

# English Through Art—Incorporating Art in the ESL/EFL Classroom through Peer Collaboration to Encourage Language Production, Acquisition and Learning Outcomes

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## Abstract

This study explores the innovativeness of Task-Based-Learning (TBL) through different strategies, rapidly being implemented by practitioners in ESL/EFL (English as a Second Language English as a Foreign Language) classrooms around the world. In the current study, 200 university students, as a part of the English Program, were brought together to demonstrate the use of Art, as in drawings or paintings, in the process of learning English. This mixed-method study showed that through the practice of Art as a methodology used for language acquisition, many co-related aspects of language learning could be achieved along the way, namely vocabulary building, confidence enhancement, storytelling, cultivating team spirit, peer to peer bonding/cooperation, to name a few of the benefits accomplished. The participants demonstrated their ability to create stories in an artistic manner, while using English language as a tool to convey meaning, which generated curiosity and sensitivity towards the use of the target language, English. Keen observation of the artwork was the key element in the analysis of data collected. This empirical study, using Art as a TBL methodology, contributed towards generating pathways clearly demonstrating participants' intense eagerness to achieve creative excellence in the application of English as a language of communication, among other positive outcomes of this form of language acquisition.

## Keywords

Peer Collaboration, Vocabulary Building, Artwork Through Drawing, Creative Expression, Critical Thinking, Artifacts Showing Creativity, Spoken English Skills Enhancement

## 1. Introduction

Research has proven that “arts support conventional literacy skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening” as stated by [Anderson \(2017\)](#) who went on to further elaborate that “arts could be a picture, drama, song or dance that may help with English language learning and related cognitive skills that support learning across many different areas.” Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that we are immersed in a world where communication takes place through different modes such as visual, gestural, or aural ([Cope & Kalantzis, 2000](#)).

The purpose of applying Art to develop English speaking abilities was chosen in this study to prove that Art has a significant place in English learning, and can further offer prospects of learning the language in a fun way to enhance creativity and critical thinking skills. The strategic methodology used, explicitly focused on preparing the learners to successfully function in a globalized society. The assessment of the results was based on collaborative attentiveness, peer evaluation, self-monitoring, language responsiveness, among other aspects of observation used to measure the outcomes through qualitative and quantitative implements. As indicated above, keen observation and critical analysis of the artwork were some of the methods adopted to analyse the data collected. The data were eventually synthesized by feeding into Excel spreadsheets and statistically formatting it to convert the, thus far incomprehensible, data into identifiable markers and guides, and further on, projected into graphs and diagrams where they made specific indicators for the end users, the ESL/EFL educators.

Here, in this study, we will elaborate on language acquisition and creativity through art, as in drawings or paintings, while working in collaboration within groups of learners.

## 2. Literature and Context

According to [Farokhi & Hashemi \(2012\)](#), “Students are required to think critically, pose problems and make decisions, central capacities in all learning. Students who participate regularly in the arts develop self-confidence.” When we think about critical thinking and creativity, we often think of art in its different forms. The creativity in Art can lead to critical thinking while working within groups of learners. Many researchers have observed that applying the collaborative approach to language learning can activate critical thinking ([Bonk & Smith, 1998](#); [Thayer-Bacon, 2000](#); [Heyman, 2008](#)). Advocates of group learning, where learners work in collaboration with each other, underscore the importance of critical thinking skills that sharpen the ability of the learners to examine arguments and draw conclusions to make decisions ([Paul, 1992](#); [Willingham, 2007](#)). [Bailin et al. \(1999\)](#) have claimed that those learners who possess critical thinking skills can contribute significantly to a group task.

However, creativity is a very vast concept applied in language learning. [Beaman & Williams \(2010\)](#), Discussion section, para 1, state that educators agree teaching should be more creative, to inspire students to use language more “creatively”.

Researchers like Sternberg & Lubart (1995) have proposed the definition of creativity as the capacity to generate output that is original and authentic. It breaks out of the confines of a given task and adapts in new ways to deal with different situations. As stated by Farokhi & Hashemi (2012), “At the best level, ‘creative’ means bringing into being something that was not there before and has been brought into being.” Therefore, for the benefit of this research, where creativity of the students was encouraged through art, we can describe creativity as the wings that learners grow when dealing with a situation by adding their own inventiveness to give a unique dimension to their work and take flight to explore the unknown with the power of language. Each person looks at a task in a different manner, and each one lends their own exclusivity to their creative output while using language, developing in them the ability to breathe life into a piece of paper and turn it into a work of art.

Art is rampantly being used to develop the production of language in an EFL/ESL classroom by educators around the world. As described by Altun (2015).

In this perspective, the use of teaching devices such as paintings, maps, slides, film strips, animated movies, flash cards, plates, etc. are all just some of the effective methods in pivoting students to imagine and understand quickly... and by linking the word with its counterpart drawing will fortify it within their minds. By integrating the arts and artmaking into English language teaching and learning, students will develop and deepen their understanding of their own and others’ human experience (*Art as a Tool for Teachers of English Language Learners*, 2010).

“The activity of drawing offers pupils a chance to speak; they can make comments on each other’s picture(s) ask questions about details... The teacher should encourage them to do so (Joklová, 2009: p. 42).” The motivation received from the teacher can help a learner of a foreign language tremendously.

The problem of self-esteem has been a subject studied as an affective variable when broadly analysing the effects of the incentives and attitudes using the “social psychological approach” on the achievements of the L2 users of English (Clément, 1980; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997). It was proposed by Clément (1980, 1986), that self-confidence was hypothesised as an important concept that determined the enthusiasm to learn a second language, primarily due to the agreeable and pleasing interactions with fellow learners of English. As a result, higher levels of confidence in learners increases the chances of their language competence, their ability to make emotional adjustments and develop the versatility to adapt to cross-cultural experiences (Clément, 1986; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; Noels, Pon, & Clément, 1996; Yang, Noels, & Saumure, 2005). Furthermore, Clément (1980) went on to theorize that when language learning occurred in an inclusive environment, where there was qualitative and quantitative contact with other fellow language learners, it increased the learners’ self-confidence, thereby contributing to the motivation of learning the English language. This willingness to communicate (WTC) is the first step to language acquisition and learning. The researchers believe that motivation is the most significant factor

that facilitates learning and should be targeted by educators.

A teacher can help by removing the “affective filter” more quickly, thereby paving a clear path towards language acquisition. Krashen (1982) posited that “language learning must take place in an environment where learners are ‘off the defensive’ and the affective filter (anxiety) is low for the input to be noticed and gain access to the learners thinking” (p. 30). Krashen’s theory states that the learning process can be restricted or enhanced depending on the learners’ emotional and physical state, which differs from one learner to the other. Low affective filters are conducive to language learning. The learners lower their affective filters in an environment that is congenial and harmonious. This leads to effective outcomes in language learning. The activities and materials prepared by teachers, the peer-to-peer contact and the classroom environment can tremendously help students to stimulate positivity. This enhanced learning environment tremendously contributes to language learning.

In the words of Du (2009: p. 16) “People with the high affective filter will lower their intake whereas people with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device.”

Therefore, one can safely say that it is the onus of the facilitators to maintain the energy level and the positive state of mind of the learners whose language learning responsibility they have been entrusted with. As is claimed by Stevick (1980: p. 4) “Success [in language learning] depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom.”

Teachers need to use various devices that generate interest and curiosity among learners. Exploring the use of language learning through art, where raw art comes from within, without any intention of perfection in the outcome, was used as a great learning tool in this ELT research. In order to promote authentic learning and to build creativity while improving critical thinking, art in the ESL/EFL classroom was applied during the research, giving rise to a more engaging and interactive learning experience. TBL can be introduced in its various forms through different tasks in the EFL/ESL classroom.

### 3. Backbone of the Study

#### 3.1. Benefits of Art in Language Learning

To demonstrate the benefits of using art in the English language classroom, following are a few of the myriad benefits of using art in a classroom: It makes lessons...

- Engaging
- Interactive
- Inclusive
- Helps in Vocabulary Building
- Develops Creativity
- Builds Critical Thinking

- Improves Communication and Interpersonal Skills Development
- Builds a Deeper Bond among Students

The methodology implemented to assess language learning through self-monitoring and peer evaluation was made available to the learners through the device of peer interactions. Peer interaction for language learning, as defined by Adams, Rebecca, Oliver, & Rhonda (2019) is:

...any sort of second language communicative activity in which the main participants are the language learners themselves. The difference between a peer interaction and other communicative activities is that in peer interactions, the main work of the activity is done by the learners working together, with only minimal input from the teacher.

### 3.2. Understanding the Learning Process

In this research, the authors laid grounds for the learners to get the opportunity for peer interactions to practice, perform, and display their language skills in the harmonious, interactive atmosphere carefully crafted by the teachers for this TBL research, where a humanistic approach in teaching English was seen to greatly contribute to the learning outcomes. The immersive learning environment interacting with peers was an enriching experience for the learners. Research has proved that learners' language acquisition thrives while learning from each other. Peer learning is a concept used widely in the language learning classrooms. The benefits of peer learning are described by Boud, David, Cohen, Ruth, Sampson, & Jane (1999) as, "... the development of learning outcomes related to collaboration, teamwork, and becoming a member of a learning community; critical enquiry and reflection; communication skills; and learning to learn." Researchers believe that learning from peers promotes certain lifelong learning skills which are exclusive to peer learning and are not easily obtained by other methods of language learning Slavin (1990). As stated by Celce-Murica, (2001), speaking is considered to be a complex skill that needs to be taught ubiquitously and learners learn to speak better when in groups.

## 4. Methodology and Materials

### 4.1. Case Study and Participants

This form of Language Learning through Art was put into effect through an Art Activity performed by four different sets of students, with fifty students in each set, in an EFL Program at a university in China. The participants were enrolled in the Program and their consent was obtained via a sub-section on the syllabus of the course, which clearly mentioned that the students gave their consent explicitly and the outcomes can be utilized for research purposes and publications. The 200 participants were students from all levels of English taught at the University's English Language Center, namely Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4 (1 being the lowest level). Students were from the Arts Program, English Majors, Medical School, Engineering School, Business School, and Post Graduate School. Irrespective of their

majors, each student participated with equal enthusiasm, passion and fervor. Every set of the 50 participants was further divided into four or five teams. Each set of 50 students was given the Art Activity planned by the researchers for the study every week. As part of the research, the Art Activity was conducted for a duration of one hour per class, over a period of four classes with a week's gap between the classes and with a different set of students each time.

## 4.2. Aims and Design of the Task

The aim of the study was to observe language production by the students during the Art Activity. Four set Groups of students were given the same activity, where the participants were handed over a blank sheet of paper to draw, while using their background knowledge of any or all the English vocabulary that they already possessed to express themselves during the activities used for the case study. To gauge the language output, creativity, confidence level, peer collaboration, among other aspects observed during the study of the participants through the Art Activity, the students were granted the freedom to express themselves through the creativity in their art. They were told to draw whatever they liked, responding to the flow of their thought, maintaining continuity, coherence and logic in their art created on the blank sheet of paper before them, while using spoken English to express themselves. In other words, students had the choice of the use of their own repertoire of vocabulary and were not confined to the use of any vocabulary sets given to them by the facilitators. The focus of the research was to measure the amount of obvious visible language production when creativity and self-confidence were permitted to thrive unrestrained in a harmonious environment, conducive to learning, among cooperative peers.

This research was a mixed-method study, within the quantitative and qualitative spectrum. This approach encompasses the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. As Crossley & Edwards (2016) maintain, that the mixed method approach may accomplish “a more comprehensive and a more robust perspective by combining the vantage points that different methods afford”; Furthermore, it “allows us to overcome the limitation of individual methods, deepens our understanding and enriches our analysis” (p. 3).

The reason why the mixed method of research was implemented for this study was because the integration of both the qualitative and quantitative approach, enabled the researchers to analyze the data more accurately. According to Johnson et al. (2007) mixed methods is “...the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (p. 123). This view is also supported by Creswell & Clark (2007) who agree that the mixed method is “a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and ‘mixing’ both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem” (p. 5).

Furthermore, as stated by (Glogowska 2011), both the qualitative and quantitative mechanisms can be incorporated and merged at any stage of the research. It must be noted that the features of the research methodology need not necessarily be in equal proportion and can be implemented to analyze the study and draw conclusions.

### **4.3. Evaluation of the Connection between Art and Language Learning**

This research adopted the observations and analysis method of calculation based on the systemic evaluation of the contemporary literature researched through the definitions of critical thinking, creativity, confidence building, and language learning through the process of discovering connections between art and language production. The two trained assessors, implemented analytical rating as the criteria for scoring the outcomes, demonstrated a satisfactory level of uniformity and accuracy in rating the different results obtained from the 4 sets of 50 students in each set, further broken into 4 or 5 teams per set, with around 10 students per team, per week, participating in the research.

A short note on the background of the assessors: They were two master's degree holders with roots in a Native English-speaking country. Both were university level teachers with more than 40 years and 21 years of teaching experience, respectively, and with native English proficiency. All the same, literature on 'rater training' state that the quality of a rater's/assessor's training is more important than a rater's/assessor's former experience or the rater's/assessor's first language (Xi & Mollaun, 2011), hence the raters'/assessors' first language was not a matter taken into consideration for this study, rather their experience was the trusted gauge.

### **4.4. Details of the Task Explained to the Participants**

This study comprised four sets of the same activity, but with four sets of 50 different students. For this research, the first set of 50 students was placed into small teams of 10 individuals. The task was introduced as "Story Weaving Through Art". Students were handed a piece of blank A4 size paper. Instructions were given to students to think of an image of an object in their mind, draw the image on the paper and pass the paper to the next person in the team, with everyone in the team taking turns to draw. They were also required to label the special features of their artwork for the benefit of adding new vocabulary to enrich the learning experience. Additionally, the participants were instructed to speak out aloud a sentence or two to augment the story as they added a new element to the picture. A point to be noted is, the participants were told that their drawings did not need to be perfect, but simple representations of the image that they had conjured in their individual minds. The participants needed to make sure that the picture they wished to draw would have some connection to the image drawn by the previous teammate. This meant that they had to pay close attention to the first person's



artwork, while they were drawing on the sheet of paper. The aim was to develop logical language structures to express the image in their minds, to add to the picture drawn by the previous teammate. Learners were seen to be actively rousing their own imagination and forming language links to their imagined artwork. Each participant listened attentively to the ones before them, as they needed to stay prepared to add their creativity and language inputs to the drawings made by their peers before them. Listening attentively and quickly drawing something related and relevant to the previous person's artwork, led to the students sharpening their quick-thinking skills in English. Some hardly had time to translate their thoughts from Chinese to English and were responding, maybe a bit hesitatingly at first, but soon getting quite quick and ready with English vocabulary that appeared to be flooding and filling their minds. As suggested by [Huang & Gandhioke \(2021\)](#) teachers should design tasks to encourage university students to practice using vocabulary in real-life situations. Here, it was noticed that even the lower ability speakers of English were seen to be catching up very efficiently and effectively expressing themselves through their drawings on the paper while enjoying the interesting and exciting learning experience.

[Al-Sibai \(2004\)](#), agrees that greater exposure to the second language, (in our study, English), apparently leads to the development of fluency in spoken English. In the words of [Willis \(1996: p. 7\)](#), "Learners need chances to say what they think or feel and to experiment in a supportive atmosphere using language they have heard or seen without feeling threatened." Learners soon become spontaneous users of English and feel comfortable among their peers while using the language. They are not concentrating on how to use the language, instead they are focusing on the production of language for the sake of communicating meaning, [Littlewood \(1984\)](#). This was also agreed by [Harmer \(1982\)](#), who maintained that a student's focus should be on content rather than form during a language activity or task. According to [Littlewood \(1984: p. 91\)](#), "Through communication learners can integrate separate structures into a creative system for expressing meaning." Participants in the research were encouraged to continue to produce language without paying heed to grammar or sentence structure. Participants were observed to be fearlessly and freely speaking, focussing on raw, language production rather than the polish of a grammatically correct output. They were seen to even surpass the vocabulary barriers by using substitution of words to convey meaning, instead of stopping completely when faced with lack of accurate vocabulary.

#### 4.5. Demonstration of an Example of a Task Completed

For the sake of absolute clarity, following is a sample of a task completed by one team of students, out of a set of 50 students participating in the research.

The first teammate in the team drew a hut and a few trees in the center of the paper and said aloud, "Once upon a time there was a little hut in the middle of a forest." And she wrote the words "hut" and "forest" alongside her drawings.

The next teammate added by drawing a pathway from the door of the hut



leading outwards and said, “And there was a small...Ummm (hesitation due to lack of vocabulary) *road* in front of the hut.” And he wrote the word “road”.

The next teammate jumped in and altered the drawing by saying, “Let me change the word ‘road’ to ‘pathway’ leading from the door of the house.” And the previous student was seen to be making a note of the newly acquired vocabulary, “pathway”.

The next teammate added a chimney, spewing smoke curling above the hut, and he said, “It seems someone is cooking food in the hut.” And labeled the word, “chimney”. Many students were seen to be noting down that word!

Then, the story took an interesting turn, as a team member added a question at the end of his artful description; he asked, “Does anyone know who lives inside this hut?”

This encouraged an interesting conversation that led to sharpening of the critical thinking skills of the learners, who came up with various answers, and were even challenged by the rest of the team members for illogical responses at times.

The next team member took the hint and added further to their creativity by drawing two young children on the sheet of paper, and said, “Maybe the mummy of these two children is cooking supper inside the hut, for them to eat something after they finished playing.” New word was “supper”. As facilitators, we got the opportunity to correct the pronunciation, as “supper” which was said as, “super”, as in superman!

The next team member immediately jumped in to add a pond near the hut, picturizing the kids’ daddy catching fish, and he said, “The children are playing near the pond where their daddy is catching fish for dinner.” And all the team members were overjoyed at their teammate’s idea, and they clapped joyfully.

And the activity went on and on...as did all the other teams’ tasks which led to the creation of new works of “art”.

By the end of the task, all the teams had impressive, creative pieces of art on their tables that they proudly displayed for everyone, including the two researchers, us, to admire, in amazement. Students were given a round of applause for their creativity and teamwork. They were then instructed to take pictures of their artwork and share them with the other teams present in the classroom through the social media platform widely used by students in China, WeChat.

Everyone enjoyed, looking at each other’s artwork. The task was then taken to the next level when the students were instructed to move around the classroom in pairs telling the story of their own pieces of art to the other teammates, referring to the picture of their artwork sent earlier-on in the Activity WeChat Group. The purpose behind sending students to describe their pictures in pairs was to give them a sense of security that they had someone to rely on in case one of them did not know how to describe something in English or simply to have a teammate along while they met new friends from other classes with different levels of English. The learners were encouraged to ask questions and challenge the logical thought processes of the other teams. This art based TBL through “Story Weaving”

can go on and on until the teacher decides to end the activity, or until the goals of the activity have been achieved.

Finally, the participants put up their colorful and intriguing artifacts on a notice board for all to witness, examine and offer critique. This led to further discussions, critical thinking, and creativity, all of which were unleashed, resulting in an enriching learning experience through art. Overall, it was a fun learning environment, filled with joyful laughter and cheer as students shared their creative stories, asked and answered relevant questions, received praises and critical feedback from peers and the facilitators, while all along, deftly using English as a means of communication during this very engaging task.

## 5. Results and Learning Outcomes

The second, third, and fourth rounds of the activity for the research were conducted with one-week gaps and with a different set of 50 students in each research group, each week. The results, observed after all the four rounds of the research, were then set onto tables for analysis, based on pre-designed rubrics. The charts in **Figure 1**, **Figure 2**, **Figure 3**, **Figure 4**, and **Figure 5** show the data collected after each task was completed by the Group. Here, in this paper, we have used data collected from Group 1, to demonstrate one group of 50 participants as a sample case. The basic 4 parameters of observation with the purpose to compare, as on the days of the activities and during the tasks, were as follows: 1) English Level of the Students; 2) Confidence Level of the Students; 3) Creativity Level of the Students; 4) Level of Peer Collaboration among the Students. As can be seen through the charts, the students displayed different levels in all the four parameters. When the sum of the four measurements obtained from data collected from the outcomes of the 4 sets of students were compared, in **Figure 5**, it was clearly seen that the maximum number of students demonstrated all-out creativity leading to a high level of peer collaboration, with heightened confidence levels, thereby resulting in an increased level of language production, among an active group of learners.

The research outcomes clearly demonstrated that the weaker students learned from the stronger students through following their lead. Some even mimicked their peers, albeit in a joking manner. As **Celce-Murica (2001)** posited that listening and then practicing phrases that have been used in speech acts can help learners overcome shyness, fear, and anxiety of speaking. The students' desire to speak their part of the story they had drawn, in the form of an act, aided the learning process. **Brown (2007)** also stated that verbalisation can greatly enhance speaking skills of the learners. The authors facilitating the study, could observe the obvious willingness to practice what the participants of the study group were learning from each other. This enabled the researchers to gauge the quality of the output.

The more proficient speakers of English were seen to be naturally and casually correcting the ones who were making grammatical errors during the process of story weaving. The atmosphere, which was extremely conducive to speaking, made the lower level students come out of their shells and speak to the best of their

abilities. Oradee (2012) states that evidence shows that speaking should integrate activities in group tasks. The participants of the research spoke without fear of ridicule, or generating frivolous mirth in the class, and appeared to be quite confident, as can be seen in Figure 3 and again in Figure 5, where heightened confidence levels was an important bi-product of the TBLT, English through Art. The authors observed immense development in the learners’ speaking abilities as the team activity progressed.

The whole process got quite loud and engaging. The students enjoyed experiencing the wind under their wings, unbridling their new-found knowledge of spoken English. This gave a very healthy setting for the facilitators to catch, and to correct any errors in vocabulary and grammar application, along with pronunciation and use of tones. Some learners were seen to be using fillers and common vocalizations thereby keeping the conversation “from becoming dull, boring and jerky” (Gandhioke & Singh, 2023). All along, the facilitators, through gentle recasting, were able to guide and teach the students without affecting the continuum of the activity, or them ever appearing to impose on the learning process. Flower & Miller, as cited by Wenli (2005), state that studies have shown a suitable learning environment created by the educators can enhance the learning process.

The participants were closely observed: they clearly showed an avid interest in the task given to them. Some of the students were talkative, while the shy ones came out of their shells very quickly, as the task progressed. They appeared to follow their peers and as they put their ideas into drawings, soon began the flow of language production with every stroke of creativity on that single sheet of A4 size paper given to them at the outset. A very talkative lot seemed to appear out of nowhere, through a surprising transformation of the avid learners when provided this platform of English through Art. It proved to be an exciting, encouraging, and interesting manner for the students to express themselves in English. Celce-Murica (2001) states that students themselves become astounded with their own abilities and intellects.

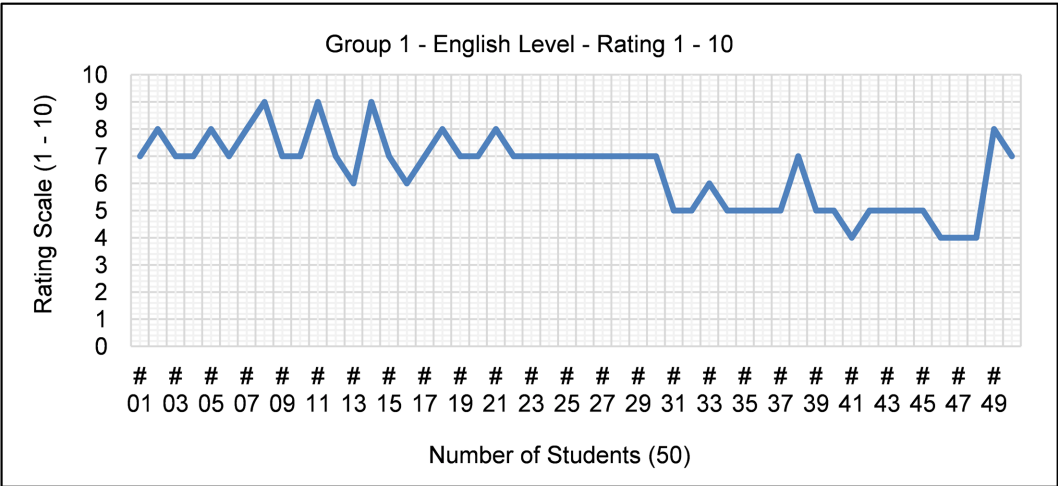
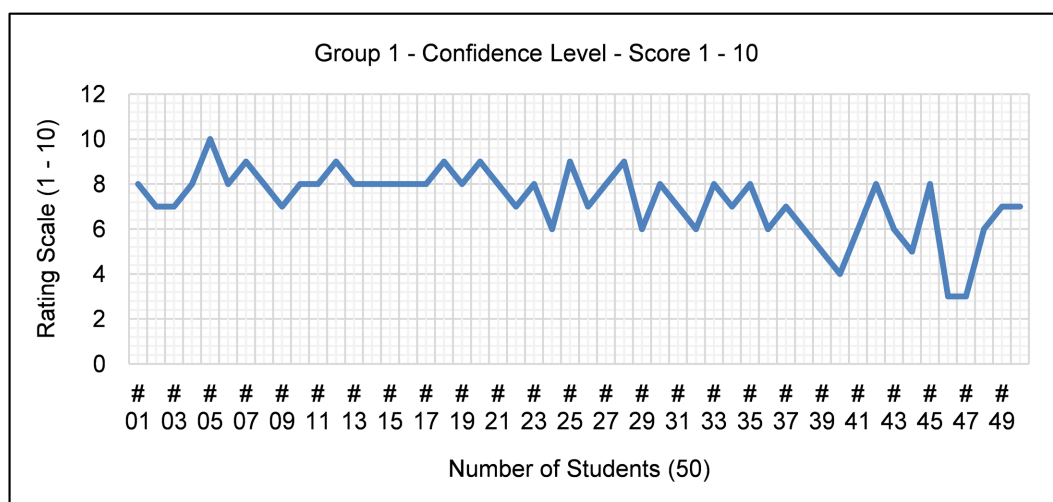
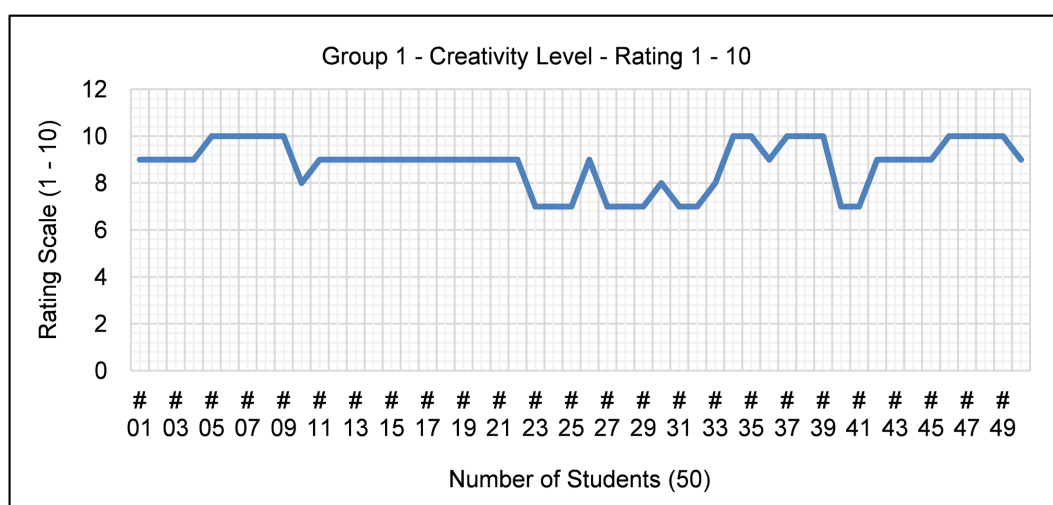


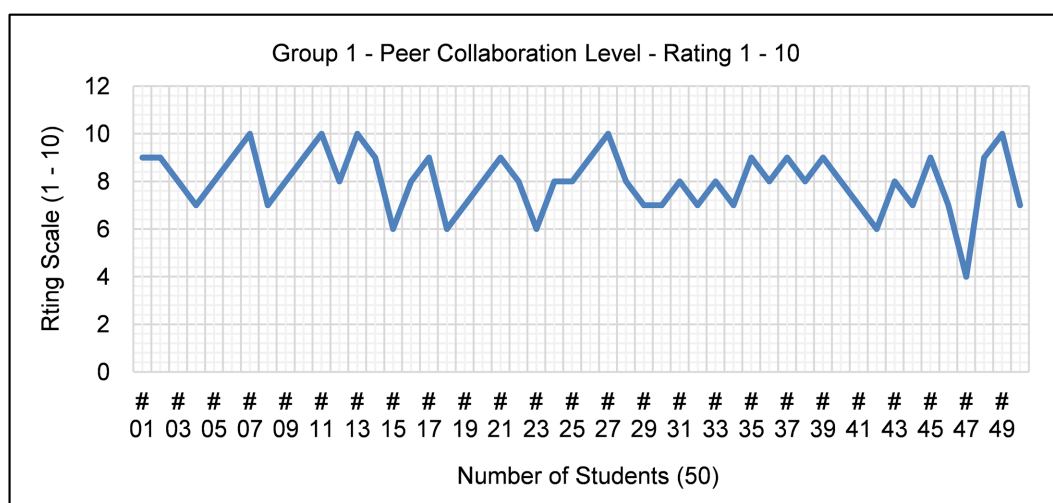
Figure 1. Outcomes in relation to English level of the students in group 1.



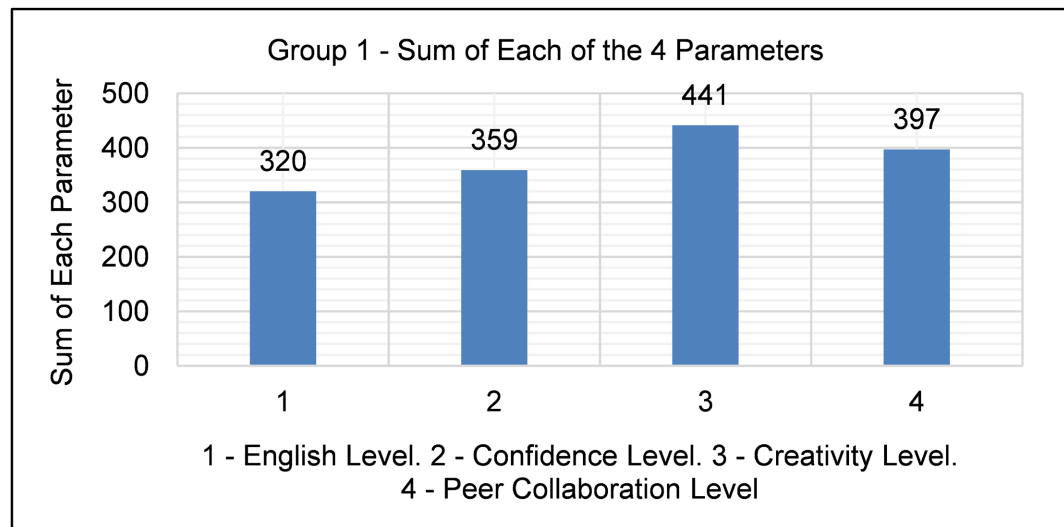
**Figure 2.** Outcomes in relation to confidence level of students in group 1.



**Figure 3.** Outcomes in relation to creativity level of students in group 1.

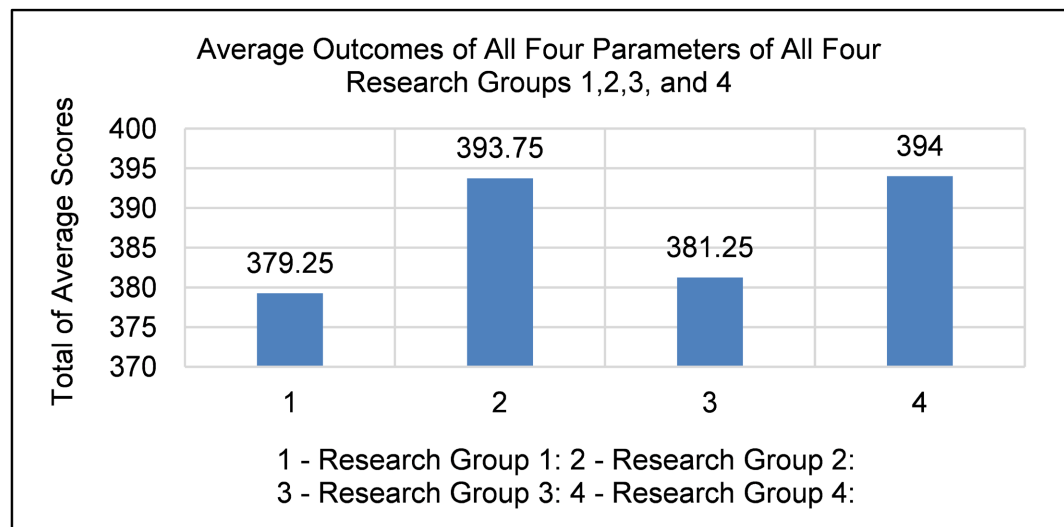


**Figure 4.** Peer collaboration level of students in group 1.



**Figure 5.** Sum of each of the four parameters observed in group 1.

The next step in the research findings, was followed by the comparison of the averages of all the four parameters of all the four Groups, made up of 200 participants in all (Research Group 1, Research Group 2, Research Group 3, and Research Group 4) as seen in the bar chart in **Figure 6**. Overall, it was noticed that all the 4 Groups had similar learning outcomes, with creativity leading as a maximum consequence in every Group, as demonstrated in the sample. Thereby consolidating the conclusion to this research that creativity through art is an important contributor to language production, with confidence and teamwork becoming collateral advantages in the learning outcomes, irrespective of the level of English of the participants.



**Figure 6.** Average outcomes comparing all four parameters of all four research groups.

## 6. Discussion and Analysis

During the course of this study, it became evident that the learning environment

created by this task was conducive to active learning. “A harmonizing environment and a state of mind which lowers the affective filters will enhance the students’ learning experience and gives expected effective outcomes [Kalanithi \(2021\)](#).” Students felt comfortable to talk with each other when they communicated through their works of art. The absence of the “Affective Filter” aided in the learning process, which led to immense amount of learning through doing, thereby giving authenticity to the famous quote by the great philosopher Confucius: “I hear, and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

It was observed by the researchers conducting the tasks that students were taking notes of the new vocabulary they were learning during the process of making their drawings. We know that the basic aspect of learning any language is the mastery of the new vocabulary of the target language. “Vocabulary is an important part of foreign language teaching and learning process. Vocabulary can be taught via drawing [Altun \(2015\)](#).” He goes on to elucidate that drawing is an exciting process that allows students to learn the newly acquainted vocabulary and aids “quick memorization”. [Brooks \(2009\)](#) went on to add, “The ability to visualise ideas, concepts and problems can help move children to higher levels of thinking. When children are able to work at a conceptual level, they are able to move beyond basic recitation and make links between concepts.”

Visualization of ideas and putting it in drawings on a paper unleashed creativity. Creativity, as defined in the literature section of this research, was ubiquitous throughout the tasks. Students were amazed at their own abilities to showcase images from their brain onto the paper. They had never expected that there could be so much learning through the basic act of drawing everyday images in such a simplistic manner. The strategy of encouraging the learners to ask questions and challenge each other’s logical thought process resulted in immense critical thinking and creativity. The works of art created by the learners themselves sparked excited discussions, critique, and a healthy discourse.

Additionally, it was noticed that even the shy participants were demonstrating the courage to speak, albeit short sentences, and were seen to be taking their first tottering steps towards language acquisition and production. As stated by [Altun \(2015\)](#) “Students use observation skills when they are drawing, and this can help to motivate students who might otherwise remain quiet or need more time to process information ([Art as a Tool for Teachers of English Language Learners, 2010](#)).” Peer teaching and learning raised the morale of the students participating in this study. Presenting in front of peers boosted the self-confidence of the learners who advanced, over time, to becoming confident speakers of English. During the study, participants of the EFL classroom vociferously claimed that they had enjoyed the rich learning experience of practicing this multi-faceted TBL through Art and wanted to do the activity, again, in the near future.

As we know, “Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information” ([Brown, 1994](#); [Burns & Joyce, 1997](#)), it makes it all the more important for the facilitators to

create a learning environment that draws the attention and interest of the learners. As Peck (1978: p. 139) states, “Activities need to be child centred and communication should be authentic. This means that children are listening or speaking about something that interests them, for their own reasons, and not merely because a teacher has asked them to.” Even Nunan (1988) added that if students are assigned group work, which is a good teaching method, it allows students to talk in English more often. Richards & Rodgers (2001) further elaborated on this view by stating that language acquisition becomes more effective if learners are given the opportunity to actively use it in the classroom.

Therefore, the art activity introduced by the researchers encouraged the students to produce language willingly and effectively. The TBLT proved to be engaging and exciting which gave the desired and expected learning outcomes, through naturally occurring interaction within groups, inspired by creativity, leading the learners to become confident users of the target language, English.

## 7. Conclusion

It is successfully determined, that through creativity comes language learning. The demonstration of creative expression through visual representation of emotions was expressed by the learners by way of their works of art. Through this experiential learning device, “Story Weaving Through Art”, the authors observed the successful application of Art as a strategic implement for language learning. In the words of Brooks (2017):

...Drawing supports the movement from simple spontaneous concepts to more complex concepts and plays an important role in promoting higher mental functions. When drawing is used in a collaborative and communicative manner, it becomes a powerful meaning-making tool. When drawing is recognized as a meaning-making process, supporting drawing then becomes central to the teaching and learning of young children.

Additionally, students were more willing to learn when the learning process was engaging and interesting. Students appeared to be more at ease and relaxed which led them to come out of their comfort zones and express themselves freely and fearlessly as they did not feel judged. According to Tarone (2005: p. 485) speaking is usually viewed as “the most complex and difficult skill to master”. Granted, we agree with this view, but through the duration of our research, we concluded that if there are ardent learners and if they are motivated and encouraged enough, they can achieve the learning outcomes envisioned by facilitators and aimed by learners everywhere.

## 8. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This research has given us the opportunity to do an in-depth study on the effect of art activity on peer collaboration. Deeper study could be encouraged to consolidate our findings that clearly indicated that speaking through art enhanced



learning and collaboration between peers, leading to an interesting way of acquiring spoken English.

Further research in this area to study the scope of English acquisition through Art could be conducted with more tasks and more participants. Other parameters, such as the influence of culture and student-centered learning could be added to broaden the focus of the research and its outcomes.

Overall, the results showed a dramatic increase in language output from every student participating in the research. Granted, the research was conducted only four sessions, but the number of participants, 200 in all, made the conclusions, through keen observation and analysis by the two researchers of the study, quite conclusive and authentic. The evidence of language production, confidence, creativity, peer collaboration was observed during the study. The researchers noted creativity and confidence to speak English clearly ignited sparks of motivation in every learner through this research. The participants felt that mastering the English language was an achievable possibility, one that could be fostered with dedication and hard work to actualize their dream of becoming confident speakers of English.

The more student-to-student interaction there is in a task, the better the outcomes of the successful acquisition of the target language are. “The growing body of research on the topic of arts integration in education makes a strong case for the increased use of the arts in language learning Anderson (2017).”

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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