



# The Use of Creative Methods to Improve English Skills Among ESL Children 4-5 years old

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**The Use of Creative Methods to Improve  
English Skills Among ESL Children 4-5 years  
old**

Kenji Weis Brum Higa  
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This thesis has, as its primary purpose, analyze how can creative methods be, specifically visual arts, beneficial for the acquisition of English language skills. To achieve positive results and knowledge about the topic, there was research made to find examples of visual arts being used as a tool for English learning.

For the practical side of this thesis, there was a partnership with a bilingual Finnish daycare, that uses English as its second language. Although they are bilingual, the children are not fluent in English, as their pedagogy works as introducing the children to useful English vocabulary in daily activities, but Finnish remains the primary language of instruction.

As a result of the partnership, a total of six art sessions were created and carried on among their children who were 4-5 years old. The sessions contained a diverse range of art methods that helped the children to better their English skills.

A booklet was created after the art interventions were carried on; this booklet serves as an instruction manual for others who would like to recreate the activities. A copy of the brochure was also left at the partner institution for their future use and research.

Anonymous feedback was collected from the children, workers, and parents to analyze the efficacy of the sessions and their feelings about the program.

Keywords: ESL, Early Childhood Education, Art Intervention, Art Education, Language Development.

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## 1 Introduction

In recent years Finland has become more international, and demand for the English language has grown in pretty much every field of work. That demand is due to a wave of immigrants moving to Finland in search of better life opportunities (Yle webpage, 2019) and also because of the intense globalization worldwide (Finnish Immigration webpage, 2019).

English might not be the most spoken language in the world, but it acts as the primary language for international relationships (Harvard business review webpage, 2012). It is no surprise that parents are keen to have their children start to be in contact and learn English even in the kindergarten years (Yle webpage, 2018). Finland has a renowned education system that is in constant change to achieve better results and to promote a better future and well-being of its youngest citizens.

Finland has noted the need for high skills in the English language, and as a response to that, many direct actions have been taken into account (Yle webpage, 2018). Among them, English is now taught at an earlier age than it used to be (Yle webpage, 2018). Many experts have also suggested that children should be in contact with a foreign language in the earlier stages of their childhood (Yle webpage, 2018).

Likely due to this demand of being more acquainted with a new language, in Helsinki, there are right now 23 operating daycares (Helsinki city webpage, 2019), which have English as their primary language or are bilingual in their curriculum.

Being more internationalized and have a good command of a second language is a big goal for the future generation (Foreigner.fi webpage, 2019), who will be in charge of the work for in a couple of decades. How it can be achieved might be one of the significant challenges for their teachers.

In the field of language education, there are many different methods and pedagogies to achieve the goal of a second language (Frankfurt international school webpage, 2019). There isn't a superior way to the others, but the teaching styles should be viewed as alternatives and supplements to each other (PBS kids for parents webpage, 2012). What should be kept in mind the students' realities and their different ways of learning (PBS kids for parents webpage, 2012).

In this thesis, the focus will be on the use of art based interventions and its benefits for the learning of a second language. These interventions occurred in the Finnish daycare scenario with children ranging from four to five years old; these children were already familiarized

with basic knowledge of English. This thesis will take note of the improvement of these children's English skills after the art-based interventions.

## STATISTICS

Updated 15/11/2019

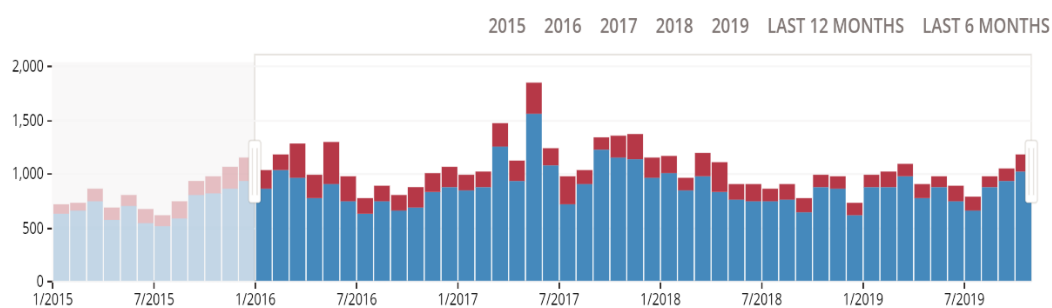
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### Citizenship

Decisions 1/2016 - 10/2019

In total 48,173

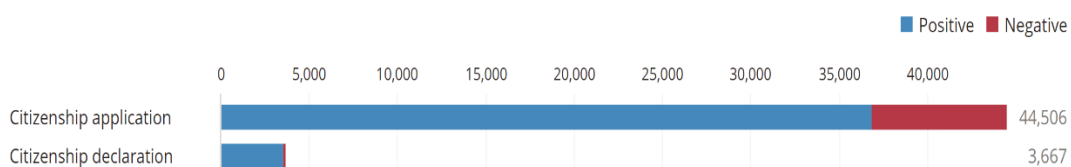
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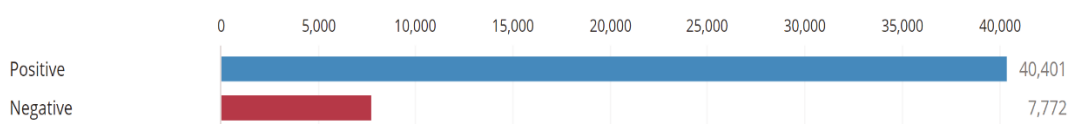


Figure 1: Demographics on how many people were granted Finnish citizenship from 1/2016-10/2019 (Finnish Immigration webpage, 2019).

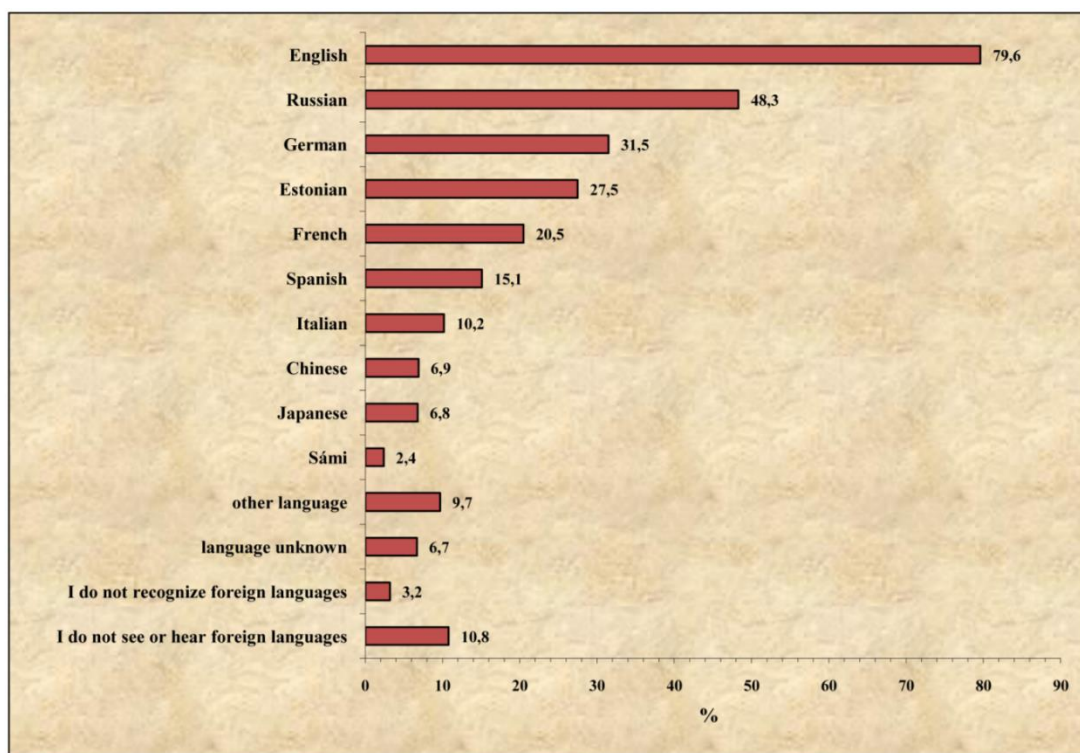


Figure 2: Questionnaire to find out what foreign language most Finnish people hear in their daily lives (Leppänen et al., 2011).

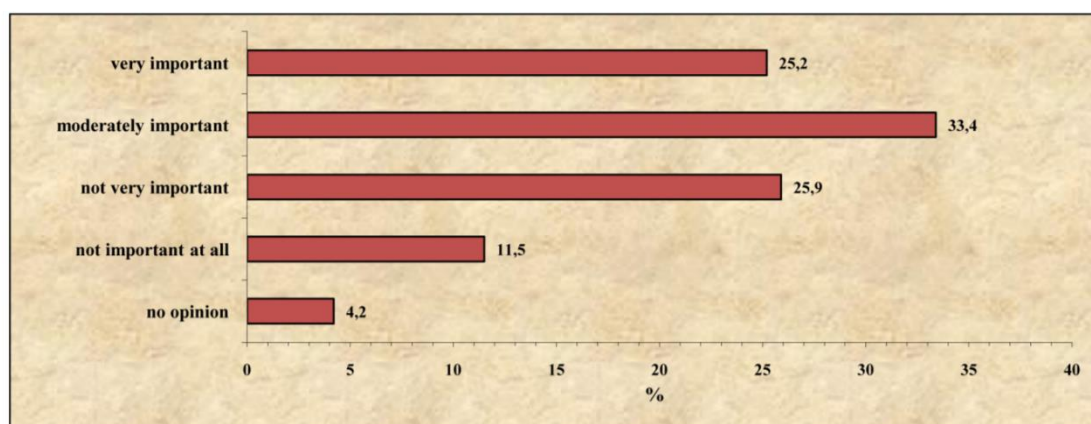


Figure 3: Questionnaire to find out how Finnish people value the English language in their lives (Leppänen et al., 2011).

## 2 Background of the Thesis

This thesis is qualitative and a “functional thesis or activity-based thesis,” which is a particular type of project that is carried by students of universities of applied sciences. In this kind of a dissertation, students are not aiming only at reviewing the literature to prove a primary point of view; they are linked to a work-life partner. The student who is carrying a functional thesis should create some type of activities and research to conduct alongside the work-life partner (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 9.).

The work-life partner is closely linked to the activities the student is carrying on, and those activities are aiming at finding a solution for the main question that is asked at the beginning of the thesis. In this case, the main point that this thesis wants to defend is how art-based interventions can be beneficial to the learning of a second language (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 9.).

## 2.1 Overview of the project

The project consists of six art-based sessions that were planned with the primary goal of aiding children who are from four to five years old to better their skills in the English language. The betterment of the skills is taking into account the children’s abilities to understand English when listening. It also acknowledges their oral skills and how comfortable they are to speak English after the sessions.

The children participating in the sessions are attending a bilingual daycare in Kerava for at least one year or more. Therefore they are acquainted to English at some level, but their levels vary, and during the sessions, each child was taken as an individual first.

## 2.2 Objectives of the project

The principal purpose of this project is to provide solid proof of how art-based methods are beneficial to a child learning a second language.

My professional growth as an early childhood educator who enjoys using art as a leading source for activities is too one of the big goals. This research and its findings certainly can be of big help for my future career and how I view myself as an educator.



Since this project is taking part in a daycare, their objectives and wishes should be taken into account as well. For the daycare was very important that the sessions would follow their schedule of themes that are discussed during the year. It was also essential to take into account each of the children's needs to create activities that could be challenging but suiting for the different levels of proficiency in English.

Finally, so there can be a physical product for the sessions; I also made one of the goals a creation of a booklet. This material registers all the activities and can be used as instructions for other professionals that are aiming to use art interventions as a method to teach children a new language. The booklet was left for the daycare workers to use among them, and it is also attached to the appendices of this thesis.

### 2.3 Working life partner

Kiddy House is a bilingual daycare located in Kerava; it has been operating for 23 years, intending to familiarize the children with the English Language. Their strategy is to create a safe space where the primary language of communication for everybody is Finnish, and English is introduced daily to the children by the staff. Kiddy House refers to this strategy as language showering since the children are listening and receiving English vocabulary every day (Kiddy House daycare webpage, 2019.).

In contrast to language immersion, the staff uses most of the time Finnish. Their main goal is not to achieve fluency but to create a useful size vocabulary. So, the children can have access during their daily activities and in future English classes when they are in school (Kiddy House daycare webpage, 2019.).

Kiddy House has three main groups in their building; they are Starlets, 1-3 years old, Moonbeams, 3-5 years old, and Sunrays, 5-7 years old. Each group has three adults working, them being nursery nurses and early childhood education teachers.

In the daily activities, Kiddy House's staff focus on a wide range of pedagogies that will benefit every child individually and enrich their learning. Most of the learning sessions take place in two languages, meaning that instructions are said first in Finnish, then repeated in English to promote bilingually. An exception to this rule is the Starlets group, where the youngest children are. With them, there is a more significant focus on the Finnish language, so they have a strong base with the Finnish to later get knowledge of English.

I have been working as a full-time early childhood education teacher in Kiddy House for over a year; for this reason, I chose to keep this project there. With the benefit of combining study growth with my professional growth. Also, the fact that I am familiarized with the children is a bonus that facilitates the assessment of their language growth and English knowledge level.

Being already working in Kiddy House was a significant facilitator to plan the activities that became part of the project. I took into account the current themes for the time of the year, in this case, autumn, Halloween, and nature. It was also essential to create activities that would challenge the level of English of all the children, but at the same time, it should be accessible to all of them.

The primary method to collect data on the efficacy of the project was by feedback; the feedback was received anonymously from the parents via the daily discussions and early childhood development assessments held. My colleagues were also active in giving input and observing my methods of teaching. The children's opinions about the project and their views about the processes were also taken into consideration.

As the booklet was created with the work-life partner in mind, some of the material utilized during the sessions were part of the exclusive content from the daycare. For example, some books used during the project might not be so common among other daycares. But as the sessions and booklet were created for Kiddy House daycare, their material was used.

### 3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of a broad overview of theories around the main topics of this dissertation. The look into the academic side of the points made is done with the intent to bring credibility and awareness to the subjects surrounding the thesis.

I choose to develop the topic of early childhood education at two levels. First, there is the exploration of the world broadly side to give a general awareness of the subject. After that, the Finnish reality and points of view involving the topic are presented to create a more focused approach.

#### 3.1 Early childhood education overview

Early childhood education is a branch of study which englobes a range of diverse theories and philosophies that were started mostly from 1500 and are still in development to the current days(Krogh, S. L., & Slentz, K. L. 2010, 6); these studies relating to early childhood education were focussing on the development of children from their first months after born to the stages up to their eight years of age(Krogh, S. L., & Slentz, K. L. 2010, 6).

In the book “Early Childhood Education.” By Krogh, S. L., & Slentz, K. L. relates a comprehensive list of modern and current scholars that influenced the world of early childhood education. Among them, we should highlight some like Friedrich Froebel, who lived from 1782-1852; his unhappy childhood shaped him; he lost his mother quite young and considered that that event was the cornerstone to the way he led his future life. In his adult life, he was concerned about how children are thrown out of their nests at home straight to school; he decided to develop an intermediary institution which he called kindergarten; there, children 4-6 years old would receive the nurture they need and education that would prepare them to attend school. He developed training for those teachers who would be in charge of the pre-school children(Krogh, S. L., & Slentz, K. L. 2010, 13).

Another prominent figure was John Dewey, who during his life studied the theories of Froebel and many times found them to be outdated to the society they were living back then; that way Dewey worked on updating and rewriting on what Froebel had established to create a better set of theories(Krogh, S. L., & Slentz, K. L. 2010, 15).

Maria Montessori was mentioned in the book; they go through her life briefly and how she was interested in developing a learning strategy to aid children with disabilities. Her teaching methods are still used to the current dates; many daycares specialize in the Montessori method(Krogh, S. L., & Slentz, K. L. 2010, 17-18).

The UNICEF states in its webpage, “Quality pre-primary education is the foundation of a child’s journey: every stage of education that follows relies on its success. Yet, despite the proven and lifelong benefits, more than 175 million children - nearly half of all pre-primary-age children globally - are not enrolled in pre-primary education.”(UNICEF,2019). According to UNICEF, mostly in non-developed countries, there is a big problem with a lack of early childhood education. That can lead to a rough pathway in their future education, due to the basis for their knowledge not being well built(UNICEF. 2019).

## Pre-primary gross enrollment ratios across countries

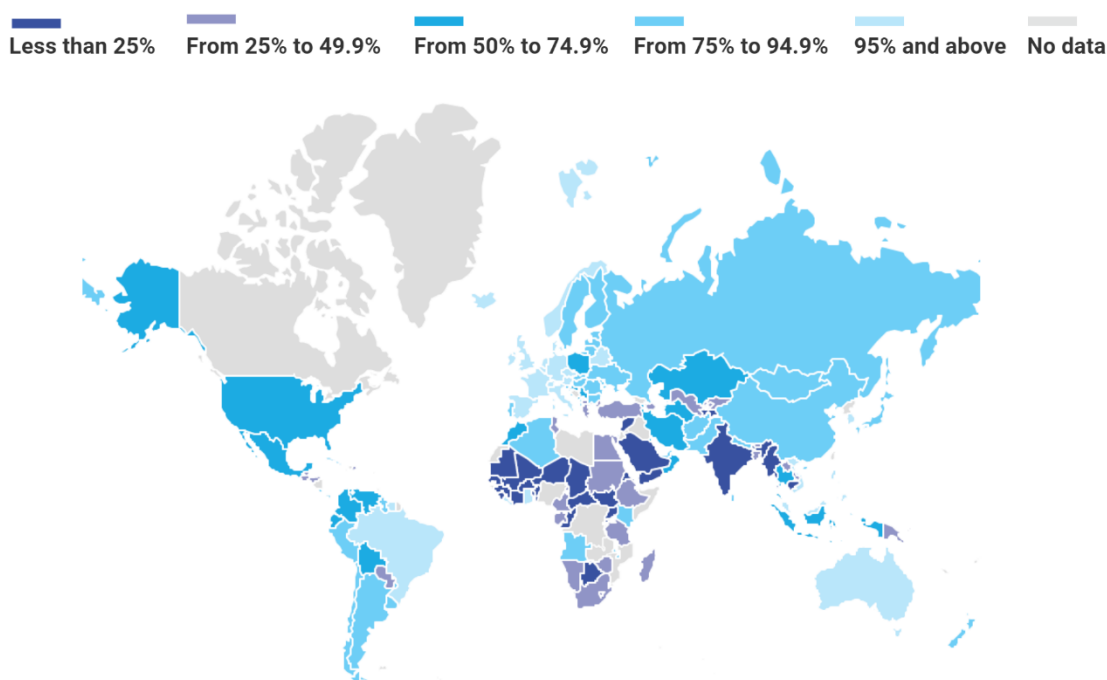


Figure 4: Map showing the enrolment in pre-school around the world(UNICEF. 2019)

According to a video on their youtube channel, the UNICEF states that a key to a better future starts by providing and ensuring all children are enrolled in preschool(UNICEF youtube channel, 2019). They are firm about three main changes that have to occur for this preschool measure to be successful; they are: number one is to provide equal access, all children should be able to have a high quality of education no matter where they live or their social status. Number two is the governments must be keen on providing enough resources to keep pre-primary school sustainable; for example, by hiring enough teachers, ensuring the greatness of their curriculum. Number three is providing enough budget to support early childhood education, in their video, they were specific that governments should reserve at least 10% for the early childhood education; they also mention that donors should also make sure that 10% of their donations are destined to the early childhood education(UNICEF youtube channel. 2019).

The European Union has also provided its stance on early childhood education, and in their webpage, they state, “Early childhood education and care refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory pre-primary school age, which may vary across the EU. It includes centre and family-day care, privately and publicly funded provision, pre-school, and pre-primary provision. Quality early childhood education and care can lay the foundations for later success in life in terms of education, well-being, employability, and social integration, and is especially important for children

from disadvantaged backgrounds. High-quality early childhood education and care is therefore an efficient and effective investment in education and training.”(European Union’s webpage, 2018).

The EU commission in 2018 proposed a council recommendation; in there, they again state the importance of early childhood education and make some suggestions for what are some actions the member states of the EU should take. Some of the recommendations are: Early childhood education providers should keep in mind all the challenges families might have and work around those, for example, poverty, cultural, and linguistic differences. Providers should remain in contact with families that are not privileged and be able to inform them what type of benefits they might have. Support learning a new language while also encouraging the child’s mother tongue and culture. Raise the bar for the professionals by providing more opportunities for constant education and also improving the status of the current schooling for professionals. Provide workers with a diverse range of tools to better work with a wide range of children and families. Mind not only the child’s cognitive development but also the emotional and wellbeing in general. Create a dialogue between EU states members to allow sharing and trading experiences, training, and knowledge between professionals(European Union Commission, 2018).

### 3.1.1 Early childhood education in Finland

In Finland, early childhood education is offered for children ranging from 1 to 7 years old, that being that it is not mandatory except for the pre-school year when all the children must attend daycare for pre-school instruction.

Finnish law states, “Early childhood education and care is provided as: 1) centre-based early education activities organised in early education centres; 2) family-based daycare arranged in family daycare premises; 3) open early childhood education and care activities organised in a suitable place.”

The law has an extensive set of goals for the early childhood practices in Finland; overall they state that the providers are bounded to offer care to the children and should aim to their personal growth in a pedagogical way; the workers are supposed to work respecting every child’s interests and individualities, the activities should be planned to benefit and help each child grow to their full potential. In a general way of saying the child’s wellbeing and learning is the priority (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland. 2018).

The national curriculum for early childhood education and care from 2016 published by the Finnish national agency for education goes more in-depth into how are the care providers supposed to carry on the activities in the daycare and what should be the goal of these activities. The rules and objectives work more like guidelines and are not so strict on how they should be executed; the professionals have the flexibility and creativity on how to conduct their lessons.

The curriculum divides education into learning areas that should be explored, and they are “rich world of languages; diverse forms of expression; me and our community; exploring and interacting with my environment; and I grow, move and develop”(Finnish national agency for education. 2016, 44).

“Rich world of language” is the area that focuses on the language skills and language identity, the teachers should develop activities that bring different approaches to enriching their language in a diverse range like speech, comprehending language and language awareness; interactive skills are a big chunk of this section as well since the curriculum focuses a lot on the child’s social development(Finnish national agency for education. 2016, 44-45).

“Diverse forms of expression” is the focus on the artistic expression in general; this section mentions the many different ways a child can start their journey into expressing themselves; they mention three primary forms of expression to be taken into consideration. The musical expression should provide the child with a diversity of experiences focussed on musicality. Visual expression is related to the visual arts, which englobes producing art-pieces, learning about artists and creating a sense of aesthetics and appreciating visual arts(Finnish national agency for education. 2016, 46-47).

“Me and our community” is the area where ethical thinking, media, worldview social skills are presented; the teacher should be capable of approaching different topics that help the children grow into good citizens that are informed about the world and Finland. That is the area where we can discuss most current issues with children and learn to respect and deal with differences(Finnish national agency for education. 2016, 48-49).

“Exploring and interacting with my environment” is the focus on the natural sciences and mathematical thinking, technology education, and environmental education. In this area, children are thought basic knowledge about these topics that will help them in the future when they start their primary school education(Finnish national agency for education. 2016, 49-50).

“I grow, move and develop” part is taking care of the children’s physical education, food, health, and safety. When working on this area, the professionals should offer the children the opportunity to practice a diverse range of sports that can challenge their physical growth;

they also should instruct the children with information on how to live and eat healthily, and how to be safe in a diverse set of situations (Finnish national agency for education. 2016, 51-52).

In their research, Pölkki and Vornanen interviewed Finnish parents who have the children attending Finnish daycare. The parents were very satisfied with the services provided; they answered that in their opinion their children shared happy feelings about attending daycare, and their basic and pedagogical needs were being satisfied. The parents also expressed that the professionals were very cordial, treated the parents with respect, listened to the parents' needs, and requests, this way, creating a support system(Pölkki, P. & Vornanen, R. 2016, 586-587).

### 3.2 Second Language acquisition in early childhood

It is a common saying that young children learn a second language so quickly, but how true is that? And if accurate, how can it be done correctly in a way that sparks joy and interest in the learning of a second language?

Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl in their book "The scientist in a crib" state that children are learning from early infancy and they have an astonishing level of flexibility to adapt to new situations; are easily stimulated and are curious to learn about the things around them(Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl, 2008)

Locke puts in his book "The child's path to spoken language" that children are not born set out to learn certain things; the motivation comes from being surrounded by loved ones that instigating onto the motivation and showing them what are the important things they should learn. Society and culture play a significant role in this motivation, too, as they are indirectly putting the guidelines on what an infant's motivation to learn by showing what skills are valued in their culture(Locke, 1995).

Ostroff supports in her book "Understanding how young children learn" that view of Locke that the ones around them and society motivate children; then, she adds for that reason we must create a learning environment for children where there is enough amount of motivation. Their teachers and their parents should support their growth, learning, and curiosity (Ostroff, 2012).

Second Language acquisition should be made with support from a professional, who preferably can speak the child's mother tongue and the new language of instruction; there has to be

a good sense of sensitivity that learning a new language can be a stressful situation and the worker should be able to work around this. During the process of instructing a new language, there will be a need for lots of repetition, speaking slowly within fragmented sentences – also the use of extra visual material, such as picture cards, videos, and books. Signing to help the children understand what has been said is also helpful(Crosse, 2013, 26-27).

In her research paper, Soderman makes this statement about Language Immersion “Dual language immersion programs must be carefully constructed and monitored, providing best practice in skill-building and language training. Teachers and administrators must be qualified and skilled in effective instruction, assessment, and strategies to protect each child’s well being. Parents must be knowledgeable and active partners.”(Soderman, 2010). In her paper, she mentions how there is a growing demand from parents eager to have their children enrolled in bilingual programs; in her opinion, very young children can be quite stressed if enrolled in language immersion. She recommended that the child should be at least two before starting in total language immersion(Soderman, 2010).

### 3.3 Creative Methods as visual arts benefits in the early formative years

There are many approaches to early childhood education, and one that englobes lots of art and creativity is the Reggio Emilia approach. With their multi-disciplinary approach, the Reggio Emilia philosophy can join what is considered a branch of more traditional learning with arts and creativity. In their philosophy, they preach that the children are capable of multi-faced learn, and they should be allowed to explore different subjects diversely and very independently(Vecchi, 2010). One example would be to use drawings and paintings to explore the world of math and counting(Vecchi, 2010).

In her research, Rusanen analyzed to what level the pedagogical practices in Finland are when relating to the visual arts expression field. Rusanen reinforces the importance of arts in her paper by stating that the development of this skill is an excellent way to promote emotional and creative growth. She also notices that there is a need to have the early childhood teachers to have more opportunities during their studies not only get more contact with the theoretical side of the visual arts and early childhood education, but also to promote hands-on art experiences to the future teachers; this process would allow them to become used to the methods, know how to analyze them and also to have their artistic growth. She hopes her research can help the betterment of the early childhood education curriculum for future teachers(Rusanen, 2014).



In her research, Eckhoff has taken students to view and appreciate art then create art related to those experiences. She was able to get students to be in contact with pieces of work that are studied as part of art history, and through art appreciation, then some classes and activities that benefited the students' multi-disciplinary needs. This way showing how contact with arts and early knowledge and appreciation for the art pieces can be integrated into a multi-disciplinary curriculum(Eckhoff, 2007).

### 3.4 Visual arts and language acquisition

In this last session concerning the theory part of my thesis, I am doing a correlation between how the visual arts and a second language learning can be related to each other and have a beneficial relationship.

The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign languages Studies in 2010 published a book with a set of possible ideas for classes where the primary goals were approaching art and gaining a second language. The program was meant to bridge the cultural differences as visual arts can work as a universal language and a way to express oneself without many words. Most of the students and teachers who used the material were extremely happy with the results. They stated that the implementation of the arts during their classes has sparked the interest of the students and helped their language development(The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign languages Studies, 2010).

In 2013 Chang and Cress published research detailed how teachers can help children enhance their language skills with the aid of visual arts. In their research papers, they described how some teachers were creating dialogues with their students. The conversations were done during the art-creating process or after; the teacher discussed what was created and engaged with the children positively about their works. In the end, they noticed that this type of interaction was very beneficial for young children acquiring language as the kids were happy to express their work(Chang and Cress, 2013).

In South Africa, among the rural communities, there is a gap in English learning; unlike their urban counterparts, the rural students might end-up without many good career options due to the lack of English language(Jansen van Vuuren, 2018). Jansen van Vuuren in her paper, created a strategy to go around the lack of English proficiency. Her paper research analyzed how, by using a method that includes arts to the curriculum, English proficiency could be improved. The lessons were multi-disciplinary and involved the main topic discussed in English then a full range of artistic expressions, such as musical, visual and dramatic. At the end of

her research, she noticed that average learning had been increased, and the scores got higher, not only that but also the interest from the students and their well-being (Jansen van Vuuren, 2018).

#### 4 Implementation

The main idea for this topic came around when I started to work in Kiddy House daycare. It was my first job as an early childhood education teacher, and as the leading English educator of the group I was supervising.

I hoped to develop my style of teaching, where I would be able to draw qualities from the other educators. Who have already established their position and have done this job for years. At the same time, I would allow myself to create my parameters for being a teacher and work on my strengths.

The opportunity to develop my thesis around bilingualism and art methodology was something I cherished a lot. Because art has been a constant subject in my life, it has provided me lots of growth. It has become the basis for my development as an early childhood education teacher.

Bilingualism is also a significant facet of my work and who I am. I have been living in Finland for many years, where I develop two second languages. My hope is to be able to pass on tools for the children to become Bilingual and enjoy learning another language.

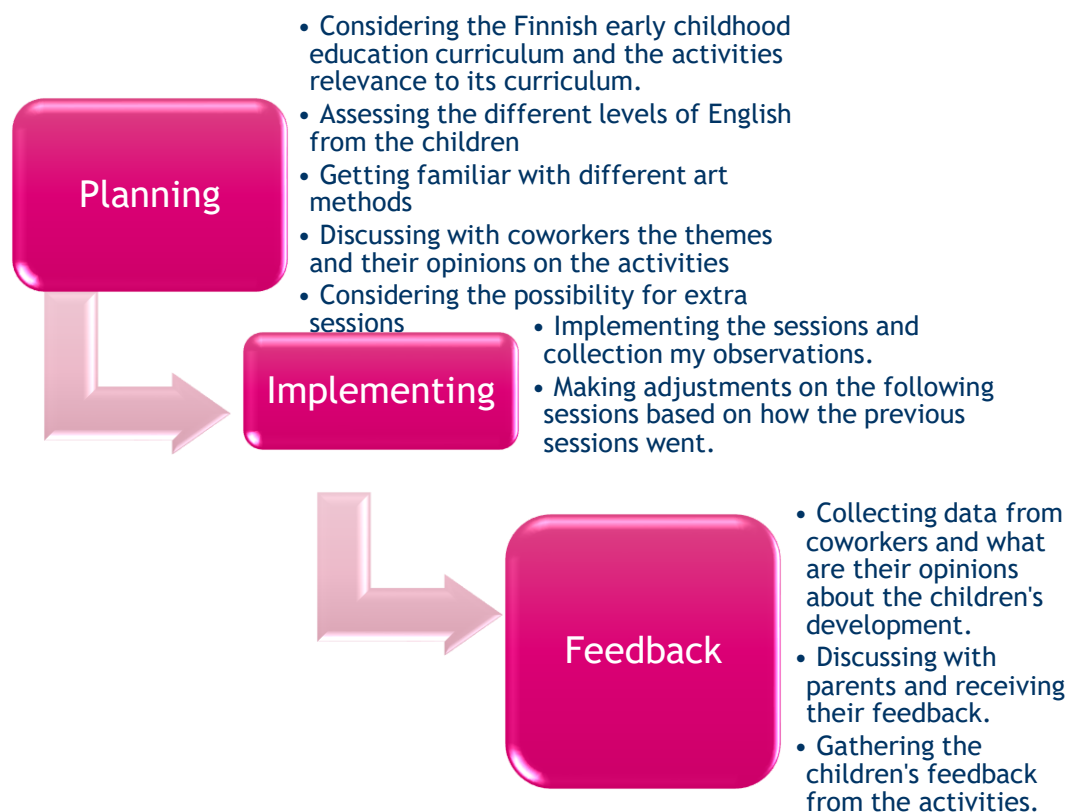


Figure 5: Simplified version of the process I went through developing the project for my thesis.

#### 4.1 Preliminary actions and requisites

Before starting the sessions, I took a few steps and did some considerations before its implementation. The first thing that I did was to get acquainted with different art methods so that I could create a diverse range of activities; by that providing the children with several varying experiences that wouldn't only benefit their language skills, but their art skills and education in whole.

Making sure that what was being taught was cohesive with the national curriculum for early childhood education was very crucial; as all the activities in a daycare can happen freely and be diverse in their methodology, but they still have to agree and follow the requisites set by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

Assessing the standard level of English was very critical for the creation of the interventions, knowing the base level most of the children have was the north to where the project would go. To find out the degree of English that they had, I talked to my colleagues and also evaluated in their daily interactions with me in our morning activities. With that, I was able to create a base to work.

I also made sure to organize the interventions in a way that would make sense when thinking about our monthly themes, meaning that the sessions involving Halloween felt close to the holiday, and the session about autumn leaves was done in the time that the trees were shedding their leaves but still had some green in it.

Another essential step to take before starting my project was to have a talk with my coworkers, where I would be able to explain what my objectives are and get their point of view about my project. This type of input is essential because even though I act as the primary teacher for 4-5 years old group, I work together with a preschool teacher and a nursery nurse. By creating this dialogue, our work becomes more fluid and transparent, and I was also able to receive input and pieces of advice from them before starting the art and creativity project.

Another critical step was to contact my manager about what type of projects I would be carrying on and what was my goal with my thesis.

The last necessary step was to contact the parents and explain that I was carrying on a thesis project with their children. I made sure to them that all the data I would be collecting would be anonymous, and their children's art pieces would be used in the production of a booklet. But those art pieces wouldn't be able to be linked to the children, as their names are not visible in the images.

#### 4.2 Sessions & outcomes

To simplify and help the reader, I created a table detailing broadly what has each session had as its approach. At the appendices where the booklet is presented, there will be a more detailed version of each session and its instructions to anybody who wishes to implement them or use them as a base for inspiration.

Session	Pre-requisites	Art Method	Language and art learning goal
1 Cupcake art	Read the book "Pete the Cat and the Missing Cupcakes."	Watercolor painting	Different flavors of cake, colors, expressing what foods they like, developing self-expression, and painting technics.
2 Dream Icecream	Read the book "Groovy Joe: Ice Cream & Dinosaurs."	Monotype printing.	Different flavors of ice cream, diverse and fun art technic.
3 Halloween	Read the book "Pete the Cat: Five Little Pumpkins."	Paper-Mache.	Halloween vocabulary, develop motor-skills with the art technic.
4 Autumn Leaves	Discussion about Autumn weather and color changes.	Watercolor negative splash painting.	Autumn changes and nature vocabulary and a different way to use watercolors.
5 Monster Painting	Read the book "Go away big green monster!"	Watercolor painting	Halloween vocabulary, monsters, and body parts.
6 My Favorite Pizza	Sing the song "I am a Pizza."	Colored-pencils drawing.	Different flavors of pizza, imagination, and singing in English.

Table: Simplified overview of the sessions

#### 4.3 Session 1

The first session was significant because, besides its contents and activities, it worked as a guide for where this project went. With the general overview of how the children reacted to art activities, I was able to think and formulate a cohesive program that would suit their needs.

Watercolor is a medium most of the children are used to, and it is perhaps one of the first medium that infants are introduced to due to how safe it is. Also, the book I chose is from one of their favorite book series, and that was an easy way to keep them excited about the activity that there was to come.

The results were mostly positive; children felt comfortable and repeated their new vocabulary. The painting went very well; many of the children felt like repeating the activity and were keen to draw more cupcakes during the afternoon after we were done.

One important note to add is one of the children was very concerned about their own painting skills and didn't want to do it in front of the others. For this reason, I allowed this child to conduct the painting after the others went outside with my help. I had been working for a while on this child's confidence when it came to be confident about their art skills. From before my project began to this first session, there has been already progress. Before I started the sessions, the child would freeze during the activities and not be able to do them, but with a gain of confidence that has been improved.

#### 4.4 Session 2

After the success of the first intervention, I decided to continue on the same note. I read again a book the children were used to, but this time I decided to present a significantly different art medium, which they had never tried before.

The children were very intrigued by how monoprints are done and were keen on repeating the process to see how many different images they were able to create. At some point, they went away from the subject of paint, but it wasn't a problem as they were enjoying the art-making process.

As for the English, the main vocabulary was passed to them through the book, and I continued to add more vocabulary by creating a discussion around the topic. During the process of

creating the monoprints, I was able to sprinkle more vocabulary when talking to them and giving instructions.

#### 4.5 Session 3

Halloween is a cherished date among our children and extremely important to our staff, as it is a traditional celebration from the English-speaking countries.

For this session, I kept the book reading and chose a book again from their favorite series to keep their interest at a peak. The activity was very new for the whole group; they have never done paper-mache.

The outcome was good; just by the activity being related to Halloween, the children were already excited and keen to learn the new vocabulary. The paper-mache was a complete surprise to them; some enjoyed touch and playing with the wallpaper glue; others felt it was disgusting to touch, so they decided to use brushes. The main point was trying something new, and they all did, for that I am happy.

#### 4.6 Session 4

For this session, I decided to stir away from the books to try a new approach. I wanted to see how much could I get their attention by only having a morning talk in a circle; during the conversation, I used as most English as possible.

Our morning circle discussion was about the change of seasons and how can we notice what was happening; the children were very vocal about it and came up with many ideas for what are signs that Autumn is coming. I kept myself as a listener and as an interpreter, so whenever they would say something about nature and the weather, I would tell them what was in English and ask them to repeat it.

The painting with the leaves went very well, too; they were happy and excited to do water-colors differently. That was very rewarding as they could see how we can think outside of the box when using painting, and it doesn't have to be always the same.

#### 4.7 Session 5

Before this session, I was debating if I should have a book again or go to another route; but I didn't as it was Halloween week and in our daycare and we have book the children love, which is related to Halloween and has lots of useful vocabulary.

The book reading went excellent; they were able to go through colors, body parts, and simple adjectives in English. Right after the book, I still added a bit more vocabulary by revising some of the Halloween things that we've been through already.

The watercolor painting of their monster creation was a straightforward task, and it was planned this way so I could talk with each child what type of monster they were painting; I went through the body parts, colors, and shapes in English again when discussing about their art-making process

#### 4.8 Session 6

For the last session, I decided to try a different approach. This time we started with a song that some were acquainted with, but others not. We repeated the song and a couple of times, and it was hit. Many of the children were singing the song all day long, even after the activity was over.

The art part of the session was kept very simple; I decided to bring back to the basics and do a simple drawing with colored pencils; that allowed me to discuss with the children about their pictures and reinforce the vocabulary we just learned.

### 5 Feedback & evaluations

After conducting all the sessions, I was able to gather a significant amount of feedback from peers and parents. My coworkers were very positive about how the project was carried on; they noticed the children kept their interest in the topics I brought up longer than the interventions. They saw many children would do things related to what we did in our mornings throughout the week. As for the English, they noticed in general that there was significant growth, and it was kept steady during the sessions.



Parents have brought up very positive feedback as well; many have said that their children were very keen on showing what they've learned in their homes and that the children were happy to show their improved English skills. The topics we've approached became discussion at their homes too, and they were asking their parents about doing the same art activities at their homes.

The child who had a difficult time expressing themselves artistically in front of others made such an impactful improvement that by the last session, there wasn't any more shyness. The child was then very keen on participating and also proud of their art pieces. Their parents have noticed the improvement, too, and they were pleased with our progress.

The feedback coming from the children was by far the most positive; they kept a positive attitude towards the arts and remain very keen on doing many artworks. Their interest in learning English has grown a lot, and they are every day expressing themselves more in English and looking for learning new words.

As for my take on this project, I felt that the sessions have significantly worked, and the English profile among the children has improved. Of course not, all the art interventions were not appreciated by all the children equally and greatly. But the average feeling towards art and learning English was positive; no child had to step out of their comfort zone as they all had the freedom to choose if they wanted to do or not. Yet they all were very keen on trying and seeing by themselves if they enjoyed it or not.

## 6 Conclusions & discussions

A very significant question for this project is, "Did the art contribute to English learning at all, or was it more the role of pre-session?". I've ended up asking myself this question many times during the process; I wasn't sure if the art was necessary for the learning process.

I had to take a step back and look very detailed on how the project was going and if my art methods were, in fact, effective or if they were more of extra activity. What I concluded was it wasn't only the arts, nor it was the pre-session. The reality for me was both were working in a complementary way. First, there was a more formal way of language education with books, music, and presenting vocabulary. After, the arts were acting on the creative side and kept the children creating and their interest in the topic high.

The artmaking process allowed me to create a conversation about the topics during its process; it also helped the children merge the verbal with the visual.

What cemented my views on the efficacy of the arts as a tool for learning a second language was the research I've done after the project to create my written thesis.

The last consideration must be to be mindful of every child's individuality; visual arts can be a very fulfilling way to teach in general, but so it is through drama, sports, story-telling, nature exposure, and other many ways. What must come first is what are the children passionate about and then to build the lessons on top of that. The group I've been working with is very fond of artistic interventions, and that was already one step forward towards the success of this thesis. If the situation were leaning towards another teaching style, then my approach would've have been different.

Of course, having the children's central interested in another area than arts shouldn't exclude its use from the curriculum, and they are still beneficial and an essential skill set to practice in the early childhood. What must be done is to understand the individualities when building a teaching curriculum but still create a multifaceted curriculum, so there lots of room for the children to grow and acquire new experiences and skills.

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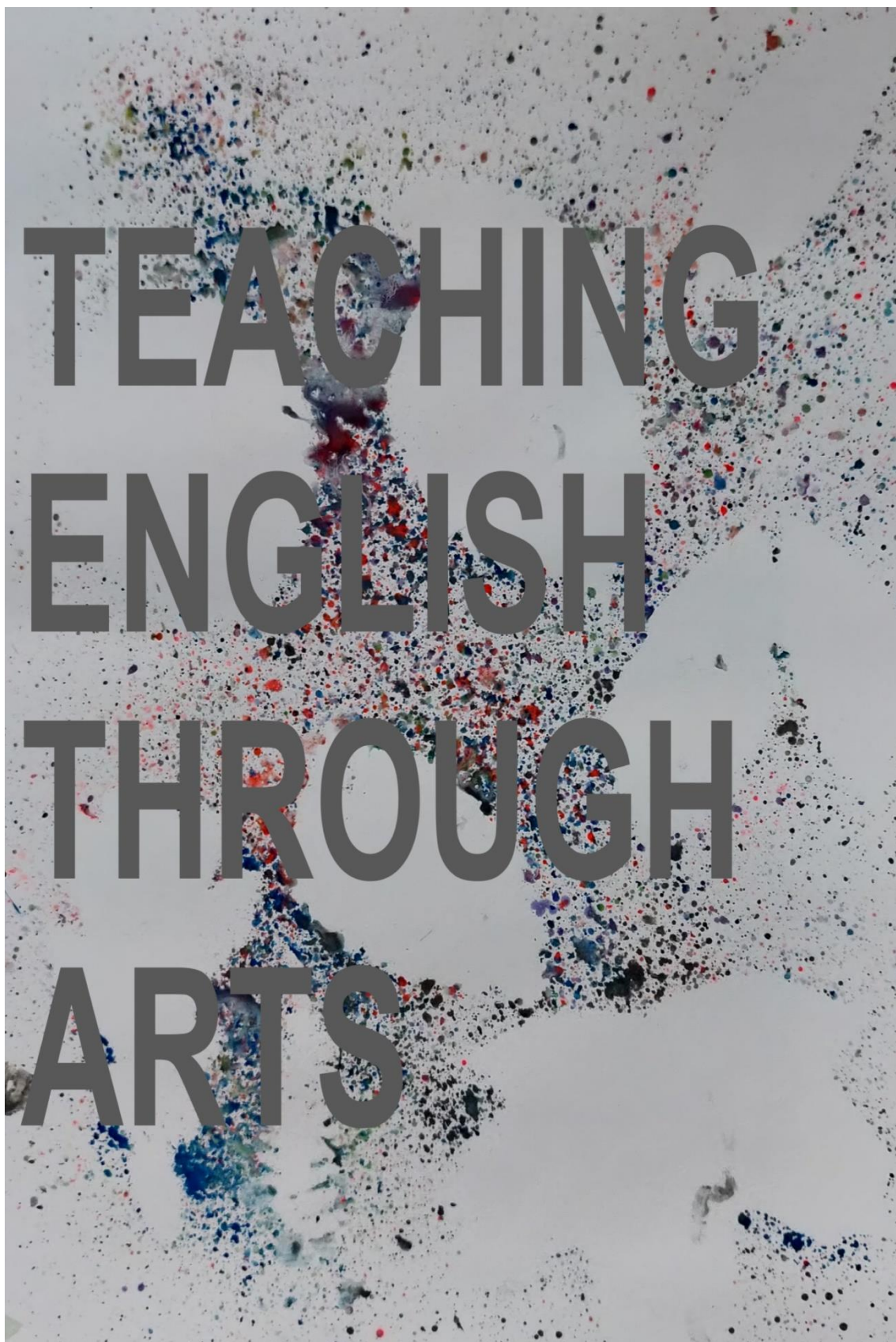
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Appendix 1: The booklet I created as a product from my sessions





# CUPCAKE ART

**ART MEDIUM:  
WATERCOLOR**

**MATERIAL: - WATERCOLOR  
- BRUSHES**

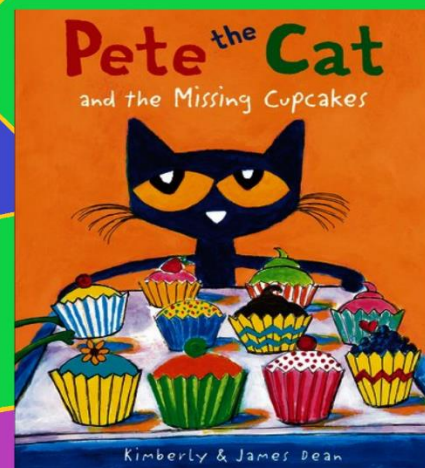
## PRE-ART SESSION

**READ THE BOOK "PETE THE CAT AND THE MISSING CUPCAKES." AFTER THAT DISCUSS WITH THE CHILDREN WHAT ARE THEIR FAVORITE FLAVOR OF CUPCAKES AND WHAT TOPPINGS THEY LIKE.**

## ART SESSION

**THE GOAL OF THE ACTIVITY IS TO CREATE THE DREAM CUPCAKE. ALLOW THE KIDS TO USE THEIR IMAGINATION WHEN THINKING WHAT FLAVOR, WHAT KIND OF TOPPINGS AND SIZE OF THE CUPCAKE. DURING THE SESSION USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT NEW WORDS RELATED TO THEIR PAINTINGS.**

**VOCABULARY: FOODS,  
COLORS, SIZE.**





# DREAM ICE CREAM ART

ART MEDIUM: MONOPRINTING

MATERIALS: - PLASTIC SURFACE  
- TEMPERA MIX  
- COTTON SWAB

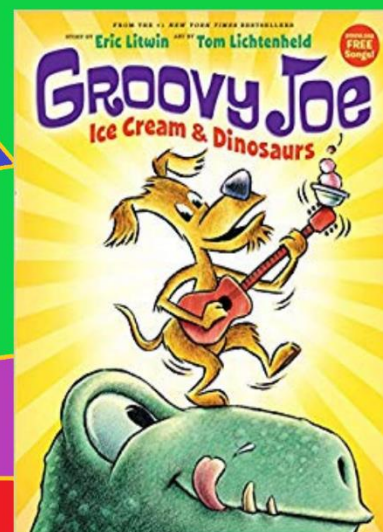
## PRE-ART SESSION

READ THE BOOK "GROOVY JOE ICE CREAM & DINOSAURS. AFTER READING DISCUSS WITH THE CHILDREN IN ENGLISH WHAT ARE THEIR FAVORITE FLAVORS OF ICE CREAM, WHAT COLOR THEY ARE; THEN TELL THEM THEY WILL BE PAINTING THEIR DREAM ICE CREAM.

## ART-SESSION

MONOPRINT IS A VERY EASY FUN TECHNIC TO DO WITH CHILDREN. TO START INSTRUCT THE CHILDREN TO PAINT A PLASTIC SURFACE WITH TEMPERA MIX, ALL THEY NEED TO DO IS TO SPREAD A EVEN LAYER; AFTER THAT WITH THE COTTON SWAB THEY SHOULD DRAW THEIR ICE CREAM; LASTLY WITH A PAPER PRESS ONTO THE PLASTIC SURFACE TO PRINT THEIR CREATIONS ONTO THE PAPER. REMEMBER TO USE THE SESSIONS TO DISCUSS THE TOPICS THEY ARE PAINTING IN ENGLISH AND TRY TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH FIRST THEN TRANSLATE INTO FINNISH.

VOCABULARY: FOODS, SHAPES, AND COLORS.





# HALLOWEEN

**ART MEDIUM: PAPER-MACHE**

**MATERIALS:** - NEWSPAPER SCRAPS  
- BALLONS  
- WALLPAPER GLUE  
- TEMPERA MIX

## PRE-ART SESSION

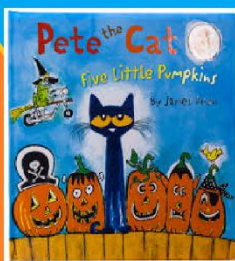
READ THE BOOK "PETE THE CAT FIVE LITTLE PUMPKINS." AFTER READING THE BOOK START A DISCUSSION ABOUT HALLOWEEN. ASK THE CHILDREN IF THEY KNOW WHAT TYPE OF THINGS BELONG TO HALLOWEEN AND IF THEY KNOW IT IN ENGLISH.

## ART SESSIONS

BEFORE THE SESSION MAKE SURE THAT THE WALLPAPER GLUE HAS TO BE PREPARED AT LEAST 15 MINUTES BEFORE. THIS PAPER-MACHE TECHNIC IS A CLASSIC ONE WHERE NEWSPAPER SCRAP ARE GLUED ON A BALLON WHICH IS EMPTIED LATER BUT THE SCRAPS WILL KEEP ITS SHAPE. ALLOW THE CHILDREN TO GET MESSY DURING THIS SESSION; THEY CAN BE THE ONES TURNING THE NEWSPAPER APART AND GLUING IT ONTO THE BALLONS, TRY TO BE AN OBSERVER AND ONLY JOIN IN TO ADD MORE ENGLISH VOCABULARY.

THE BALLONS WILL TAKE ABOUT 2-3 DAYS TO GET DRY. WHEN THEY ARE READY, BRING THEM TO BE BLOWN UP WITH THE CHILDREN; THEN ALLOW THEM TO PAINT THEIR PUMPKINS.

**VOCABULARY: HALLOWEEN RELATED VOCABULARY.**



## **AUTUMN LEAVES**

**ART MEDIUM: WATERCOLOR NEGATIVE PAINTING**

**MATERIALS: - WATERCOLOR  
- LEAVES**

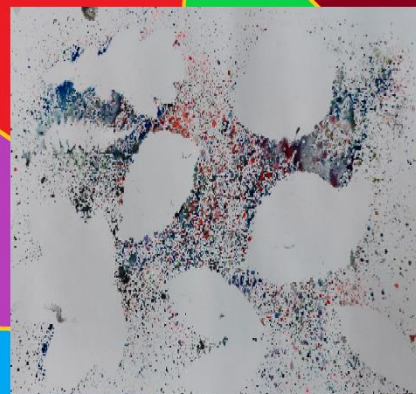
### **PRE-ART SESSION**

**BEFORE START THE PAINTING TALK WITH CHILDREN ABOUT THE CHANGES OF THE SEASONS; ASK THEM IF THEY NOTICED WHAT COLOR ARE THE LEAVES ARE TURNING AND WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THEM. DO IT IN ENGLISH AND IN FINNISH TO MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND. AFTER THAT GO OUTSIDE AND COLLECT SOME LEAVES WITH THE CHILDREN; INSTRUCT THEM THAT YOU WANT DIFFERENT SIZES AND TYPES.**

### **ART SESSION**

**ALLOW THE CHILDREN TO CHOOSE WHAT LEAVES THEY WOULD LIKE IN THEIR PAINTING; AFTER THAT HELP THEM TO TAPE IT ONTO THE PAPER. INSTRUCT THEM TO WET THEIR BRUSH AND TAKE SOME WATERCOLOR, BUT INSTEAD OF PAINTING DIRECTLY ONTO THE PAPER, TELL THEM TO SPLASH IT. AFTER MANY SPLASHES REMOVE THE LEAVES CAREFULLY TO REVEAL THE SHAPES. DURING THE SESSION TALK TO THE CHILDREN HOW WHEN THEY SPLASH DIFFERENT COLORS THEY MIX AND MAKE OTHER COLORS.**

**VOCABULARY: COLORS, NATURE, SEASONS.**





# MONSTER PAINTING

**ART MEDIUM: WATERCOLOR**

**MATERIALS: WATERCOLOR**

## PRE-ART SESSION

**READ THE BOOK "GO AWAY BIG GREEN MONSTER," THIS BOOK IS A GOOD WAY TO INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY RELATED TO BODY PARTS, COLORS AND SIMPLE ADJECTIVES. TALK WITH THE CHILDREN ABOUT WHAT TYPE OF MONSTERS THEY KNOW AND WHAT KIND OF ABILITIES THEY HAVE.**

## ART SESSION.

**THAT IS A VERY LAID BACK SESSIONS; THE ONLY INSTRUCTIONS IS TO CREATE THEIR MONSTER. USE THE TIME THEY ARE CREATING THEIR MONSTERS TO ASK QUESTION-RELATED TO THEIR CREATION AND USE AS MUCH ENGLISH AS POSSIBLE.**

**VOCABULARY: HALLOWEEN MONSTERS, COLORS, BODY PARTS, SIMPLE ADJECTIVES.**





## **MY FAVORITE PIZZA**

**MEDIUM: COLORING PENCILS**

**MATERIAL: - COLORING PENCILS**

**PRE-ART SESSION  
TO START, SING TOGETHER  
THE SONG "I AM A PIZZA" FOR  
A COUPLE OF TIMES. AFTER  
THE SONG SANG TALK WITH  
THE CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR  
FAVORITE TYPES OF PIZZA,  
WHAT KIND OF TOPPINGS,  
WHAT KIND OF SHAPES A  
PIZZA CAN BE.**



**ART SESSION  
THIS IS A BACK TO BASICS  
SESSIONS; CHILDREN ARE  
SIMPLY DRAWING THEIR  
FAVORITE PIZZAS WITH  
COLORING PENCILS. SINCE  
THIS IS A VERY SIMPLE  
METHOD USE THIS  
OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO  
THE CHILDREN AND  
INTRODUCE NEW  
VOCABULARY RELATED TO  
THE TOPIC.**



**VOCABULARY: FOODS, AND  
SHAPES.**