

Feel The Culture; Learn The Language (F.C.L.L.)

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ABSTRACT

Feel the Culture; Learn the Language (F.C.L.L.) is an international eTwinning Project founded by two different upper secondary schools from Turkey (Eskisehir Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Anadolu Lisesi and İstanbul Uluslararası Pendik Kız Anadolu İmam Hatip Lisesi) and implemented with 3 schools from Turkey, Poland, Romania, Italy, Lithuania and Serbia. It was conducted by 11 teachers and 66 students from September 2020 to March 2021. The main objective is to search to what extent cultural elements as authentic materials can support foreign language teaching at schools for a more permanent and natural learning. To reach this goal, the specific aims were to implement a series of individual, pair and group work activities that required the students to exchange their cultures using web2 tools. The students were able to improve their foreign language competences and increased their knowledge on other cultures while they boosted 21st century skills such as digital competences, communication skills, collaboration etc. During our journey, various pedagogical approaches were benefited. CLIL, project-based learning, task-based learning, internet-based and game-based learning were the main approaches that provided a student-centered and more natural learning environment. The teachers acted as a counsellor and task distributor while the students worked individually, in pairs and groups, which enabled them to produce common and collaborative works on cultural exchange. In addition to addressing four skills of foreign languages, the activities included literature, information technology, history, visual arts, music, which means a multidisciplinary approach was adapted. The tangible products are eBook of Traditional Meals, eBook of Prominent People, eBook of Digital Traditional Stories as collaborative works and Animation Dialogues on Daily Meals, eBook of Documentary Films on Traditional/Popular Brain Games, InterTraditional Digit Story as common works. The intangible results include professional development for teachers and improvement in foreign, digital, cultural competences and soft skills for the students.

Key words: Foreign language, Culture, Authentic, Permanent learning

ÖZET

Feel the Culture;Learn the Language(F.C.L.L.)isimli projemiz, Türkiye’den iki farklı lisesinin (Eskisehir Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Anadolu Lisesi ve Istanbul Pendik Uluslararası Kız Anadolu İmam Hatip Lisesi) koordinasyonunda başlatılan uluslararası bir eTwinning projesidir ve Türkiye (ortak olarak 3 lise),Polonya, Romanya, İtalya,Litvanya ve Sırbistan’dan okulların iş birliği ile uygulanmıştır. 11 öğretmen, 66 öğrenci ile 2020 Eylül ve 2021 Mart ayları arasında çalışılmıştır. Projenin ana amacı, daha kalıcı ve doğal öğrenme için otantik materyal olan kültürel elementlerin okullardaki yabancı dil eğitimini ne ölçüde desteklediğini araştırmaktır. Bu genel amaca ulaşmak için belirlenen alt hedefler ise web2 araçlarını kullanarak öğrencilerin kültürel değişim yapabilecekleri bir dizi bireysel, ikili ve grup çalışmalarını içermektedir. Böylece öğrencilerimiz, sadece yabancı dil becerilerini geliştirmekle kalmayıp dijital becerilerini, iletişim becerilerini, iş birliği gibi 21.yy. becerilerini geliştirirken diğer kültürler hakkında da bilgi edindiler. Araştırma süreci boyunca, çalışmalarda farklı pedagojik yaklaşımlar kullanıldı Bunlar arasında daha doğal öğrenme ortamı sağlayan ve öğrenci merkezli olan CLIL, proje-tabanlı öğrenme, görev tabanlı öğrenme, internet ve oyun tabanlı öğrenme gibi yaklaşımlar bulunmaktadır. Öğrenciler, kültürel değişim üzerine ortak ve işbirlikçi ürünler çıkarmalarını sağlayan bireysel, ikili ve grup(yerel ve uluslararası) olarak çalışma yaparken öğretmenler daha çok danışman ve görev veren rolündeydi. Yabancı dilin 4 becerisine hitap etmesine ek olarak, araştırma faaliyetleri edebiyat, bilişim teknolojileri, tarih, görsel sanatlar, müzik derslerini de içermekteydi ki bu da disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımın izlendiğini göstermektedir. Araştırmanın somut ürünleri arasında, işbirlikçi çalışma olarak Geleneksel Yemekler e-kitabı, Önemli Kişiler e-Kitabı, Dijital Geleneksel Hikayeler e-kitabı yer alırken Günlük Öğünler Üzerine Animasyon Diyalogları, Gelenekse/Popüler Akıl Oyunları üzerine belgesel filmler e-kitabı, Gelenekler arası Dijital Hikaye diye adlandırılan bir hikaye ise ortak ürün olarak yer almaktadır. Soyut sonuçlar arasında ise öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi; öğrencilerin ise yabancı dil becerilerinin, dijital, kültürel ve soft (yumuşak)becerilerinin gelişmesi yer almaktadır.

Introduction

What you need mostly in today's world is to use not only one foreign language but also more in a fluent way since people from different languages with different nationalities start to live in the same city, in the same neighbourhood, in the same school and even in the same desks in the classrooms. That is why the educational ministries of the governments all around the world have been taking initiatives to motivate the students to learn or acquire more foreign languages to supply the need of globalizing world with the multilingual and multicultural atmosphere while the foreign language teachers have been offered different kinds of in-service trainings or courses for their professional development to reach the students with changing learning styles. However, the students, most of the time, perceive the foreign language classes as just a school subject to pass the class, which hinders the interior motivation to improve their foreign language. In addition, the students may not find a real need to get or practice a foreign language after the class, which is another obstacle for not reaching the expected level in foreign language competences. This is the reason such a project was born to search to what extent 'cultural elements' as authentic materials could attract students' attention, raise their intrinsic motivation in foreign language learning and practicing and finally support the foreign language education at schools since exploiting culture-based activities is the best way to boost students' cultural awareness and language competence as Elena Kozhevnikova /Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences 116 (2014) 4462 – 4466) suggests. In this connection, this research mainly aimed to support foreign language learning and teaching at schools by prodding intrinsic learning motivation via culture as an authentic tool that has a tight junction to real life. The sub objectives of the research were to increase the students' 21st century skills by implementing a series of individual, pair and group work activities using digital tools.



Figure 1. Project Research Logo developed by the students

Methodology

Aiming communicative competence cannot be considered with a learning environment which is isolated from the culture. In order to be able to integrate culture to the language to provide permanent learning, authentic materials were adapted to the tasks. In this way, it was aimed that the students would gain experience in learning by living and by doing. Besides, students were encouraged to volunteer to learn more than one language and to wonder about the cultures to which these languages were connected in a safe online environment with their peers who were the original owners of these languages and cultures. The path to reach the main goal was built by the help of project based, task based, content and language integrated learning, internet-based, game-based techniques and approaches including student-centered, individual works, pair works, local and mixed group works. In addition to practicing the language, it was targeted that the students would socialize, develop self-confidence, improve their digital skills, develop their skills to contribute to group work by providing self-control, and develop their skills to work both individually and with individuals and with a group by the help of cooperatively and originally produced authentic materials by the members of the teams with the coordination to their age range. To ensure the permanence of learning, it was ensured that all stages of the project were linked to the curriculum following the procedures of a multi-disciplinary approach. To illustrate, the use of digital WEB 2.0 tools and applications, to create online games coincided with the outcomes of the ICT lesson. In addition, collecting information on the prominent people of a country and the celebration of partner countries' national days was a natural outcome of the History lesson. Furthermore, writing a short story of their own country and creating a short story met the outcomes of Literature Lesson. Moreover, the traditional music

that students tried to use when preparing the video tasks coincided with the outputs of the Music lesson. Finally, the students' skills on Visual Art Lesson were activated by the help of preparing and creating brochures, posters, and other visual materials.

The following competences were the key features of the research besides being the main targets of the Ministry of National Education and European Commission ;

- Ability of learning to learn
- Digital competence
- Multilingual competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence

Findings and Activities

The activities of the research were designed in accordance with the aims and needs of the partner schools and other possible beneficiaries who experienced similar problems. The targeted group of pupils were between the ages from 15 to 18 with at least A2 level of English and above. Teachers just acted as a counsellor and a task distributor, which means all the activities (preparation-implementation and dissemination on the Twinspace) were fulfilled by the students. 4-8 students were involved by each partner following the legal procedure. The duration of the research took 7 months. The activities were determined at the kick-off meeting with all partners and the work program was created as follows;

- Start up : Preparing introduction videos of the students via their avatar.
 Task 1A : Preparing brochures on traditional meals (Individual work)
 Task 1B : Creating animated dialogues on typical daily meals (International common pair work)
 Task 2A : Collecting and storing materials on a traditional brain game belonging to the partner country
 Task 2B : Shooting a short film on the other partners' brain games (International pair work)
 Task 3A : Preparing a video on a prominent person. (Individual work)
 Task 3B : Producing games on these people (international work)
 Task 4A : Creating a digital story using a traditional/popular story in their countries
 Task 4B : Creating an international traditional digital story (international group work/FINAL PRODUCT)

At the beginning of the research, as a start, avatar videos were created in order to motivate students and integrate them with each other. It was designed as an individual study to allow adding subheadings for each participant on the “Pages” section on the Twinspace platform.

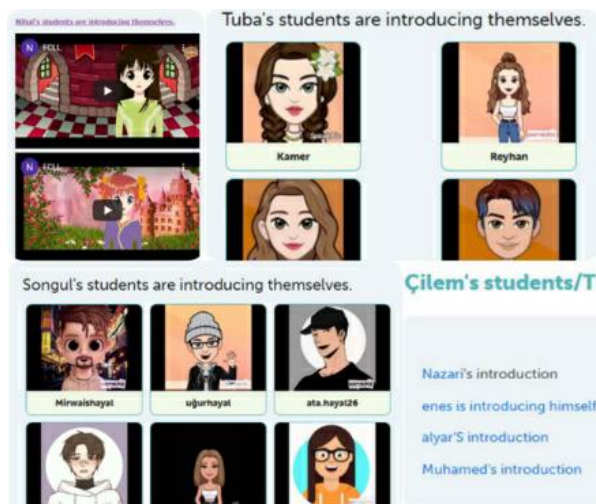


Figure 2. Start up

In Task 1A, the brochures or leaflets about traditional meals of partner schools were prepared. The activity led the participants to know about an important element in each culture. All created materials were compiled in an e-book, which served to make an individual work collaborative.

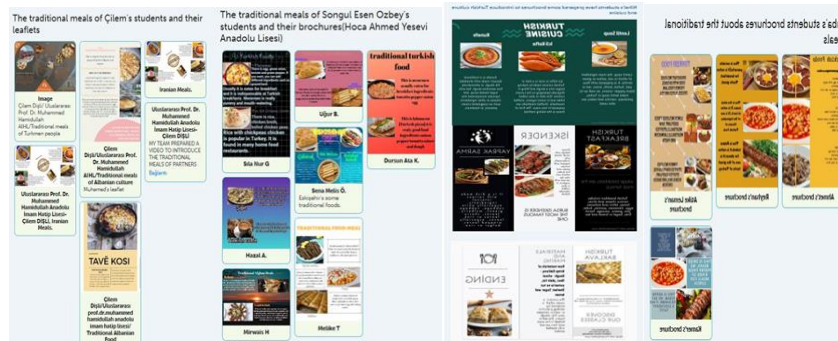


Figure 3. Task 1A

In Task 1B, the students were engaged in an International Pair Common Work Activity. The students were matched with foreign peers. They sent messages about daily meals using Twinmail. They created animation dialogues containing the information they got from those text messages. The steps of the activity in detail; Step1: They prepared 4-7 questions on each other's typical daily meals such as “what is usually eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner?”. They were allowed to ask for the others they wonder about their peers' meals/food stated on their works TASK 1A.

Step2: They had the chance to communicate through twinmail (sending messages on twinspace) or chat on twinspace. They scheduled a time through twinmail or sent messages for their questions and replies.

Step3: They had screenshots of their messaging and shared them on the subpage of the Task 1.B

Step4: Each student on their own created an animation dialogue using the questions and replies they received from their partners. They used web2 tools/applications to make animation videos. They uploaded or pasted the link to the subpage of this task.

Student Match List

SILA NUR (TR)	DENNY C (IT)	OK
UGUR (TR)	ARMANTSILTI (IT)	OK
AYNUR (TR)	WIKTORIA (PL)	OK
BRENDENY (TR)	TARA (RO)	OK
SENIA (TR/Songül Esen Özbey)	MEU D (IT)	OK
HAZAL (TR)	DANIELA (IT)	OK
BERNARDE (TR)	SERE L (IT)	OK
KARIM (RO)	ZAVIDE (TR)	OK
SUSLA (RO)	AZSA SILA (TR)	OK
ALEXANDRA (RO)	AZKALTRI (TR)'s student	OK
IZEN NURUN (TR)	RUMELIA (TR)	OK
AMEL (RO)	ABDULLADI (TR)	OK
THOMAS (IT)	HALL K (TR)	OK
ANITA (IT)	ELISA KULIN (TR)	OK
SINDONE (TR)	ALVAR (TR)	OK
MATILDE (IT)	ZEHRA K (TR)	OK
LEOPOLDO (IT)	ENES K (TR)	OK
CHANG (IT)	CHANG (IT)	OK
GUSTAS (IT)	MQUEVANI (TR)	OK
HORTYNA (IT)	OZGUR B. D (TR)	OK
SIMBA (IT)	HAZAL (TR)	OK
POLIPERDIA (TR)	AZSA HATUN U (TR)	OK
BIRGIRVIC (SERBIA)	REYHAN C (TR)	OK
BRENDENY (SERBIA)	SAMER K (TR)	OK
SENIA (TR/Songül Esen Özbey)	ANTO L (IT)	OK
JULIANA (RO)	SEVIDE (TR)	OK
SARABELA (RO)	NEHR D (TR)	OK
DOVINOVA (RO)	SEVA (TR)	OK
MARCO A (RO)	AHANET D (TR)	OK
DONAR L (IT)	ATHE LEMAN K (TR)	OK
FRANCI (IT)	YASER (TR)	OK
GRISI (IT)	MERVE A (TR)	OK

Screenshots of Messages

Figure 4. Task 1B

In Task 2A, they worked in local groups. They chose a popular national game to share on Twinspace and prepared a collaborative brochure about it.



Figure 5. TASK 2A

Task 2B was an International Pair Work activity. They were divided into 2 groups and each group was matched with a foreign group. They worked together and produced documentary films on partner school's brain game using the information that was uploaded by their matched groups.



Figure 6. TASK 2B

In Task 3A, individual work was assigned. Each student in each team selected a prominent person from today or back and prepared a video about that person. The video had to include some important information about that person (who /characteristics/what benefits etc), visuals, dubbing with the students' own voice/written texts.

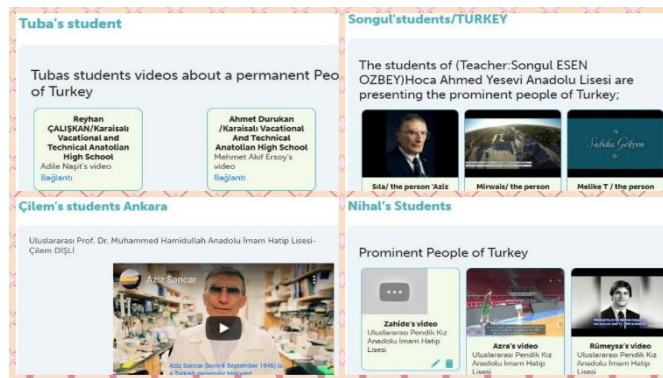


Figure 7. TASK 3A

TASK 3B was about preparing an online game about the prominent person that the students had prepared for Task 3A. Each student produced one online game using their own work from TASK 3A. They displayed them using different applications or different kinds of games. After producing games, they were supposed to share the link on the related subpage. The participants benefited from the opportunity to play some of these games online and shared the video record or screenshots.

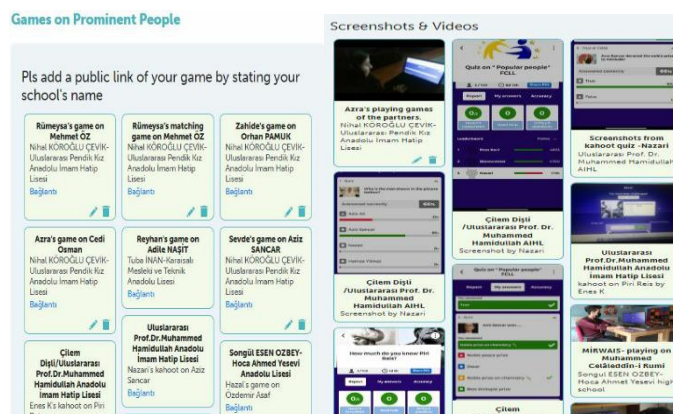


Figure 8. TASK 3B

In TASK 4A, traditional/national or popular digital stories were prepared by each partner representing the features of their own region or country. Each team decided on only one story and worked on it collaboratively using a collaborative digital tool. The digital story had to include visuals, music, dubbing in their mother tongue, subtitles in English, and any more materials that the groups desired to use.

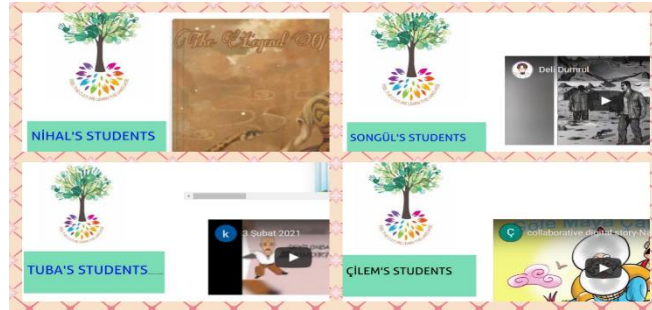


Figure 9. TASK 4A

In Task 4B, a common international traditional digital story was created. All partners worked as a group to compose a common story. Each partner was supposed to add a character/place or an important element from their stories in Task 4A by adding 2-3 sentences. Local teams used FORUM Page on Twinspace to contribute a part of a collaborative story with partner schools containing the character they chose. They uploaded it using visuals and sound to a digital collaborative tool. A time schedule was shared to avoid confusion and work in a harmony.

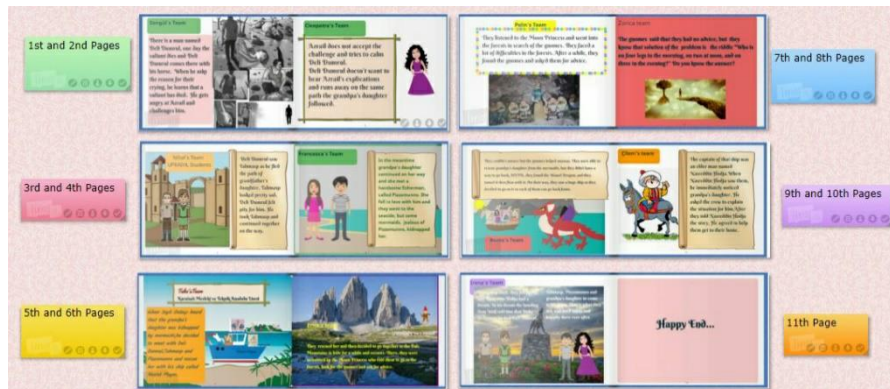


Figure 10. TASK 4B

Besides all these works, additional activities were also conducted by all participants to facilitate interaction, raise cultural awareness, and have fun. Posters and brochures were prepared by the students in order to share the joy and celebrate the National Days of the partner countries. It was a nice way to build respect for others. All the teachers and students sent ecards to each other to celebrate New Year and Christmas. CodeWeek was another occasion for the students to learn more about digital skills. One of the partners prepared a game or a questionnaire about cultural features of each country every month. A final Kahoot Game was prepared by all partners, and an online meeting was scheduled for all students to join. It was a good chance to meet all the partners and have fun together. All products and works were published and disseminated on e-school corners, FCLL blog page, e-bulletin boards, and school websites.



Figure 11. Extra Activities

Considering the activity plan, the research provided the participants many opportunities by meeting their goals and expectations. Introduction videos via avatars, preparing brochures on traditional meals (Task 1A), creating videos on a prominent person (Task 3A) enabled pupils to express themselves, and use their foreign languages via a digital tool. Preparing videos on a prominent person (Task 3A) and creating a digital story using a traditional story (Task 4A) provided them to learn about their own and other cultures, helped them desire to learn more. Creating animated dialogues on typical daily meals (Task 1B) helped them to work in an international common pair work, motivated them to use their foreign languages and gained self-esteem in a safe online platform. Collecting materials on a traditional brain game of the partner's country (Task 2A) enabled group work. Shooting a short film on the partners' brain games (Task 2B) and creating their own international traditional digital story (Task 4B) enhanced their creativity through cultural elements. Producing games on prominent people (Task 3B) improved their digital skills in a game-based learning type. The digital skills of the students were developed by the help of using digital Web2.0 tools and learning the usage of Twinspace during the research. Multilingual competence among the students was promoted with the communication in foreign languages among each other. Cultural awareness and students' competence of expression were enlarged by the help of the tasks integrated with 'Culture' as an authentic material. All these different working ways provided the students' active involvement in the research activities by offering new learning experiences with their peers with a more permanent and natural learning atmosphere. It was also inspiring for teachers that each partner made contributions and enlarged the impact of the research. New opportunities to know about how to use digital tools were provided by collaborating with each other. The research itself became a cultural bridge between different countries and nationalities.

Finally, some 21st century competencies like problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, learning core content along with research skills, creativity, collaboration, and interpersonal communication competences were enhanced. Taking everything into account, culture integration was assumed to be one of the most vital components of learning foreign languages.

Results and Suggestions

When the results that were obtained from the pre and post assessment tests that were conducted to the project teachers and students and the parents (only the post assessment test) were compared, it has been seen that the research has achieved its aim with a percent of 80% and over. The tests (ANNEX 1 & 2) were created using google form and shared on twinspace but merely the parents were informed through their students/children. When the tests were conducted, the results were shared with the partners on twinspace in downloadable pdf and the short reports of them were added.

When the replies for the teacher test were analysed, it was seen that the rate of the teachers who had not participated in eTwinning projects increased 100%, which enabled them to get a new way for their own professional development. In addition and lastly, 90% and above of them stated that they developed their digital and cultural competences, which proved that the research contributed to their professional development and motivated them for further learning. As for the students' test, it was seen that 93% of the students gained motivation to take an active role in further eTwinning projects. Moreover, 80% and over of them thought that the research activities developed their foreign language digital and cultural competences, which meant the objectives were achieved with a high rate. Finally, when the tests for parents were studied, all the parents thought that the activities enabled their children to spend their time effectively, which was a significant issue especially at those pandemic days when the students were away from the school and with online classes. 97% of them supported such activities since they found it stimulating for their children for lifelong learning. Furthermore, 90% and over of them noticed that their children's interest and motivation in learning or developing foreign language and cultural competences increased. In addition, 79.1% of them stated that they also learnt about other cultures thanks to sharings of their children. Only 62.86 of them expressed that the activities were a bit burden to their children in addition to their regular works, which enabled us to question the teachers' attitudes, difficulties of the activities and the deadlines given for the activities.

Those results have showed us that learning a foreign language by using cultural elements enables the learners and even teachers to discover and improve many skills. Commonly and collaboratively created materials display a range of options for beneficiaries. Some of the applications that we used during FCLL Research are Canva- Postermiywall (Posters/brochures/Logos), Blogger (blog), Google Forms (Logo selection/Assessments), Chatterpix - Voki(introduction videos), Padlet (School corners), Platagon (animation dialogues), Clips - Inshot (Videos), Quizlet – Learningapps - Kahoot (Games), Story jumper (Stories), Genial.ly (Christmas wishes), Ourboox – Thinglink – Padlet – Joomag - Linoit (Common/Collaborative

materials) and all the links used in this research were combined by using Thinglink. However, the activities could have been designed using different tools. Besides, extra activities were also optional as it might be time consuming for the participants. They could have been combined in the activities which might increase the time of the research. Not all the games created during the research were played among all partners. Because arranging the meetings available for all partners was almost impossible and would cause extra burden for the teachers. In order to avoid these problems, the participants were not expected to be involved in all meetings except for the final meeting.

Awards

All those efforts led to our research being awarded by 4 National Quality Labels.



Figure 12. Quality Labels

Annex

Pre assessment and post assessment tests results can be reached by clicking the links below.

Pre-assessment Surveys for Teachers & Students

ANNEX1- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cR-d7IP8pYw4N8nRICwWHDLuN2I2Ddn1?usp=sharing>

Post-assessment Surveys for Teachers, Students, Parents

ANNEX 2- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12Kms8kEjcogqZy854uFaBEsoYmmpMT-1?usp=sharing>

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