

## **ARTS SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNING: HOW IT MAYHELP?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Incorporating arts in pedagogy has been studied and reported to be able to support students' achievement; however, the studies of integrating arts in the English language learning especially in higher education in Indonesia remain low. This paper focuses on the recent literature review of arts integration within English language learning and how it has been implemented globally. The articles are then analyzed based on the forms of arts, the implementation, and the learners' responses. Lastly, by reflecting the review results to Indonesian settings, the researcher reveals opportunities and ideas of integrating artswithin English teaching learning in Indonesia that may have been neglected before.*

**Keywords:** *Art Integration, English, Language Learning*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The potential of arts for teaching and learning process of other discipline in education has been unlocked since years ago. The term of art integration has been familiarly defined as the use of an art form in teaching students, which could be in the form of exploration, reflection, interpretation, connection, application, or demonstration of knowledge and proficiency (Beverly Taylor Sorenson & the BYU Art Partnership, 2017). Demos (2011) argues that arts-integrated teaching and learning can 1) increase autonomous and personally motivated learning investments, 2) encourage learning for comprehension rather than memory of facts for examinations 3) convert students' perceptions of "learning hurdles" into "challenges" to be addressed, and 4) spur students to explore additional learning opportunities outside of class. Ballesteros et al. (2018) states that visual arts are any forms of artwork that can be seen, including objects drawn, painted, printed, sculpted, design, crafted, and/or digitally captured. They suggest that visual arts can be source of excitement, at the same time engaging critical thinking and making it possible for instructors to arrange interesting and meaningful teaching scenarios. In the following year, McCulloch (2019) noted that there are three elements to concern related to art integration in

the instructional practice: who teaches, how arts are brought into classroom, and how the responses of the students.

Several studies have been done in the area of arts in its relation with English class. Dahlinger (2016), in her study, presented how arts became part of English instructions in an elementary school, giving space to the students to express themselves through art creation while learning about two mandatory texts to comprehend in their English subject. Another study by Jäntti(2019) in Finland, who revealed that arts in English class could be enjoyable yet confusing for the students. The teacher also found it difficult to have practical artistic imagination, on how arts can get along with English communication practice for young learners in middle school. Study by Park and Lee (2019) , Chi (2017), Thulasivanthana (2020), and Duropan (2020) also reflect how arts meet English instructional process.

There have been few studies about English and arts in Indonesia. Songs have become the art product which attract Indonesian researchers' attention when it comes to English teaching and learning (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021; Bisena & Susana, 2020. Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021; Naralita & Azis, 2020; Ulfa, 2019, Farid Baharuddin et al, 2021). Studies and practices related to art in English classroom strongly needs to be developed. This article presents some studies of art integrated English instructional practices and its reflection in Indonesian context which focus on the following research questions: 1) how arts were brought into English classroom especially about its forms, implementation, and students responses in the selected studies? 2) How is the reflection of the art-supported English class in the studies, in Indonesian setting?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research is a literature study from university and journal sources to reflect global practice on the use of art in English classes. The selection process of articles is processed with the following criteria: 1) the study must be related to teaching and learning English in formal context, 2) the teaching must be related to the arts, mentioning the form of arts applied 3) it contains information about how it is applied in class/pedagogy 4) there are notes about student responses, to support data analysis to be carried out. From all the articles that have been reviewed, 6 articles were selected for further reading and analysis, that have met the criteria mentioned, and that they are the studies from 6 different countries, namely the USA, Finland, Korea, Sri Lanka, Canada, and the Philippines.

Furthermore, article analysis was carried out by adapting the three components of art integration in practice mentioned by McCulloch (2019): "first, who delivers the instruction; second, how the art is employed for instruction; and third, the students' responses." Lastly, the results of this review are used as materials for reflection in Indonesian setting, related to the use of art in learning English, considering the potential and challenges that exist both at schools and universities.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Real Practices of Art Supporting English Language Classroom

The contents of six selected studies as summarized in Table 1, containing five aspects in each study related to English instruction and art support in real practices. Of these six articles, two of them involve participants from young learners, while the other four are learning English in higher education (college or university). The instructors are general English teacher, but in Study 1 the teacher has a bachelor's degree in Art. In the English teaching learning observed in these studies, all are related to visual arts in English classroom.

#### Study 1: A research from USA

Dahlinger (2016) observed a thematic English class for fifth graders at an elementary school in Pennsylvania which involved visual and performing arts for the students to create, based on two classic texts determined by the teacher. The purpose of this activity is to provide experience for the students to gain in-depth understanding of the two texts through arts. The titles of the text are "*The Watsons Go to Birmingham*" by Christopher Paul Curtis, and "*Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*" by Phillip Hoose. This class gives space for students to express their creativity, supporting learner-centralization by giving them freedom to decide two types of art to reflect important section drawn from the plot of the two texts. Several types of art shown are visual art in the form of drawings, craft, dance, vocal music, instrumental music, and drama/theater. Excitement is the overall student response, but there are some who feel confused because they have never experienced such a learning experience that gives them the freedom to be creative.

#### Study 2: A research from Finland

One study from Finland, by Jäntti (2019), observed an English class for young learners at their grade 7-9 whose teachers felt positive about art integration in language teaching. However, the class did not run as it was thought to be when the teachers had difficulty in applying arts to support their English instructions. They lacked of confidence and felt that they did not have enough aesthetic creativity to be able to bring arts into the classroom. What they did in their English class was offering freedom to the students in terms of creating visual arts related to English learning. Thus, after the teachers direct the students to create various kinds of arts according to their will, the arts are displayed in their class (which turned to be a mini gallery exhibition). Some students reported feeling happy and enjoying the process, but the majority tended to be confused and unmotivated, not as expected.

#### Study 3: A research from Korea

Study by Park and Lee (2019), which takes place at a university in Korea, incorporates arts into project-based learning, giving freedom of types of works to be displayed in the final presentation, whether in the form of a resume, video, or portfolio. With native speaker instructors, the focus of class activities is more on the art project making process, which includes discussions and presentations of their creations. Therefore, the class became English-based Art Communication. In general, students experienced improvement in vocabulary and confidence. This study found that Project-based Learning or PBL is recommended for arts-based English classes.

Table 1. Studies Related to Art-based English Class from Five Countries

No	Country	Grade	Instructor	Form of Art	Implementation	Students' Response
1	USA	Fifth grade	General education elementary teacher with a bachelor degree in art	Visual Arts, Dance, Vocal Music Instrumental, Music Theater	Text-based art exploration through mini-projects and small activities	Art performance and art making made the class and material memorable, exciting, but some students feel confused
2	finland	grades 7-9	EFL teacher	visual arts like drawing, painting, sculpture, and various other crafts	Portfolio-making (freedom expression), exhibition style	Some students enjoy art-related tasks, most of them unwilling and insecure
3	Korea	Freshmen / university students	Native English-speaking instructors	Project based learning with art for final presentation: showcase or portfolio	Emphasis on learning English and test preparation, artwork project group discussion with free conversation	Vocabulary and confidence improvement. Project-based language efficient with art-related works and students engagement.
4	Canada	Grad and under-grad students of various majors	EFL instructor	Visual arts, poetry appreciation, poster drawing, photograph, drama, song and story telling	Describing visual information from a picture  Telling a story based on description or information  Art-based Presentation	Stimulated, refreshed, guided and facilitated by arts existence in English language learning.  Participants showed high involvement and engagement in learning English.
5	Sri Lanka	the students in	EFL teacher	Art-based content	Teaching materials	A great level of participation,

		the department of Visual & Technological Arts			extracted from arts-related textbook of English for EFL learners	excitement, and engagement in learning English,
6	Philippines	College students	ESL teacher	Visual arts in form of images	Pictures related to culture and history for speaking activities	Interesting, stimulating and effective, the students express their ideas by looking at the images present in the poster.

#### Study 4: A research from Canada

A study by Chi (2017) observed the implementation of the “English through the Arts” program which involved seven international students from different countries as participants. The sessions were divided into several art activities such as visual arts, poem appreciation, poster drawing, photography, drama, song and storytelling. All participants freely took part in the scheduled activities according to the expressions and creations they want to show or create, and are explained through descriptions. For example, following the topic given by the teacher, there were students who made artistic postcards with message on it. Another example shown is a photo of one’s house that is full of memories for him completed with a poem. Drawings and images are widely used by them, as visual objects for their depiction of a story or a theme. Generally, the students' responses were very good, with a high level of engagement and involvement in class activities.

#### Study 5: A research from Srilanka

Thulasivanthana (2020) studied how art-based content is applied in English class for the students in the department of Visual & Technological Arts. The instructor uses specific English book to extract teaching material from. Contents related to visual arts are brought into class according to the students' majors and four language skills, namely Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The role of arts in here is the topics of the instructional activities and discussion, while students practicing the four skills. In this experimental study, students who received arts material shows greater score of the four skills, good responses, advanced participation and better word memorization. In this case, arts served as content supports, there is no mention of any art activities such like drawing or crafting included in their teaching and learning process.

#### Study 6: A research from Philippines

A research by Duropan (2020) reported how arts in English class could support English learning. The arts are in the form of images that the students can describe and tell stories about. The images are related to the history and culture. The students really enjoyed the process, and they looked forward to the next art-based English class. However, they suggest some concerns such as: 1) the photos would be way better if they were colorful 2) the task instructions should be made clear 3) some need time to brainstorm idea and think before speaking about the arts image 4) class discussion which provides chances for more students to speak would be a great idea.

In general, from the six studies reviewed, there are several shared finding points in the art-supported English class in practice, such as: teacher providing freedom of expression in arts, arts supporting student-centered teaching learning, and arts can do more than just a supporting content. By teacher bringing arts into English classroom, students can get other perspectives and opportunities to appreciate arts and culture so as to support intercultural communication.

### **Reflection of Art-supported English Classroom in Indonesian Setting**

The arts support for English teaching and learning seems promising. Seeing positive impacts of bringing arts into English classroom written in the studies, it is very important to encourage English teachers in Indonesia to do 'experiments' in their classrooms by using both visual and performing arts. Considering the fact that there are numbers of art schools and art colleges in Indonesia, the implementation of this art integration can be initiated by English teachers or lecturers who teach at art educational institutions, and of course it is also possible to apply it in non-arts schools, colleges, and universities. Anchoring McCulloch's (2019) statement related to the art integration mentioning three components in the instruction, including the instructor, art employment in class and the students' responses, art-integrated English class in Indonesian setting has some potentials and barriers elaborated below.

#### **Instructors**

There have been several studies related to Indonesian teachers who lack of confidence and suffer teaching anxiety due to some reasons (Daud, et. al 2019; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018; Hadi and Arante (2015). Lack of exposure and practice in English causes low communication competence, remembering that English is a foreign language for most Indonesian people: there is barely space and chance to practice English communication. In Indonesia, teachers are busy with their efforts to achieve basic competencies and learning objectives, making it lack communication practice. However, some studies show that teachers have cultural awareness to bring into English classroom (Gandana, 2015; Hidayati & Santiana, 2020; Diem & Abdullah, 2020). The English teachers or lecturer association can start doing art-integration campaign by conducting discussion, workshop, and planning

program related to English teaching using arts in order to achieve the benefits that have been studied previously.

#### Art employment in class

Indonesia, which is rich in culture and types of art, certainly supports the application of freedom of art expressions, especially for English teaching learning in higher education which consists of students from various regions and ethnicities. Strengthened exploration of art and culture is important to stimulate students in developing their ideas and thoughts as well as mastering English. Research on the application of art in English in Indonesia is only limited to artifacts and content, but has not yet reached art as a material for discussion or study, or even learning English through creating artworks in real practices.

Many studies have been conducted on the use of art in English classes in the form of songs to teach English (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021; Bisena & Susana, 2020. Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021; Naralita & Azis, 2020; Ulfa, 2019, Farid Baharuddin et al. al, 2021). However, a study by Wahyuningtyas (2022) and Cahyani (2022) provides a new mindset regarding art support for English teaching and learning. Art can be included in the themes of discussion, conversation, and presentation, so that students can be more active in the interaction of ideas. English is no longer a grammar lesson or translation practice, as in Elmayantie (2016) and Milawati (2019) studies. Additionally, Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2017) emphasize the importance of intercultural communication competence and recommend curriculum developers in Indonesia to strengthen the cultural elements in the materials, including context-based social interaction, also artifacts and art products.

#### Students' responses

From the studies reviewed in this article, not only positive responses, there were also negative responses shown by the students and even the teachers. Study 2 from Finland revealed that teachers do not feel they have enough ability to apply art into the English Classroom. Study in Canada stated that some students were confused. This is a consequence. Arts do create a different and unique atmosphere, but some people may not be confident with their work, so it is important to emphasize that art here is an expression of honesty, which must be appreciated. It's not about being able to create works or not, but how to express and communicate their work verbally in English. Therefore, it can be circumvented with varied forms of art, clear instructions, and good planning.

## CONCLUSION

From the studies on the arts integration from six countries, three identical things were noted about real practice in pedagogy, namely: providing freedom of art expression

for students, arts supporting student-centered teaching and learning, and arts can do more than just a supporting content. In the reflection on the situation in Indonesia, it is very possible to implement the integration of the arts, given the wide variety of Indonesian cultures and ethnicities. Institutionally, of course, more emphasis can be placed on learning English at art schools and universities, and of course on non-arts, while taking into account the objectives of learning English, the type of art that is integrated by looking at the potential and interests of students, and clearer instructions. Further studies are extremely needed related to arts supporting English language teaching and learning in Indonesia.

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