.

C9: There is a teenager taking her daughter to school.

R: Are you sure it's her daughter?

C9: It might be her sister too because sometimes parents or your brother and sister take you to school.

Discussions indicated that the children recognised how the scene in the image (Figure 28) reflected their story. Through that image, the children explained how the bus is one option for going to school. Moreover, discussions around the image served to establish the fact that



Figure 6.4-29. A picture of a group of children cycling in the UK

children can be taken to school by a parent or a sibling – if over 16. Some of the children were quite interested in the image because they were also taking buses to their schools.

> *R: What do you see in this image? You asked for this image last week.*
>
> *C1: So, it's three people friends two of them are on scooters and one of them is on a bike and one has got a helmet on.*
>
> *R: What it looks like what they are heading to?*
>
> *C3: They are heading to a festival.*
>
> *C1: They are heading to school, school.*
>
> *Some discussions took place among student about whether it's school or festival.*
>
> *C8: That's school.*
>
> *C5: They have got light jackets on.*
>
> *R: Yeah, school or they are leaving from school.*
>
> *C10: Because they are like, because they have got helmet and jacket on, it's probably like on a big road.*
>
> *C4: Because you just said yellow jacket.*
>
> *C1: If you are walking in a dark and you are crossing the road and if you don't have one of them on, people cannot see you, but if you have them on then they will see you.*

Discussions indicated how the children recognised significant cultural details in the image (Figure 6.3-29). Moreover, the image led the children to reflect on those details and elaborate them for expressing further understandings. This shows a sensitivity to the cultural significance of the image for children in Turkey to have a useful understanding of a common travelling option to UK schooling. As partially reflected in the discussions, children were responsive to expressing their own cultural knowledge through their reading of the image.

Reading cultural photographs of the other school site

In this section, findings from the children's reading of images reflecting transport in Turkey are presented.



Figure 6.4-30. A picture of a school service in Turkey

R: How about this one?

C1: Here we have a kind of like a smaller school bus and here it looks like this random lady is taking her child to it and this is a kid of yeah like I said a minibus, but it looks like a van, but I wouldn't really have one of these because you never know you sitting down and a crooked like that wants to take you.

R: But the parents would know the driver.

C2: And there is a sign

C6: I think it says stop.

R: Yes, stop sign. What do you think it is for?

C6: For safety of children.

R: So, imagine the driver is safe would you prefer this one?

C2: I would prefer my parents or alone.

R: Why is that?

C1: Because like I said we don't trust strange people.

C7: That's just a school bus, so no old people can go and steal children.

C2: Yes, they can.

Discussions indicated that the children were aware of cultural significance in the image (Figure 6.3-30). In addition to highlighting the school minibus, the children shared concerns regarding the safety of going to school this way. In doing so, the children reflected on their own cultural context: one in which they were strongly encouraged not to engage with strangers, or to register the "stranger danger" as it's called in the UK. In engaging with the image, children not only became familiar with the main travel options to school, but also discussed safety issues surrounding them.



Figure 6.4-31. A picture of a group of children cycling in Turkey

C1: Those bikes look like sports bike, so they might be like all of them on a hike.

R: Well, the children in Turkey shared this photo, but in general students go to school like that.

C: So, they don't have hybrid vest for being seen by cars.

R: No,

C: That can be like really dangerous.

C: They don't seem like having helmets too.

R: Some people have, but it's not common.

C: I wouldn't ride a bike like that.

The children identified key cultural differences in the image (Figure 6.3-31). Moreover, they recognised that there were safety issues with children riding bikes without helmets or Hi-Viz vests. From this perspective, the children registered that not all countries have safety regulations as those in the UK.



Figure 6.4-32. A picture of some local transportation in Turkey

R: So, what is this photo about?

C1: There is a blue minibus and that's like transport people from one place to another and then here we think it's a taxi/minibus. Behind it, we don't even know what item this is vehicle or something.

R: Why do you think they would have minibus?

C1: Well, because there is minibuses and there is normal buses double deckers. There won't be many of them because it's so big and so many people, but would be loads of minibuses because it's really mean like small. So, the bigger it is the less people, less of them will be. You won't need like a hundred double deckers.

C2: And, it's small because like none of them will be able to afford fuel like big buses.

R: One more question, they look a bit high, what are the disadvantages of that?

C4: So, like disabled people can't get in them.

R: So, what do we understand from this image about the town there?

C1: Probably it's a small town like with less people and there is not like many disabled people or they just like don't pay attention to them.

The children pointed out some visual features in the image (Figure 6.3-32). They commented on transport style in the image. One detail in the image that children were aware of was an unfriendliness of minibuses for disabled people. The ways in which the children extracted the visual meaning from the image and drew cultural inferences indicated that such images can ground the children for increasing cultural differentiation and understandings.

6.4.5. Teacher's Pedagogical Exploitation of Visual Materials for Curricular Purposes

In this section the teachers' pedagogical recruitment of cultural images is considered. Since this project aims to address how teachers can use culturally rich images for curriculum purposes, the response that reflects this possibility is the main concern. In presenting this, the sessions conducted, including the key 'phases' that identify various aspects of the teachers' involvement are presented. The data suggested the following phases:

- Negotiating the pedagogical use of images with the teachers

- The classroom discussions indicating the actual exploitation of the images
- Reflections over the use of images

In presenting those phases, sessions are considered to be the unit of representation. In the next sections, the sessions carried out by the participating teacher are described through a framework of phases identified with appropriate sub-headings.

6.4.5.1. Session 1

Participants: The teacher and 11 children

Cultural topic: My School

Number of images: 3 images

Duration: 20 minutes

Negotiating the pedagogical use of images with the teachers

The teacher was judged to be interested in adopting images shared by the school in Turkey for curriculum goals. Prior to Session 1, 8 images provided in Table 12, reflecting the school culture in Turkey, were introduced to the teacher. The teacher felt the images useful in terms of depicting significant cultural concepts relating to schools in Turkey. The teacher selected three images based on their cultural content and how they might naturally interest the children. Moreover, the content of these images was discussed in order for the teacher to be fully familiar with them prior to classroom discussions.

During discussions, my impression was that the teacher was hesitant in considering the images for curriculum purposes: focussing on their use for widening the cultural perspective of the children, rather than exploiting them for teaching curriculum concepts.

The teacher suggested that the children should be allowed to have brief discussions among themselves after reviewing each image. After that, the children could be invited to share their thoughts regarding cultural details in each image. I advised that children often will identify basic visual features in the images and they might need to be scaffolded towards more meaningful cultural insights available from an illustration. The teacher suggested that inviting the children to focus on the similarities and differences between the context showing in the images and their cultural environment could be useful.

The classroom discussions indicating the actual recruitment of images

In this section, the findings of the classroom discussions that took place around the images are presented. As indicated in Table 1, two images of the classroom context and an image of the school corridor were discussed in the classroom.

In discussing the first two, the teacher invited children to identify differences and similarities between their classroom setting and the one in the image. The children were seen to be intrigued by analysing the classroom environment depicted in the image and this led them to identify various visual features in the image. However, the teacher did not consider those details as sufficient for a deeper cultural awareness of the differences between the two countries. So, discussions merely focused on the physical setting in the image – such as the

equipment in the room. While the children could not draw distinctive cultural inferences from the school in Turkey, the most culturally rich discussion developed around Figure 6.3-33.



Figure 6.4-33. A picture of a school corridor in Turkey

> *C: That long dress is strange, do people dress like that in Turkey (referring to the painting on the left hand side).*
>
> *T: People from different countries may have different dress codes. I, myself, wear a long dress like that at home because it's quite comfortable. I assume the person in the painting is kind of special and it looks like he's sort of dancing like a ritual.*

As indicated, a comment shared by a child led the teacher to stress that people might have different dress codes in other countries. Moreover, the teacher provided a personal example in order to stress the importance of respecting different dress codes. During the discussion, considering the UK's inclusive social policy, the teacher seemed surprised by the child's comment, as he was anxious for the children to embrace different dress codes.

Reflections over the use of images with the teacher

Following the session, the teacher was invited to have a conversation regarding the use of the images discussed. He considered this session as a valid initial step for children to become

familiar with the project and with the cultural context in Turkey. He expressed the feeling that he could not prompt the children to go beyond the content in the image because there were insufficient openings for deeper cultural discussions.

On the other hand, the teacher was interested in discussing Figure 33. He observed that the image allowed children to reveal their understanding of different dress codes in different cultures. Moreover, he was pleased with the opportunity that the image provided him with: considering that having images for classroom discussions allowed children to reveal their understandings and how that could be difficult to obtain in other ways.

Outcome of the session

As stated earlier, the teacher had limited expectations regarding exploiting the images for curriculum purpose. Moreover, the main purpose of the session was to allow the children to become familiar with the cultural context in Turkey. Considering these two constraints the limited insights from this session is reasonable.

6.4.5.2. Session 2

Neighbourhood

Participants: The teacher and 11 children

Cultural topic: Neighbourhood

Number of images: 3 images from the UK and 3 images from Turkey, 6 images

Duration: 20 minutes

The expectations from the teacher at the beginning of the session

Prior to Session 2, 7 images reflecting various cultural aspects of 'neighbourhood' culture in Turkey were shown to the teacher. He found three images useful for the session. I then invited him to discuss possible pedagogical opportunities. He reflected on the images and thought that he could prompt the children to identify some of visual details in the image and thereby discuss the climate and geographical location of Turkey. Moreover, the teacher suggested that the images reflecting similar content from the two countries should be presented together - in order for children to better recognise the visual features.

The classroom discussions indicating the actual use of images

At the beginning of the session, the teacher asked the children to briefly comment on the country and cultural topics discussed in the previous session. After that, the teacher invited the children to share their understandings of the phrase 'neighbourhood'. The children discussed several elements of their neighbourhoods, such as streets, houses and shops. Then the teacher declared the purpose of the session as comparing neighbourhood culture between the two countries - through images. In introducing each matched image, the teacher briefly mentioned the apparent content of the image and asked children to have discussions regarding the similarities and differences between them .



Figure 6.4-34. Pictures of a comparison of two streets in Turkey and the UK

C: In Turkey, the road hasn't got lines.

T: Yes, the road is not marked with traffic lines. What do the lines represent?

C: Which side you got.

T: They represent lanes. That car is a moving car. Who can you notice about that car?

C: It's driving on the right side.

T: Well done, in Turkey, they drive on right hand side. Which side we drive?

C: Left.

T: You know we've talked about life lessons. A very important life lesson in the UK. You learnt to always be on the left hand side. Where there is a corridor, a stairs, you don't go on the right hand side, you go on the left. In the UK, we do everything on the left.

Following that the teacher invited some children to walk in the classroom on the left hand side in order to assure that they understand the significance this life lesson.

C: You know when we get down the line, car can park or not.

T: Well done, fantastic. There is not clear on this picture… But, you are right. In the UK, we normally have double yellow lines or single yellow lines telling you where you can park or where you cannot park to make it safe. The double yellow line is mostly on the corners. Why is it like that?

C: Is it because, so the cars coming not to crash.

T: Yes, when you turn, you need to be close to the curve as much you can otherwise you would go in the middle which can cause a crash.

…

C: The houses are different.

T: Well done, really. The houses look different. How do houses look different?

C: It is like for more warm weather.

T: Yes, they look like they are suited to more to warm because there is like big open bits. Would you have a big open without even any glass.

C: No,

T: Why, what happened in the UK when you have?

C: Because it rains.

T: Yes, it rains most of the time. So let's look at Turkey on the map to see it's weather and location. As you can see, Turkey is on the Mediterranean see like Greece, Italy, France and Spain. The weather is warmer in these countries.

As indicated in discussions, the teacher reflected on the responses of the children regarding visual details in matched images (Figure 6.3-34) and applied them to pedagogical ends. In the first discussion, he reacted to the differences in traffic structure in Turkey and took advantage of it for reminding the children a significant life lesson in the UK. The most significant pedagogical reference for the matched images was teaching children about the geographical location of Turkey and the characteristics of weather in such an area. Useful classroom discussions showed that when appropriate images and their contrasts are provided, teachers can use this for curriculum purposes.

Reflections over the use of images with the teacher

The teacher was invited to have a conversation on the use of the images this way. He considered the session richer in terms of relating them to curriculum themes. He noted that an image allowed him to reflect on some of the visual details and remind him of some of the life lessons previously discussed. Also, he noted that some of the images allowed him to highlight the weather and geographical location of Turkey and of surrounding countries. Although the teacher was observed to show some signs of recruiting the images for developing some educational concepts, it remained a limited encounter.

The outcome of the session

This session was perhaps richer than Session 1. My impression was that both the teacher and the children did show eagerness in discussing images. Nevertheless, the potential of the image for curriculum subjects did not meet expectations.

6.5.Discussion

In this section, the findings reported above are discussed with respect to each of the research questions.

6.5.1. RQ1(a) How do children interpret the cultural content of photographs?

The children's interpretation of images is the main concern here. The children were observed to be well captivated by the visual features illustrated in the images. In particular, the physical and social settings captured in the images were stimulating for the children and they eagerly shared their ideas. Photography seemed effective in recruiting attention from the children and positioning them towards the task (Burke, 2008; Lapenta, 2011). In this respect, the findings of this intervention were similarly positive to Intervention I.

In moving from gazing upon to interpreting the content of the images, the children were selective with their focus on the visual details - rather than simply labelling. Although the richness of the cultural meanings that were derived from the selected visual elements was limited, the findings indicated that the children often went beyond solely identifying details towards sharing their insights of the cultural connotations implicit in those elements. In doing this, findings showed that the children occasionally referred to the advance discussions in critically choosing visual patterns in the images and interpreting them. In particular, a discussion over the gender differences in an image from that twinned with Turkey was initiated by a child by reflecting on a similar matter took place in the initial discussions. Therefore, the role of photographs in grounding the search for social and cultural insights was improved in Intervention II. The significance of photography as a visual resource in invoking

participants' social and cultural expressions is echoed with others from different contexts (Collier & Collier, 1986; Lapenta, 2011).

The selected material displayed by the children stimulated them to reach out to for some broader cultural meaning in the images. Scaffolding prompts within the discussions around photography played an important role for the children to extract more meaning from the images (Lapenta, 2011). In this intervention, the use of prompts was still of great importance, reduced in quantity, but more probing compared to Intervention I. Much is rooted in the preliminary discussions which led schemas allowing richer and more direct engagement with the meanings embodied in the images.

To conclude, the children were observed to be intrigued by the content of the images, and their interpretations were moderately satisfying as a result of selectivity over significant visual elements and as guided by preliminary cultural discussions. That also led the prompts to be more directive for children to become more aware of the cultural context depicted in the images. Considering those factors, this intervention II was more efficient that Intervention I. It can be supposed that the initial discussions allowed the children to have an additional reference schema for interpreting visual cultural content in the images.

6.5.2. RQ1(b) How do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography?

As a prerequisite for the success of this intervention, the children must express cultural insights through photography. This research question is concerned with the children's awareness regarding the cultural connotations of elements represented in their captured photographs. For this research question to be approached there is a need for preliminary

cultural exchanges and group discussions around the images. In this intervention, the children provided numerous photographs with useful cultural implications for the first two cultural topics. For the remainder of the themes, the children were provided with a great quantity of photographs that were taken under guidance from the children.

The findings of 'My School' and 'My School Playground' indicated that the children represented various physical settings of their social and cultural environments. Similar findings in other empirical studies indicate that children's photographs and their interpretation rely strongly on content as physical surroundings (Lilly & Fields, 2014; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005). Children's photographs also shows tendencies of reflecting social and cultural identities (Kendrick & Jones, 2008a; Vasudevan et al., 2010). The findings from the first two cultural topics indicated that the children did not only take photographs of various parts of their school settings, but also arranged the settings for better representing relevant aspects of their school culture. While recognising the great efforts of the children, the photographs could have worked better in affording cultural implications. For instance, the picture illustrating the 'reading corner' as representative of the school's culture of reading did not show the association of the reading corner with the rest of the classroom setting.

In order for me to capture photographs of 'Neighbourhood' and 'Transportation' in accordance with their preferences, the children provided me with useful insights based on their cultural awareness. In that way they were provided with numerous images to discuss cultural implication through selecting ones that they found most appropriate. It has been indicated in other studies (Coles-Ritchie et al., 2015; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005) that discussions around images can play a role in stimulating children to have richer

insights. Within those discussions, the prompts in particular proved to be central to children's approach. as were preliminary discussions.

6.5.3. RQ 2 How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes?

This second research question takes a slightly different position in further investigating the use of photography. It covers the children's experiences with photography in the first two research questions from a broader perspective.

Discussions alone could become tiresome if prolonged, but can be protected with the visual element represented by photography. They created an appropriate setting for the children to express their genuine interest in the images investigated throughout the episodes. A possible monotony that could hinder the desire of children to contribute to any cross-cultural discussion was prevented (Burke, 2008; Lapenta, 2011). Thus, it can be argued that photography succeeds in "maintaining concrete and explicit reference points" (Collier & Collier, 1986) for the children to express their thoughts.

Cultural elements that were challenging to illustrate, and vague for children to identify and focus on in Intervention 1, became a more effective platform for cultural discussions. The quality of the exchanges was more satisfying. Nevertheless, the cultural content of the discussions depended significantly on understanding expressed during the preliminary discussions and the actual reading of the images through prompts. Findings of this intervention indicated how the capacity of photography to depict objects in their social and cultural settings maintained children's interest and helped anchor more concrete cultural discussions - which would otherwise be hard for children in absence of photography as a

shared visual medium (Burke, 2008; Leitch, 2008; Moss et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008). The role of photography in creating opportunities for children to realistically exploit an achievement of richer cultural exposure has been documented in the literature (Kendrick & Jones, 2008b; Lilly & Fields, 2014; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005; Vasudevan et al., 2010). With reference to this study, it can be said that the fundamental role of photography has been to allow children to access a resource that would lead to preliminary reflection on the social and cultural aspects of their lives. Considering the cultural content within the images in this intervention - for both participating countries - photography should still be valued as a focal point in such future interventions. However, the available methods and strategies of utilising photographs in obtaining more meaningful cultural communication need to be developed in more challenging ways.

6.5.4. RQ3 How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes?

This research question is related to teachers' potential pedagogical exploitation of comparative and culturally rich images. Although two sessions were carried out for addressing this question, the obtained data was limited. The only illustration that resonated well with this ambition came from the teacher in stimulating the children to review and practice a limited set of concepts identified in the images (e.g. life lesson and geography).

7. CONCLUSION

This project has sought to provide children with well-structured conditions to develop a greater awareness of cultural diversity. In order to do that, the study began with identifying an age group suited to having effective cultural exposures. Existing studies investigating children's conception of social and cultural identities suggested that children of around 10-years old possess understandings of social and cultural identities that are sufficiently abstract - in order for them to benefit from exploratory cultural interactions (Barrett et al., 2004; Barrett & Oppenheimer, 2011; Bennett, 2011; Peiser, 2015; Quintana, 1998; Sani & Bennett, 2004; Svirydzenka et al., 2010). Accordingly, the targeted group chosen were 10-year-old children as being the youngest reasonable choice.

For the purpose of creating the necessary contingencies for children to encounter novel cultural perspectives, possible constituencies of cultural differences were considered. This suggested that the natural way of constructing new cultural perspectives could occur through spontaneous personal interactions relating to other cultural contexts (Barrett et al., 2014; Byram, 2014). From this point of view, having cultural exchanges appeared to be a firm condition for grounding the present research interest.

In providing children with opportunities to have cultural interactions with individuals from other contexts, a school collaboration was sought. Among the varied school twinning practices (Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2007; Chapman & Allen, 2006), the literature on international school twinning was a natural reference point for achieving the aims of this project. In particular, exploring the potential of such school twinning for building cultural bridges between geographically and culturally distanced schools was an appealing possibility.

For managing and incorporating credible ingredients for a twinning, the relevant literature of existing practice was therefore reviewed. That literature showed how groups, including like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and governmental or business organisations, have established projects for schools to have pedagogical and cultural interactions (Cara & Bourn, 2013; Chapman, 2008; Cook, 2012; Katz et al., 2008; UNESCO, 2003b). In reflecting on the social and cultural interactions within such international school projects, OXFAM (2007), the British Council (2016) and the Department for International Development (DfID) (2010) shared critical recommendations for schools to bear in mind. Among those, clear objectives, integration of curriculum activities, good communication and involvement of the teachers were suggested. The most crucial suggestion relevant to the present project was in regard to the *content* of cultural interactions and exchanges: stressing how sensitive and controversial cultural topics should be avoided or cautiously approached. Also, emphasis was placed on how the process should be well managed in order to not reinforce stereotypes and to prevent cultural misunderstandings. Accordingly, the sensitivity of social and cultural values and beliefs, alongside curriculum integration, teachers' involvement and clear objectives, were all taken into account in selecting cultural topics to be introduced to children in the present study.

Planning then investigated possible communication *channels* that could best meet the demand of the complex nature of cultural expressions within an international twinning project. It was felt that *digital technology* had interestingly shifted the nature of typical mediation in such projects: from traditional exchanges of letters to representationally richer and more immediate digital interactions (Austin et al., 2004; Maitles & Gilchrist, 2006; Valentine & Holloway, 2001). In particular, the rise of Web 2.0 technologies was argued to be

significant in facilitating more diverse forms of communication among schools and their students. As a compelling long-term international school partnership project, 'European eTwinning' provided schools from around 30 countries with a Web 2.0 platform named 'Twinspace' for cultural and educational interactions. Despite mixed results, reports on the eTwinning project illustrated the possibility of useful educational and cultural exchanges on the Web 2.0 platform (Gouseti, 2013a; Wastiau et al., 2013). On this basis, Web 2.0 technologies were planned to be integrated for facilitating cultural interactions in the present study.

Although richer forms of expression have become available with the development of digital technologies, the ways in which the children could exploit such communicative instruments for conveying rich cultural meanings were judged to be a necessary investigation for the present study (Crook, 2008a). For this reason, approaches focusing on new literacy opportunities for educational contexts were reviewed (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Unsworth, 2001). Among those, scrutiny was directed towards the terms 'multiliteracy' and 'multimodality', along with their suggestions regarding the affordances of the various neglected modes of meaning expression, such as the visual, auditory and textual (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Jewitt, 2005; Unsworth, 2001). Those perspectives argued that it was no longer appropriate to conceive of literacy through only the linguistic component of communicative expression (Kress, 2003). In particular, the skilful blend of image and text were suggested to accomplish new power in conveying meaning (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Jewitt, 2005).

Within the expressive possibilities considered, visual images were suggested as more significant for young children in elaborating meaning (Leitch & Mitchell, 2007; Thomson,

2008). Although it was noted how such opportunities were claimed by many commentators to be under-developed for students - despite the ubiquitous presence of the visual in educational and social contexts (Jewitt, 2008c). The potential affordances of images for constructing richer meaning has led to the emergence of different conceptualisations, such as those of 'visual literacy' and the expanding field of social semiotics (Avgerinou, 2009; Kress, 2003). In particular, social semiotics gives clues of possible different interpretations of images based on the individual's social and cultural perspectives (Bezemer & Kress, 2008).

Since this study aimed to assist children in developing a fuller sense of cultural diversity, restraining them to express their cultural understandings through only verbal language could be a difficult task for them to deliver on. As an alternative, allowing children to exploit different forms of expression, particularly images, as the external representations for grounding and reflecting their own cultural understandings, and interpreting that of others, became the focus of the present study.

Planning the research then moved towards an investigation of the practical implication of images for children to exchange cross-cultural understandings. In considering this approach, the use of images more generally in educational research was reviewed, particularly with younger children. Several studies (Anning & Ring, 2004; Burke, 2005, 2008; Leitch & Mitchell, 2007; Moss et al., 2007; Prosser, 2007; Ring, 2006) suggested the real value of images, mainly in the form of drawing and photography, for allowing children to express their understandings. Photography was judged to be a more appealing and effective representational form for individual and cultural expression in reflecting life events through the subjectivity of the image (Share, 2015).

In reviewing the use of photography for educational purposes, it was noted how photographs had been utilised, for example, in exploring children's perception of science and maths (Katz, 2011; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005), supporting science learning (Cappello & Lafferty, 2015), including confidence with its vocabulary (Jones, 2010), and developing traditional literacy skills of children (Cavendish et al., 2016; Lilly & Fields, 2014; Wiseman et al., 2016). In particular, those empirical studies showed signs of the significance of photography for children in reflecting their social and cultural identities. At the same time, children's photographs were suggested to be useful for providing a rich space for classroom discussions. Apart from its educational context, the use of photography in broader research areas was also investigated (Collier & Collier, 1986; Lapenta, 2011). Several studies suggested that photography was an engaging and rich visual resource for allowing participants to express understandings. However, the need for appropriate scaffolding through prompts for having more meaningful insights was noted. In sum, photography was considered to be the most sensible representational resource for children to both express their cultural awareness and to gain a fuller understanding of other cultural contexts.

The suggested approach for fulfilling the aims of the proposed study paved a way for investigating several research questions. Within that, the children's exploitation of photography for expressing their own cultural understandings, interpreting the cultural content of the photographs of others, and the use of photography for enriching cultural discussions could all be explored. In addition, the teacher's exploitation of visual cultural photographs for pedagogical purposes, as well as the dissemination of those materials through Web 2.0 technologies, could be investigated.

In answering those research questions, a narrative methodology was proposed. This decision grew out of a concern for method: focusing on defining the *journey* whereby the children, as a group of social actors, engaged with photography. But also on narrative as *content* – as an emerging body of understanding around cultural diversity. Having this research approach also required me to be self-reflecting throughout the research, such as to make useful design alterations through exercising a Design Based Research (DBR) perspective. This was in order to provide the children with better contingencies for developing insights Moreover, such implications for the research goals made close interactions and observations necessary during the research process. Thereby, 'participant observation' was a significant research technique employed in this study.

7.1.Intervention I

The present study established an international school twinning between a primary school in Turkey and a primary school in the UK. In selecting the participants, the uniqueness of the culture in their locations was considered, so that richer cultural exchanges might occur. In order to be able host more intense cultural interactions, year-5 classrooms from each school were invited to contribute to the school twinning. In this sense, all my interactions with the children took place in the classroom environment, all the children present were involved.

The actual intervention began with introducing children to the purpose of the study. Within that, the children were invited to express their cultural awareness through capturing relevant photographs of their social and cultural environment. At the same time, the visual materials shared by the school in Turkey were also presented, in order for the children to have a better grasp of the cultural context of the other school. In selecting cultural topics, I was aware of

potentially sensitive issues - in line with the suggestion from the existing literature in the field - resulting in the choices of, 'Neighbourhood', 'Town' and 'My School''.

The first topic tackled was 'My Neighbourhood' in one session. Although the children provided a multitude of photographs, their awareness of the cultural content was not satisfying in neither individual nor classroom discussions. Similarly, the reading of the images shared by the twinned school was also observed to be somewhat shallow. In an attempt to enrich those exposures, the children were increasingly stimulated through conversational prompts. Yet, little cultural meaning was assigned to the identified visual cultural features in the images, despite the children's willingness in engaging with the images.

In reflecting on the first sessions, I introduced the children to digital multimodality in order for them to actively manipulate the images and, perhaps, thereby, convey richer cultural expressions through the creative affordances of doing digital multimodality. Further on, I intended to exploit those rich cultural meanings for stimulating the children to have still broader cultural interpretations. Once again, the children were eager to engage with the task, particularly with 'joyful' expressions, yet they did not go beyond annotating the obvious elements in the images. The children's reading of cultural meanings embodied in the images provided by the school twinning was somewhat superficial, despite more prompts on the part of the researcher.

The modest results of the first two cultural topics were considered, I noticed that the children were engaging with the task: they provided a satisfying number of images and actively participated in the discussions. Despite identifying and labelling relevant features in the images, the children did not show strong recognition of underlying cultural concepts associated with those features. Based on all of the above, brief preliminary discussions took

place in advance of working with the images. The outcome of the 'My School' cultural topic had indicated that the children were slightly more responsive to the cultural connotations in both their images as well as others, while their products from digital multimodality design were still limited to a simple 'annotation' of images.

Other facets of this intervention had teacher and digital technology as main actors. The teacher in the UK was invited to explore the pedagogical use of culturally rich images for curriculum purposes. In doing this, the teacher was offered collaboration in pre and post stages of the activity. However, she expressed her regrets at not having more time available to perform the task. Moreover, the teacher shared her concerns regarding possible challenges imposed by repeated exposures of the same images for pedagogical uses.

The use of Web 2.0 technology could not be observed, for several reasons. The first issue was privacy concerns, in terms of sharing images - despite reassurances of safety in the proposed medium in the UK school. Another obstacle was a lack of technical confidence with the teacher in Turkey - as not adequate support was provided from the school.

7.2.Intervention II

The efforts of modifying the task for providing more optimal conditions characterised the second intervention as well. In doing so, several practical and theoretical implications from Intervention I were used as a basis for designing Intervention II. Consequently, Web 2.0 technology and digital multimodality were put aside, while more extensive preliminary group discussions were constructed. In addition, some problems were observed in how the twining school in Turkey managed the task. In this intervention a new international school twinning project was established with the participation of two new schools form Turkey and the UK

and with the direct involvement of a fellow researcher in the Turkish school. The school in the UK had two Year-5 classrooms for this intervention. In order not to disrupt the learning process in the school, five children from each classroom were selected and a separate space outside of classrooms for the task was allocated. This strategy made possible additional time slots for this intervention.

In this intervention, the cultural topics decided upon were 'My School', 'My School Playground', 'Neighbourhood' and 'Transportation'. Unlike the first intervention, the present project started with the 'My School' cultural theme, the school being perceived as a more comfortable environment for the children to express themselves. Next, the preliminary discussions were spanned over a longer period of time.

The 'My School' cultural theme entailed richer discussions with livelier participation from the children in terms of both engaging with preliminary cultural discussions, as well as reacting to the images. The results indicated that the cultural understanding registered in the sessions' opening discussions was revisited for those images showing their own cultural context: the children showed signs of deeper cultural awareness with respect to their captured images. And when exposed to the pictures provided by the twinning school, they were able to apply different perspectives for interpreting the images. In other words, the children were comfortably receptive to the cultural implication of the images for drawing broader cultural inferences.

The improved findings in dimensions, such as the children responsiveness to expressing their own cultural awareness, reflecting their cultural thoughts into images, and interpreting photographs shared by the twinning school from different perspectives were all somewhat more gratifying. That modest success in the first cultural topic carried through the rest of the

cultural themes. The second theme was 'My School Playground' and the children emphasised very specific cultural features emerging from the preliminary discussions, with high interest from all participating children. Having such particular awareness in mind, the children made sure to reflect their own cultural approach to matters discussed in the photographs. Similar reactions were also observed in interpreting the images shared by the twinning school, leading the children to go beyond labelling the surface visual features in the images and drawing broader cultural inferences.

To avoid both practical and ethical complications, the out-of-school context images were provided by the researcher in the 'Neighbourhood' and 'Transportation' cultural themes. To avoid the researcher's own bias, in-depth conversations took place with the children for inviting them to indicate specific cultural matters to be reflected in the images. With this in mind, I provided the children with numerous photographs, out of which 8 images were selected by the children for further discussions. The children reflected on not only the visible cultural features in the images, but also went beyond by hypothesising more meaningful cultural implications. They applied a similar strategy in identifying common cultural features without neglecting the unique cultural concepts in the images.

Independently from other cultural topics, the 'Transportation' section brought an element of novelty. The children were invited to create stories that would indicate people's experiences within the transport culture of the UK. This activity stimulated the children to such an extent that the task was accomplished in a much shorter amount time and ended up with strong stories. Inviting children to discuss numerous images in attempting to visualise their constructed narratives allowed the children not only to review the reflection of their stories, but also to elaborate more on transport in the UK. When interpreting the images shared by

the twinned school, the children were observed to be fully engaged. Thus, the researcher's involvement was reduced and the children did not need prompts in drawing cultural inferences.

7.3.Research Questions

RQ1(a): how do children interpret the cultural content of photographs?

The main concern of this research question has been children's sensitive interpretation of images. In both interventions, it was observed that the children were well captivated by the visual features illustrated, particularly the physical and social settings captured in the images were engaging for the children and they eagerly shared their ideas. This must imply that physical or social settings portrayed in such photography can be effective in recruiting attention from children and thereby positioning them towards the task of interpretation (Burke, 2008; Lapenta, 2011).

In moving from merely gazing upon towards interpreting the content of the images, children showed varying cultural sensitivity towards material depicted in images in the interventions. In Intervention I, the children rarely went beyond simply labelling the visual content, while children were more selective with their focus on the visual details in Intervention 2. In particular, the more advanced cultural discussions in the second intervention: this evidently led to richer cultural interpretations and insights as derived from visual elements, because children occasionally referred to those discussions in critically choosing visual patterns in the images and interpreting them. Also, more robust scaffolding prompts within the discussions around photography played an important role in allowing the children to extract more meaning from the images (Lapenta, 2011). Therefore, the potential significance of

photography as a visual resource in invoking participants' social and cultural expressions was observed (Collier & Collier, 1986; Lapenta, 2011).

RQ1(b): how do children represent aspects of their own cultural context through photography?

This research question is related to the children's awareness regarding the cultural implications of those subjects depicted in their captured photographs. In both interventions, the children captured various relevant physical aspects of their social and cultural environment as suggested in several other empirical studies (Lilly & Fields, 2014; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005). With such photographs, it was intended that children's social and cultural identities could potentially be represented (Kendrick & Jones, 2008a; Vasudevan et al., 2010) and thus recruited to enrich cultural discussions. The children's photographs were indeed reflecting different aspects of their social and cultural perspectives, but the children's awareness of those cultural connotations varied across the interventions.

In intervention I, children were observed to be only weakly aware of such rich social and cultural implications as depicted in their images. The children's explanation of their images were limited to labelling the surface visual details. Despite gentle prompts, the children had not shown significant improvement in realising the rich cultural connotations of their images. This implied that more scaffolding was required in order to prompt a level of reflecting on their social and cultural understandings as mediated through photography.

In Intervention II, the children were observed to be more sensitive in pointing out and sharing cultural implications in the images. In particular, the preliminary cultural discussions allowed the children to be more aware of their social and cultural environment and be more selective

in becoming more conscious of rich connotations in the images. In addition, and as other studies (Coles-Ritchie et al., 2015; MacDonald, 2012; Moreland & Cowie, 2005) have indicated, discussions and prompts around the images were observed to be more effective in stimulating children to have more articulate insights regarding the cultural content in images. Despite some improvement of interpretation in Intervention II, children in that age group might have deeper capabilities for reflecting their social and cultural identities than were revealed. Those could be revealed with different designs and tasks –perhaps elaborating the scaffolding and intensifying the preparatory discussions. –

RQ2: How can photographs provide a space for (conversational) discussion of cultural themes

Despite the fact that the previous research questions were partially concerned with photography as the central medium for cultural discussions, this research question took a slightly different position by covering the children's experiences with photography from a broader perspective. In particular, it concerned with the role of photography as an agent within cultural *discussions* -expecting to elongate their interest and extend their contribution (Burke, 2008; Lapenta, 2011). Despite the limited quality of exchanges in Intervention I, the cultural content of the discussions either arose from a visual element in the images or a broader cultural implication that was stretched out of a feature in the image. It can be argued that photography thus succeeds in "maintaining concrete and explicit reference points" (Collier & Collier, 1986) for the children to express their thoughts.

In Intervention II, the quality of the exchanges was more satisfying - relying on both preliminary or framing cultural discussions and on the actual reading of images through prompts. Findings of the second intervention indicated that, by depicting social and cultural

settings, photography did maintain children's interest and assisted in anchoring more concrete cultural discussion - which would otherwise might be difficult for children without the image as a shared visual reference point (Burke, 2008; Leitch, 2008; Moss et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008). This study revealed that photography can be an appealing and attractive medium for children to interpret rich cultural implications.

RQ3: How can photographs provide a space for (classroom) interpretation of those themes for curricular purposes?

The focus of this research question was on teachers' potential pedagogical exploitation of comparative and culturally-rich images. Such conditions for answering this question could have created in Intervention I - inadequate data was available in Intervention II. The only illustration that resonated well with this ambition came from a teacher stimulating the children to review and practice a limited set of concepts identified in the images (e.g. life lesson and geography). Therefore, teachers' pedagogical exploitations of culturally rich images were not revealed in this study. Recruiting this interest cannot be taken for granted – more may need to be done to persuade practitioners of the potential in this resource.

RQ4: How can effective dissemination of children's collaborative findings be achieved?

As indicated in other studies (Gouseti, 2013a; Wastiau et al., 2013), initiating and maintaining digital interactions between children in school twinning was expected to be challenging. Despite persistent efforts in guiding teachers and children to participate, no digital interaction took place in Intervention I. One problem preventing the use of the digital platform for dissemination and interaction between the children was shared by the teacher: it reflected

parents' concerns about sharing images on digital spaces. On the other hand, the unfamiliarity of the teacher with digital technology and lack of support from the ICT in the school were stated as issues causing abundance of dissemination and interaction on the digital platform in Turkish school. This study indicated that the use of ICT for cross-cultural interactions are challenging and more robust assistance should be provided in future researches.

7.4.Lessons for the Project's Foundations

Adopting international school twinning creates a credible environment for children to develop a greater understanding of cultural diversity and to do so through cross-cultural exchanges that otherwise would be very challenging to create. In particular, international school twinning provided me with the opportunity to build cultural bridges between social groups with more genuine local culture. The status of this underpinning theme twinning will be briefly discussed here first. Followed by a reflection on the semiotic theme associated with image engagement.

Like many marginal educational practices, school twinning was not a smooth journey, despite careful considerations of several prerequisites. Matching the children in a common age group was challenging, due to differences in educational systems. The links were established within the design of the study and kept economical by connecting only a small group of participants from each school. For the success of such projects, the teachers' commitments should not be taken for granted, as it can stagger the practice (for example here, the lack integration of Web 2.0 and exploitation of visual materials for curriculum purposes).

In this particular study, I noticed that despite the willingness and availability showed when first approached, the teachers overlooked some of the deeper implications. The fading

motivation of the teachers was directly connected to other commitments that led to time management issues. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the teachers in the twinning part in Turkey showed more dedication in helping with the success of the task.

Second, in relation to the semiotic theme: the children typically demonstrated limited confidence in considering a picture as an opportunity to explore, discover, and construct new cultural meanings. Such challenges perhaps were to be expected, because the existing literature does dwell on the necessity of getting children familiar with the exploitation of visual expression for communicative purposes. In this respect, given the pervasive nature of photography and images in our lives (especially for the current generation of young people), we may still be lazy about using visual images as "tools to think with". Education could do more to draw out their semiotic potential – treating them not just in aesthetic terms (things to be admired) or not just in representational terms (things to remind us of other times and places) but in terms of possibilities inherent in semiotic discovery – even if this has to be done discursively with others (as in the present case), rather than supposing people do it easily as individual image readers.

7.4.1. Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis investigated the use of photography as the central medium for primary school level children to develop a greater awareness and understanding of cultural diversity -all within the context of an international school twinning framework. The study indicated that the children showed only limited sensitivity towards the rich cultural implications that were effectively depicted in photographs. However, preliminary or framing cultural discussions, alongside scaffolding prompts, led the children to show greater awareness of such cultural detail in photographs. In adopting photography for cultural interactions, the contribution of this thesis

has been a finding that children's spontaneous semiotic reading of images exists only at a modest level. Considering the exposure to visual images in every aspect of their lives, this study suggests that children at this stage of their lives should be provided with more communicative and interpretive.

7.5.Lessons for the Project's Execution

In the implementation of this project several limitations were encountered. A certain reluctance of the part of teachers for exploiting images around curriculum purposes was observed. Equally, the teachers' shyness in integrating Web 2.0 technologies denied me useful insights regarding children's more direct cultural interactions through photography. While these were the main obstacles in for generating rich data, it also must be acknowledged that not being able to audio record the first intervention caused a loss of useful data - despite the careful note taking throughout the research.

7.6.Future Directions

My suggestions for future research are the following. A longer period of children's exploration time and experience might be necessary to lead to deeper understanding of how photography can stimulate children towards developing a sense of cultural diversity. Within that time, more cultural themes could be covered with more careful co-participation from teachers in both mediating the cultural exchanges as well as looking for ways for recruiting visual materials for pedagogical purposes. Also, the scaffolding adult needs to adopt a more assertive role in drawing attention to the affordances of picture features and composition if children at this stage of their cognitive and cultural development are to be more creative readers of visual material. Finally, allowing the children to have more direct cultural

interactions on a digital platform remains promising for investigating the role of photography as a communicative tool for expressing and understanding cultural meanings.

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APPENDIX

Section A

Parental Consent Form for Intervention I

We seek permission for your child to contribute to a classroom project that is being researched to help other classes use technology well.

As part of normal classroom activities with technology, your child will be developing work that combines writing, images and sounds on tablet devices in his/her classroom setting. The topics are linked to the school curriculum, although your child might be invited to share some photos with commentary from outside of the school environment.

As an educational researcher, I am following what the class is doing in order to help other teachers to use technology creatively in their classrooms. Therefore, I may be sharing pupil work with others (but not identifying pupils) and may ask to have a conversation with individual pupils in order to understand their work better.

Although the project will describe what pupils create and their experience of doing this, no pupil will be identified by name when the project findings are shared.

All children will be contributing these activities with technology as part of normal class work. However, if you do not wish the work of your own child to be included in our reporting of this work, or if you do not wish us to discuss with them their experience of using technology, please sign below and return this form to the school. If you are happy for them to take part, there is **no need** to return this form to the school.

I would prefer that my child, named: ……. did **not** contribute class work to this project or take part in project conversations with the researcher. And so I am returning this form to the class teacher.

Signed ……

Print name …….. **Date** ……

If you are happy for your child to contribute to the project, you may still contact the researcher or their supervisors at any time if you require further information or have any concerns.

Contact details

Researcher: Haci Yapici

Email Address: stxhy@nottingham.ac.uk, Contact number: 07429647048

Supervisor: Professor Charles Crook

Email Address: Charles.Crook@nottingham.ac.uk

University Of Nottingham: School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator

Email Address: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Section B

Parental Consent Form for Intervention II

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are currently working in partnership with Nottingham University on a research project to help other classes use technology well.

As part of this project, your child will be developing work that combines writing, images and sounds on tablet devices in his/her classroom setting. Discussions around this activity would be recorded. The topics linked to the school curriculum, although your child might be invited to share some photos with commentary, from outside of the school environment.

The work the children produce may be shared with others in the project but all work will remain anonymous.

Please indicate if your child is able to take part in this project by returning the slip below.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Name of child……. Class…….

I do/do not give permission for my child to participate in the Nottingham University Research Project.

Signed……..

Parent/Carer

Section C

Informed Consent Form for Teachers

Project Title: Students Producing Digital Multimodal Artefacts through Tablet Devices

Researcher`s Name: Haci Yapici

Supervisors` Names: Prof. Charles Crook and Tony Fisher

YES/ NO I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me.

YES/ NO I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered.

YES/ NO I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

YES/ NO I understand that all data are confidential and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data.

YES/ NO I consent to my data being transcribed and wish to be referred to anonymously.

YES/ NO I consent to an audio file of my participation to be used, but would like identifying factors (e.g. my name to be removed) from any presentation of my data.

YES/ NO I understand that the interview data will be saved on a password protected computer and securely archived by the researcher for the required period of time (seven years from the date of publication of the results). Following this data will be destroyed.

YES/ NO I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

YES/ NO I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study.

Signed …… (Research participant)

Print name …….. **Date** ……

Contact details

Researcher: Haci Yapici

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