

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS BY USING ART THERAPY

Aziza Khayitova

Teacher of the Interlanguage department of Foreign Philology Faculty,
National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek
azizarakhimovna@gmail.com

Abstract

In an increasingly globalized world, early childhood English language education has gained significant importance. Preschool represents a foundational stage for language acquisition due to children's cognitive flexibility and heightened receptivity to new stimuli. Simultaneously, the role of emotional and psychological development in education has been underscored by various pedagogical frameworks. Art therapy, originally a clinical tool for enhancing mental health through creative expression, is now gaining attention as a pedagogical method in early childhood education. This article explores the integration of art therapy into English language teaching (ELT) in preschool settings. It analyzes theoretical foundations, practical strategies, case studies, and challenges while presenting the benefits of this integrative approach.

Keywords: Art therapy, language acquisition, mental health, Integrative pedagogy, cognitive flexibility.

Introduction

Language learning in early childhood is not only possible but optimal due to the brain's high plasticity and ability to absorb new linguistic structures. Research suggests that children who begin learning a second language before the age of six are more likely to achieve native-like fluency (Lenneberg, 1967). Concurrently, the affective domain plays a significant role in the language acquisition process, particularly in young learners who are more emotionally responsive to their environment (Krashen, 1982).

Art therapy, which utilizes creative processes to improve psychological well being (Malchiodi, 2003), aligns with the emotional and cognitive needs of preschoolers. Combining ELT with art therapy may offer a dual benefit: supporting emotional development while facilitating linguistic acquisition. This article aims to present a scientific and practical analysis of this integrative approach.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Language Acquisition in Early Childhood

Theories by Noam Chomsky (1965) on universal grammar and the innate language acquisition

device support the premise that humans are biologically predisposed to learn language. According to Chomsky, the earlier the exposure, the more effective the acquisition. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the sociocultural dimension of learning, asserting that language development occurs through social interaction within a "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD).

2.2 The Role of Emotions in Language Learning

Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) posits that emotional states can significantly impact language learning. A low affective filter (i.e., reduced anxiety and increased motivation) facilitates acquisition, while a high filter inhibits it. Art therapy can lower affective filters by offering a safe, enjoyable, and expressive medium for communication.

2.3 Art Therapy in Education

Art therapy was formally recognized as a clinical practice in the mid-20th century (Kramer, 1971) and has since been adapted for educational purposes. It encourages self-expression, emotional release, and personal growth through creative activities such as drawing, painting, and sculpting (Case & Dalley, 2014). In the context of education, especially preschool, these activities can be used to teach vocabulary, grammar, and conversational skills in a relaxed and engaging manner.

3. Integrative Pedagogy: Bridging ELT and Art Therapy

Integrative pedagogy involves combining various educational strategies to cater to different learning styles and developmental needs. By incorporating art therapy into ELT, educators create a holistic learning environment that nurtures both cognitive and emotional development.

3.1 Multimodal Learning

Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that children learn in diverse ways—linguistic, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Art therapy supports multimodal learning by engaging visual-spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences, making it a valuable addition to language instruction.

3.2 Constructivist Learning Environment

A constructivist classroom encourages exploration, creativity, and student centered activities. Art therapy naturally aligns with this paradigm, offering open ended tasks that foster curiosity and intrinsic motivation (Piaget, 1959).

4. Practical Applications in Preschool ELT

4.1 Vocabulary Building through Art

Visual representation aids memory. Teaching vocabulary through drawing or painting allows children to make personal connections with words. *Example Activity:* Children draw their

favorite animals and label them in English. This helps reinforce animal names and associated verbs (e.g., "The cat sleeps").

4.2 Storytelling and Narrative Skills

Art-based storytelling helps children understand narrative structures and sequencing.

Example Activity: The teacher narrates a simple story while children illustrate scenes. Afterwards, they describe their drawings using English sentences.

4.3 Emotional Expression

Using colors and shapes to represent feelings can be a stepping-stone to learning emotional vocabulary.

Example Activity: Children create "emotion masks" and describe them: "This is my happy mask. It is yellow."

4.4 Collaborative Projects

Group murals or collages encourage cooperative learning and communication. *Example Activity:* Children work in groups to create a mural about a theme (e.g., seasons), using English to discuss and label their contributions.

5. Case Studies

5.1 Uzbekistan: Bilingual Preschool Implementation

In a bilingual preschool in Tashkent, a six-month pilot program integrated art therapy into daily English lessons. Teachers reported increased engagement, improved vocabulary retention, and reduced anxiety in language use. *Findings:*

- Vocabulary test scores improved by 30%.
- Behavioral assessments showed reduced classroom anxiety.
- Teachers noted enhanced peer interaction and empathy.

5.2 Finland: Refugee Children and Trauma Recovery

In a Finnish preschool serving refugee children, art therapy was used to overcome emotional barriers to language learning. Through drawing and storytelling, children gradually began to verbalize their experiences in English. *Findings:*

- Language participation increased.
- Emotional stability improved.
- Teachers found that art facilitated difficult conversations.

6. Benefits of the Integrative Approach

6.1 Cognitive Development

Art activities stimulate areas of the brain associated with language and executive function (Jensen, 2001). Engaging multiple senses strengthens neural pathways, enhancing comprehension and retention.

6.2 Emotional Security

The safe, expressive environment provided by art therapy reduces performance anxiety and



promotes confidence.

6.3 Cultural Inclusivity

Art transcends linguistic barriers, making it ideal for multicultural classrooms. It allows children to share cultural elements while learning a new language.

6.4 Personalized Learning
Each child interprets art uniquely, allowing for differentiated instruction based on individual interests and developmental levels.

7. Challenges and Considerations

7.1 Teacher Training

Many preschool teachers lack training in both ELT and art therapy. Professional development is necessary to effectively implement this approach.

7.2 Curriculum Constraints
Rigid curricula may not allow the flexibility needed for art-based methods. Advocacy for integrated learning models is essential.

7.3 Resource Availability

Art supplies, space, and time can be limiting factors. Creative scheduling and low-cost materials can mitigate these issues.

7.4 Assessment Difficulties

Standardized tests do not adequately capture progress made through art-based methods. Alternative assessments like portfolios and observational checklists are more appropriate.

Conclusion

Teaching English to preschoolers through art therapy offers a promising avenue for holistic development. It supports linguistic acquisition, fosters emotional well-being, and promotes cultural inclusivity. While challenges exist, they can be addressed through training, flexible curricula, and institutional support. As education shifts towards more integrative and student-centered approaches, combining ELT with art therapy stands out as an innovative and effective method.

References

1. Case, C., & Dalley, T. (2014). The handbook of art therapy. Routledge.
2. Chomsky, N. (1965). Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. MIT Press.
3. Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Basic Books.
4. Jensen, E. (2001). Arts with the Brain in Mind. ASCD.
5. Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. Pergamon.
6. Kramer, E. (1971). Art as Therapy with Children. Schocken Books.
7. Lenneberg, E. H. (1967). Biological Foundations of Language.
8. Wiley. Malchiodi, C. A. (2003). Handbook of Art Therapy. Guilford Press.
9. Piaget, J. (1959). The Language and Thought of the Child. Routledge.
10. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Harvard University Press.