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Integrating the Arts into English Learning: A Case Study of EFL Learners in a Canadian  
University

by

Chenkai Chi

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Faculty of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Education  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2017

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Integrating the Arts into English Learning: A Case Study of EFL Learners in a Canadian  
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May 24, 2017

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is to explore what happens when the arts are integrated into the program called “English Through the Arts” in a Canadian university. This research has been conducted to investigate whether including arts activities contributes to better outcomes for the students who are working to improve their language skills. Semi-structured interviews, participant observation and artifacts elicitation have been employed as methods of data collection. Seven participants from China, Kazakhstan, India and Saudi Arabia have been interviewed with their artworks crafted in sessions. The results showed that arts serve as a stimulus, refresher, guider and facilitator in English language learning. In addition, arts also act as cohesion of the class, contributing to learning English. Participants in this program showed high involvement and engagement in learning English when integrating arts into English language learning.

*Key words:* Arts integration, English learning, artifacts elicitation, EFL learners

## DEDICATION

*To myself*

*To my grandfather*

*To my advisor*

*To my parents*

*To my fiancée*

*To all people who support me*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Terry Sefton for the continuous support of my Master of Education study and research, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Dr. George Zhou and Dr. Zbigniew Pasek. I would like to thank Dr. Zhou, my program reader who provided suggestions for improving my thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Pasek, my outside reader who attended my defense and gave me suggestions. In addition, thank you, Dr. Greig for chairing my defense.

In addition, my special thanks will go to Dr. Shijing Xu, who gave me guidance and chance to involve in the project Reciprocal Learning between China and Canada. I also want to thank Dr. Plumb, the acting director of the Center for English Language Development, who offer me facilitator position of English Through the Arts.

Next, I would like to thank my fiancée, Beibei Xiang who supported me all the time when I was in depression. It would be a lonely 'journey' without her. I also want to show my sincere gratitude to my parents and my older sister. They always encourage and support me with their best wishes.

Finally, I want to say thank you to all my participants, and without them, I could not finish my thesis.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background to the Study**

Canada is becoming an increasingly popular choice for international students to study (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Between 2009 and 2013, the number of foreign nationals with study permits entering Canada has increased by roughly 32% (from 84,869 to 111,865), and this number is still rising. Those students are confronted with various issues hindering their attainment and satisfactory regarding Canadian academic and social life. The issue associated with English language proficiency has been the most difficult problem for those students, and the academic achievements are greatly affected by the language proficiency (Andrade, 2006). What is more, language proficiency also becomes a key factor affecting those students' acclimatization to a new learning environment (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Inadequate English language skills also influence international students' communication with the domestic students, thus discouraging them from making close friends with domestic students (Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Therefore, with the significant increasing number of international students coming to Canada, universities are looking for innovative ways to help international students improve their language proficiency and to better prepare them for academic success in Canadian universities.

### **Problem Statement**

Traditional English teaching methods cannot address the needs of current students who have a desire for creative and meaningful education. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the young English learners' awareness of lifelong learning has become acute, and they are

not satisfied to learn English in standard and monotonous ways. They believe that mastering English is their tickets to higher level job opportunities, and they are willing to invest time and money in learning English. Current students are expected to use their creativity to express themselves and these students have been the creators not the consumers of knowledge (Eaton, 2010). Iwai (2002) believes that the arts can meet those students' needs in terms of creativity, and art education has been advocated in the recent years. It can improve students' aesthetic, socio-emotional, socio-cultural, cognitive skill and academic development; during the process of learning through the arts, students are joyful and hold positive attitudes on their learning. Saraniero, Goldberg and Hall (2014) illustrate that "in learning through the arts, students are able to work with information on multiple levels simultaneously, thus increasing their understanding and retention" (p. 2). Marshall (2014) argues that "art integration—which brings to teaching and learning the benefits of artistic thinking, process, and creativity—could be a major player in this new paradigm" (p. 105). LaJevic (2013) demonstrates that the arts have been showing that it can promote students' participation in the classroom; foster students' creativity, self-expression and critical thinking ability; help teachers to form their various teaching styles. Under this circumstance, integrating arts into education has been a popular topic and progressively more practitioners and researchers advocate for art integration into education, especially in language teaching (Marshall, 2014).

### **The Centre for English Language Development**

The Center for English Language Development (CELD) is the hub for the English as a foreign language learners (EFL). Its aims are to help EFL learners improve their English ability and to specialize in English language training for academic purpose. The

pedagogical philosophy of the instructor in this center is to teach English through various effective methods to meet EFL learners' learning needs. This center has three main programs: English Language Improvement program (ELIP), English Academic Preparation Program and Summer English language. ELIP serves for international students who apply for the admission of the university but do not meet the English language requirements. Those students are required to attend this program to improve their English ability. They cannot register for the university courses until they graduate from ELIP program. This program has four distinct levels: ELIP foundation, ELIP 1, ELIP 2 and ELIP 3. All levels are 12 weeks and focus on developing students' skills in reading and comprehension as well as oral and written communication. Students should participate in a placement test upon their arrival to decide their ELIP level.

### **English Through the Arts**

English Through the Arts (ETA) is a new feature of the Centre for English Language Development. The main purpose of ETA is to provide students (both in ELIP and university students who speak English as a foreign language) more opportunities to practice English. It also supports students through their journey of enhancing English skills through visual arts, dramatization, or music exploration.

There are no admission requirements for this program, and it is free. Students are provided with a fantastic opportunity to explore their own creativity and experience the happiness of learning English through the arts.

## **Purpose Statement**

This research investigates whether including arts activities contributes to better outcomes for the students who are working to improve their language skills. The program “English Through the Arts” is offered by the “Center of English Language Development” in a Southwestern Ontario university, and provides opportunities for students who learn English as a foreign language to practice their English. I worked as a facilitator to help the instructor manage the class. Students from the whole university have the access to this program and it is free for them, which is also the shining point of this program. EFL learners will be defined as the people whose mother language is not English and they speak English as a foreign language. A foreign language is defined as the language which is not official language in their motherland. Art integration will be defined as using different art forms like visual arts, dance, music, and drama to promote EFL learners to learn English meaningfully.

## **Research Questions**

The followings are the research questions which guide this study:

1. What are the EFL learners’ experiences with integrating arts into their English learning process?
2. How does art integration influence EFL learners’ English learning?

## **Significance of the Study**

The study investigates EFL learners’ attitudes towards integrating arts into their English learning process. It provides participants the opportunity to have a voice and to give feedback regarding the program “English Through the Arts.” The findings may help

the “Center of English Language Development” to more clearly understand EFL students’ needs, thus improving the quality of programs in this center. Moreover, this study can also provide some pedagogical methods to encourage the providers of EFL in Canadian universities to teach English in creative ways.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to my study. First, the purposefully selected case cannot represent all situations in Canada. This is a mid-sized university; the supports it provides to its international students may be different than those provided by other Canadian universities. The demographic made up of the participants may be limited, which means that they may not represent the diversity of international students in the university that is the research site, nor the diversity of students in other universities. There may be a gender imbalance in the participant pool. A single case may be influenced by other factors such as the skill of the primary instructor in integrating the arts activities and students’ motivation. Finally, EFL learners in this research have various levels in English communicative and written competence. Therefore, those who cannot communicate in English fluently may contribute to some loss of information.

### **Research Motivation**

My motivation to conduct this study is derived from my experience when I prepared for my English test in China. A lengthy book of vocabulary is a common tool for Chinese English education; this text is comprised of inflexible rules. Chinese students will spend a significant amount of time reciting words from these vocabulary books to prepare for English exams. I experienced this strict learning in China when I prepared for my English exams. At that time, I kept a diary of my experience:



*Everyday, I needed to get up early and go to the library to recite the words in my vocabulary book; this repetition of words made me feel like a robot. Although this learning strategy was reliable, it was also very tedious and difficult for most students to be consistent with. In the next morning, despite the reliability of my learning strategy, I was surprised that I forget half of the words I memorized. My exams were fast approaching and I felt anxious and upset. All I could do was to attempt to recite and memorize again.*

The above words are from my diary. This documentation relates my experience preparing for the Test for English Major band 8. The test is conducted the highest level in China. The average passing rate is about 25%, and the exams are divided into listening skills, reading and western culture comprehension, translation, writing, and grammar correction. My diary communicates my frustration and worry. Most of students in China have experienced similar situations. My frustration is not only from my misuse of learning English methods but the traditional teaching methods as well.

My teachers stressed that words are like bricks used to build a house. It is the foundation of your house. They are foundational. Without a solid foundation, a house will be poorly structured and weak. Therefore, we invested a great amount of time in memorizing words. If foundational bricks are simply glued together, there will be gaps and the house will not be firm.

A house is different from a home. A house is just a shelter but a home is a personalized space. A home is a place where you cry, laugh, grow and learn. After you build a house, you need to make it a home. The words are the foundation of a house and you need to make the words personalized. You need to experience and use those words.

Learning English is not dependent upon how many words you have recited but how the words make connections with your life. You cannot get the answers without experiencing it. As Sefton (1999) points out “I know the answer because I lived it, breathe it and performed it” (p. 1). You cannot learn the words without making meaningful or personal associations. Thus, I see a need for a more engaging and vibrant method of learning English.

It was still unclear what method I should utilize to research this problem, but when I audited a graduate course called Art and Education, it became clear. From that course, I learned that art is abstract and yet it is also concrete. Those two words are antonyms. They are in conflict. Art is truly abstract because you cannot give it a clear and fixed definition. Art is truly concrete because it is from life and you can grab it, feel it and perform it. In my opinion, life is art and art is life, which means that you are artistic when your life is becoming meaningful. In this sense, everything may be considered as art. How about combining the arts with language learning? These were my initial thoughts of conducting this study.

### **Research Approach**

Williamson (2006) compares two different social philosophy traditions: positivist and interpretivist. The contradiction between those two traditions derives from the understanding of the nature of the reality. The former argues that knowledge can be measured, which contributes to a focus on the quantitative data with deductive reasoning from generalization to specification. The latter, however, believes that human beings’ lived experiences construct the meaning of the society, and knowledge is explored by analysis of individuals’ unique voices from their own perspectives; those voices can be

regarded as qualitative data which can be explored with deductive reasoning from specification to generalization. Mingers (2001) argues that interpretivists stress that no external categories should be included in the interpretive analysis because its philosophical stance is to build internal rather than external views. The interpretivists opine that this certain study requires detailed and intensive analysis of transcripts from distinct sources.

I performed the participant observation from three different perspectives. Firstly, in my role of Researcher, I made observations of what happens when arts were included into participants' English learning, students' engagement, students' English language use, and students' motivation or frustration. Secondly, in my role as Facilitator, I tried to gauge whether students required more assistance; made sure students had the appropriate materials; gave feedback to students on their artefacts; encouraged their English language use. Finally, in my role as co-participant, I made a drawing about my hometown and shared with them. In addition, I also joined with the participants to go outside to take pictures and make a poster with them.

The research design of this study is case study which to some extent is mixed with ethnography. However, the conceptions of those two research designs are different in terms of research intentions. Cohen (2003) suggests that ethnographers makes efforts to achieve the perfect spy in order to better understanding the phenomenon in a specific cultural context. The goal of case study is different from the ethnography. In order to understand the case, detailed and intensive study is conducted by collecting data from multiple sources. The experiences and insights gained from the case study may allow for extrapolation to other cases, and may also provide a framework to explore other cases.

This research employs case study as the research design to explore EFL learners' experiences when arts are integrated into their learning process in Canada with detailed descriptions, and to facilitate the understanding of other cases with the implications summarized from this case.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

There has been a growing interest in arts integration into different subjects like science, language arts, mathematics and social studies. Many researches gave different definitions, but to some extent, they were same. Poldberg, Trainin, and Andrzejczak (2013) define art integration as a way to enhance both teaching and learning, and it does not require specialization in the arts. Silverstein and Layne (2010) clarify that “arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meet evolving objectives in both” (p. 1). Marshall (2014) points out that “art integration is a rich and complex approach to teaching and learning that not only aligns with new initiatives in education that prioritize conceptual and procedural skills but could also contribute to education’s transformation” (p. 104). Silverstein and Layne (2010) define art integration as “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process, which connects an art form to another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both” (p. 3). Some of the definitions of art integration lay emphasis on the mutualisation of arts and academics but evidence shows that in some cases, the art integration model need not embrace the art objectives, but may only develop the comprehension of academic subjects (Marshall, 2014).

Bresler (1995) identifies four arts integrations “styles”: subservient integration, coequal integration, affective integration and social integration.” May and Robinson (2016) make an explanation of those four styles:

In the subservient integration model, the arts are used to serve the basic academic curriculum (e.g., singing a song on a theme presented in another discipline). The affective integration style is using the arts to evoke personal expression, and social integration is using the arts as a way to increase participation in community or school events. Coequal-cognitive is the style of integration widely accepted in scholarly articles and definitions, where both the art and core academic subjects are treated equally. (p. 14)

Bresler (1995) argues that “the interaction between arts content and core subjects is frequently superficial, where the arts are often subservient to other academic subjects” (p. 14). Clark (as cited in Marshall, 2006) clarifies that:

Integration comes in many forms, ranging from the most superficial (illustrating content from other domains) to deeper explorations (examining concepts that domains have in common). True integration is a substantive approach that explores and explicates connections between areas on a conceptual and structural level. (p. 19)

Fogarty (1991) proposes ten models to integrate curriculum which can be divided into two parts. In the first part, the effects of integration in context of some of Fogarty models are mutual indicating that the integrated curriculum can reciprocally promote all the subjects in terms of the pedagogical practices and learning outcomes. However, in the

second part, the imbalance of the components in the integrated curriculum gives ‘integration’ a new meaning that some of the elements in the system serve as a facilitator and guider.

### **Music in Language Learning**

Music has positive impact on English learning. Li and Brand (2009) examine the effects of song (i.e. lyrics and music) on vocabulary acquisition and language usage. The authors argue that Chinese EFL learners face problems concerning vocabulary acquisition and language usage while they learn English. Varying the degree of the use of songs has different impacts on students’ language achievements. Learning a language cannot simply consider vocabulary and should be divided into the development of other five skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary (Catramado, 2004). Molina (2011) states that “music offers an excellent atmosphere and creates enjoyable environment in the classroom, facilitating the second language acquisition process” (p. 3). From these two studies, music can enhance student motivation and make contributions to building vocabulary and pronunciation.

A variety of vocabulary and standardized pronunciation are insufficient in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ability to collaborate with others is an important 21<sup>st</sup> century skill: “the interconnectedness of our global economy, ecosystem, and political networks require that students learn to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems with people worldwide” (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012, p. 8). Cunningham (2014) finds that beginning discussions in a quiet classroom is difficult for English learners and few students made contributions to group work. He also found that music is useful during group discussions, project work, and games; listening to music can increase students’ participation in the English learning

classroom because music can create a relaxed atmosphere and avoid the ‘silent moment’ at the beginning of the discussion. Indeed, classroom participation is important not only for students but also for teachers (Rocca, 2010). In addition, active involvement in the classroom is beneficial for students’ intellectual development (Polly, Margerison & Piel, 2014). Mena and Chapetón (2014) find:

Using songs in the English learning classroom can go beyond the fact of learning grammatical structures, vocabulary, and showing comprehension of the lyrics.

When focusing on a social content that is of interest to students, it can foster reflection and expression of personal feelings and social concerns. (p. 136)

There are some empirical studies surrounding the topic of music and language learning. Lems (2016) describes the experience of teaching in Chile in 2012 and Mongolia in 2013. The researcher uses music to encourage EFL learners to express themselves and finds that students would practice their English pronunciation repeatedly to ensure their performance is excellent in the music competition among students. The researcher also promotes students to select a song they like and recommends that they illustrate it using photos and images supported by some technologies. During this process, students try to understand the meaning of lyrics because only when they totally understand the meaning of lyrics can they illustrate the song with pictures correctly. The researcher argues that using music can make students highly involved in English language learning. Coyle and Gracia (2014) explore the effects of teaching a group of five-year-old Spanish EFL learners to learn English vocabulary through songs. The authors encourage students to practice some well-known children’s songs; students need to identify the key vocabulary and complete worksheets of coloring, matching and



drawing. Vocabulary picture tests are conducted after they finished the activities as soon as possible. The results show that teaching new language through songs is an effective way.

Nadera (2015) shows how Turkey middle school students learn English skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking through music. The researcher finds that the melody with the lyrics is enable students to review pronunciation and enjoy music at the same time. In addition, English songs can open a window to western culture to provides students with opportunities to feel that culture. The researcher also points out that extensive and intensive listening skills can also be enhanced using songs in EFL classroom. Erten (2015) explores how to use Karaoke singing in Turkey EFL classroom. To begin with, through singing, language learners can reflect their ‘inner’ world that contains their assorted emotions, thus generating opportunities for them to acquire a new language by a meaningful way. Moreover, music per se is a carrier for local culture and lyrics from the music culturally connote target-language meanings, which show a different picture to language learners. In addition, language learners can imitate the pronunciation by learning the songs. Lee and Lin (2015) examines the importance of music activities on English learning for Chinese children at age four. Through a mixed method, the authors discovery that young children’s language skills have been enhanced by participating music activities. For one thing, the melody of the music can create a comfortable environment and the rhyme in the lyrics make students more engaged in activities, although they may not understand totally the meaning of the lyrics. In addition, music can psychologically ameliorate the relationship between instructors and learners.

Akhmadullina, Abdrafikova and Vanyukhina (2016) conduct a research on how music affects English teaching pre-service students' communicative skills in a Russian University. They perform an experiment and analyze how music have an impact on their process of thinking, speaking and learning in general through physiological and emotional mechanisms. The results show that music can create relaxed psychological climate and ease stress in the classroom. It can also motivate students to study a foreign language. Moreover, when a whole team listens to the same songs together, it will cultivate the spirit of team working.

Music as an usual form in art can motivate students in the English learning classroom and make students more engaged in the classroom. It can help students to learn vocabulary, pronunciation; it can create a relaxed atmosphere to encourage English learners to speak in a discussion group and it can also improve English learners' classroom participation which helps students learn effectively. Next, it will be clear that visual arts, as another form of art, also contribute to language learning.

### **Visual Arts in Language Learning**

Art is not only the expression of personal emotion but becoming a tool of education that can motivate students, enhance team work, and encourage students to explore the world by themselves and learn something through experiences.

Visual arts can spark English learners' imagination which can help their writing skills. Mantei and Kervin (2014) argue that visual arts provide English learners with opportunities to gain insights through their paintings and make connections with their experience to value their beliefs of family and community. This is how the visual arts allow English learners to think about society regarding relationships between themselves

and communities. Visual arts cannot only provide a chance for English learners to consider these connections but also enhance students' imagination in their writing. Shmulsky (2009) argues that drawing pictures can arise students' interests in reading and writing. Lee (2014) discovers visual arts was effective in promoting English learners in increasing motivation in writing activities and visual arts can also positively change English learners' perception of learning.

Visual arts can also ease the emotional stress, thus creating a harmonious environment for language learners to acquire a new language. English language learners have different backgrounds and some of them may come from low-income families and refugee situation. Lemper (2014) points out that refugee education is challenging because the curriculum does not consider refugee's basic knowledge and psychosocial needs. The author thinks that visual arts "provides an opportunity for youth to express themselves visually while learning new language" and learning a new language through visual arts can "build confidence, psychosocial well-being and social engagement."

Some empirical investigations have been performed to explore how visual arts affect language learners' experience. Kokko, Eronen and Sormunen (2015) conduct a narrative inquiry research on how crafts affect students' language learning. The results show that because students have more opportunities to learn in an authentic learning environment, they learn how to put theoretical knowledge into practice and to learn to cooperate with their classmates. As a result, students' attitudes on learning become more positive. Bryce (2012) conducts some case studies involving students in New York whose curriculum is art-based to put forward an idea that visual arts can boost and support children's informational reading and writing. Through the visual arts, students

learn to interpret and decode information in the pictures or other forms of arts like drama, crafts, music, poems, photography, and icons. Moreover, the cooperation during the process is important and the involvement of community is helpful for students to improve visual literacy.

Paula (2002) focuses on elementary art teachers in the United States whose students are composed of English speakers of other language students (ESOL). The researcher organises a focus group interview on how art teachers can adapt or adjust their teaching pedagogies to help their ESOL students. Through this focus interview, the researcher demonstrates that the use of visuals can reduce ESOL students' discomfort in the art classroom and effectively engage students. The researcher also points out that these elementary art teachers are aware of the connections between arts learning with language acquisition. Art, as a universal language, can make students express their ideas freely. ESOL students feel comfortable and confident to take on the challenge of speaking English. Art can be defined as a vehicle for students to find their own voice and to have a rapport with their classmates. Lee (2014) explores the effects of art-integration on Chinese student English learning through content analysis, observation and in-depth interviews. The research finds that, as the participants are encouraged to integrate the arts into their English learning, they show positive attitudes on English learning, high involvement in English writing tasks through visual arts. The researcher also mentions that this approach of art integration into English learning is suitable for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners especially for Chinese-speaking students because Chinese characters are pictographic. Chinese characters express meanings through signs rather than sounds. The visual stimulus encourages Chinese-speaking students to learn

English efficiently. The researcher contends that this art integration approach can also benefit teachers of EFL in curriculum design not only for Chinese-speaking environment but the multilingual environment as well.

Spina (2006) employs a mixed approach to assess the effectiveness of integrating arts into the English as a second language education of grade 5 students in the United States. With thorough theoretical examination, statistic comparison between pre-test and post-test, on-site observation and interviews, the researcher finds that integrating arts into their second language learning can improve students' ability to interact with the outside world. The researcher also points out that visual arts can provide children with other ways to express themselves other than verbal expression. It can help students explore their inner world. Nonverbal expression, to some extent, will facilitate verbal understanding; in other words, artistic expression can encourage students' linguistic expression. More importantly, the researcher mentions that arts integration can promote second language learning without sacrificing students' first language. First language is often regarded as resistance in the second language acquisition. However, the researcher demonstrates that through arts integration, learning a second language can also improve the level of their primary language.

Visual arts, in summary, can create relaxed environment where special needs students can learn a new language freely; can increase their learning motivation; can establish and maintain positive relationship with their classmates and aid students developing their visual literacy.

## **Drama in Language Learning**

In addition to the music and visual arts, drama also plays a significant role in EFL classrooms. Rieg and Paquette (2009) suggests that drama can enhance the literacy development of language learners:

Drama and movement have proven to assist with developing decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary, syntactic knowledge, discourse knowledge and metacognitive thinking. Additional benefits for English language learners include increased motivation and reduced anxiety. (p. 148)

Donnery (2014) conducts a mix method research, which focuses on the use of drama in Japanese EFL learners' classrooms. The results show that from the perspective of both linguistic and intercultural communicative competence, drama has a positive influence on Japanese university EFL learners and students can enhance their English skills by affective engagement with authentic material. Janudom and Wasanasomsithi (2009) conclude that "drama and questioning techniques could help enhance students' speaking abilities and their positive attitudes towards EFL learning" (p. 2). Hoyt (1992) argues that language learners are more engaged to participant in the class activities designed to improve their language skills through drama. In addition, arts can deepen and expand their understanding. Gullatt (2008) suggests that language learning occurs when the language inputs which can also be regarded as language stimuli becomes meaningful; and to make the language learning meaningful, aesthetic opportunities need to be provided to allow students to respond the target language through various artistic forms.

Naoko (2012) shows the experience of integrating drama into grade six EFL classrooms in Japan. The researcher finds that the principal, teachers and students are all

fully immersed in these drama activities and some of them even spent extra hours in rehearsal. Some students who are not interested in it initially are also involved into this project actively. The researcher believes that English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching should not be confined to the teaching of grammar, words and phrases. In addition, through this project, students and teachers strengthen their relationships and get more familiar with each other. Bang (2003) investigates the effects on improvement of Korean college students' communicative ability through drama in the EFL classrooms. The researcher adopts the mixed method to conduct the study. In the quantitative study, students' communicative scores have increased obviously. In the qualitative study, most students show positive attitudes on learning English through drama. The researcher finds that drama can promote the interactions between students, change classroom climate, encourage students to discover their potential in English speaking and strengthen student-teacher relationships. Therefore, integrating drama into English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom can stimulate learners' interests and improve their communicative skills. Dodson (2000) states his experience of integrating drama into the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in the United States. The researcher designs activities in the EFL classrooms and thinks that drama can make English learning in meaningful and communicative contexts. Banejee (2014) narrates the experience of using drama into the EFL classroom in India. The researcher argues that integrating drama into EFL classroom cannot only improve students required skills like reading, listening, speaking and writing but also some other important aspects of life.

## **Dance in Language Learning**

Bell (1997) outlines the importance of body movement in language acquisition in Japan. The researcher believes that dancing is also another form of communication and there is a connection between body movement and intonation. Dancing can be an effective way to teach pronunciation. In addition, the researcher provides some reasons why it is important to use dance in the EFL classroom. Dance can provide powerful kinesthetic connections for words building. It can also be used to unify the classroom. Lastly, dance can break the silence and stillness of the EFL classroom. Therefore, the researcher believes that using drama into EFL classroom is crucial. Ortiz (2010) showcases his teaching experience of integrating dance in a foreign language classroom. The researcher argues that dance can help students know themselves better through different senses: hearing, touching and seeing. Furthermore, learning a new dance can provide students with opportunities to have a better understanding of the target language culture thus overcoming some challenges caused by the unfamiliar culture.

## **Interpretivism in Qualitative Research**

To better understanding of how people in social situation generate and retain their social meanings towards worlds, the interpretive framework is defined as a theoretical approach to analyze social actions systematically (Neuman, 1997; Chetty, 2013). Greene (1992) contends that knowledge is subjective and situational; decontextualized knowledge is nonsense for the Interpretivism, and interpretive process can be regarded as storytelling. Angen (2000) suggests that people can know and understand the world only by meaningful interpretation, which is influenced by the local culture. Interpretivists believe that the researchers play major role in data collection, which not only boosts the



researcher's involvement but also enhances the reliability of data (Parry, 1997; Chetty, 2013). Some scholars compare how people understand the reality from positivism and interpretivism perspectives. The former thinks that reality can be observed and measured while the latter argues that the reality can only be interpreted with people's lived experiences (Sutrisna, 2009; Williamson, 2006).

There are some gaps that I find from the literature review. Firstly, most scholars explore art integration into English language learning in United States, Asia, and Europe, and little has been done in Canada. Canada is a multi-cultural country and there are many immigrated people coming from different countries. They speak different languages and have different educational backgrounds. Secondly, scholars pay more attention to the elementary school level and neglect the university level, especially the international students. Therefore, my research will focus on these gaps and attempt to fill the gaps.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Study Design**

This study uses the qualitative approach; it can offer impressions and feelings about a certain situation and attempt to answer the questions like “what is going on?” In addition, the goal of qualitative research is to explore what happens in a group or in a community. It mainly focuses on who the researcher is talking with, what messages the participants are conveying to the researcher, what feelings and thoughts participants are obtaining, and how these messages are affecting the researchers (Gary, Rod & Lori, 2012, p. 49). Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005, p. 1). Creswell (2007) gives a definition of qualitative approach and outlines the characteristics of qualitative research. He argues that in qualitative research the data collection happens in the natural site which means that the researcher always collect data in the fields with participants and has an in-person talk with the participants. In my study, the data collection will happen in the classroom. In addition, in qualitative research, the researcher is a key instrument because all the methods of collecting data are designed by the researcher. The researcher acts as the "human instrument" of data collection (Hoepfl, 1997). Next, qualitative research will use multiple ways to collect data to ensure the richness of data. In my research, I will use triangulation collecting data from different sources.

Constructivists (interpretivists) hold that individuals attempt to understand the world by developing subjective and multiple meanings, which allow researchers to

analyze from different perspectives. The qualitative research based on constructivism framework heavily relies on participants' situated views. Interpreting the others' different meanings about the world is the researchers' intention, which is different from the positivists who initiate a study by a hypothesis or theory with inductive reasoning (Creswell, 2003). This qualitative case study is based on the constructivism paradigm, which argues that on the premise of recognition of the importance of the fact that the subjective human beings produce the meanings of reality (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Interpretivism and constructivism subscribes to each other. Interpretivists believe that:

Reality is constructed by social actors and people's perceptions of it. They recognize that individuals with their own varied backgrounds, assumptions and experiences contribute to the on-going construction of reality existing in their broader social context through social interaction. Because these human perspectives and experiences are subjective, social reality may change and can have multiple perspectives. (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 71)

The research design for this examination is case study. Papamichael (2007) gives a definition of case study:

A case study approach is an in-depth examination of a case or several cases. A case is often identified as a program, or project, or setting. It is up to the researcher to identify the case and to set limits or boundaries. (p. 151)

Creswell (2007) argues that "in case study research, the single case is typically selected to illustrate an issue, and the researcher provides a detailed description of the setting for the case" (p. 115). Starman (2013) argues that "case study is a ticket that allows us to

enter a research field in which we discover the unknown within well-known borders while continually monitoring our own performance; scalability; and our own, as well as general, existing knowledge” (p. 41).

### **Research Site**

The research site of this study is affiliated with the Center of English Language Development in a southwestern Ontario university. There are two reasons why I choose this site. Firstly, I graduated from this center before I started my master courses and I am familiar with this center. Secondly, the director of this center was willing to initiate. We established rapport and became good friends after her interview. She stressed the importance of the arts in learning English and said that she had contemplated this idea for a long time. I also wanted to find a suitable institution in which to conduct my research. After several communications via emails and face-to-face talks, we decided to establish this new and free program English Through the Arts. We mapped out the outline (see appendix B) of this program by valuing our initial envisions several times.

### **Participant Recruitment**

In this study, I used purposive sampling to select a typical case to examine because “this technique is very appropriate for case study and qualitative approaches in which the intent is not to generalize to a larger population but to examine a ‘typical’ case in order to understand it more fully” (Gary, Rod & Lori, 2012, p. 140). Students who speak English as a foreign and attended the program will be the criteria of selecting participants. In addition, participants who have the relationship with me and the supervisor will be excluded from this research but they still have the chance to take the program. However, this sample is not selected randomly and the sample size is relatively

small and therefore cannot represent all the population. In addition, the information that participants provide will be very individual which will lead to bring me to another aspect of the research which I had not anticipated initially.

The participants of this study are the English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in the “English Through the Arts program.” I recruited seven participants in this program who are willing to take part in my research. There are ten weeks for students to experience learning English through the arts. There are two sessions in each week which are in Tuesday and Thursday individually from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm.

Since I was a facilitator of this program, I informed them in the class and students who are interested in this research can contact me. I placed the poster in the center. Initially, there were no students contacting me and then I chose to recruit the participants directly in the class. I introduced my research in the class and I also left my email address for students to contact me. seven students were willing to participate and all of them chose to take part in the methods of artifacts elicitation interview and observation. I made an appointment with each of them in the library in the group study room to do the interview.

### **Research Role**

Participant observation means that the researcher becomes a participant. The researcher not only observes the reactions of the participants but also the researcher has a unique angle to conduct the research because the researcher has direct experiences and perceptions (Bouma, Ling & Wilkinson, 2008). DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) summarize the advantages of participant observation: “it enhances the quality of the data obtained in the fieldwork and enhances the quality of the interpretation of data” (p. 265). Participant

observation thus has been a tool for data collection and data analyse. Becker and Geer (1957) argue that participant observation can make the researcher more aware of the problems associated with the research itself because the participant observation allows researchers to gather data in a social context which contains various kinds of information and cues. They also compare participant observation with formal interview showing that formal interview is an isolated method because the researcher cannot see and hear the people in different situations. The participant observation is able to provide the researcher with an extensive base to better analyze the data obtained in the fieldwork. McCurdy and Uldam (2014) propose that when the researcher conducts the participant observation, the positions of the researcher will shift for numerous times and these shifts will influence the results of the research. Watts (2011) believes that the participant observation can build in-depth understanding of the participants and enhance the quality of the research. However, the ethical issues and bias problems will be accompanying as the researcher establishes good relationship with the participants. The dual role of the researcher as both participants and researcher will have impact on the results on the research. The involvement of the investigator in the research site will make the participants upset leading to the different results of the research and the dual role of the researcher as the participant and the research will make the researcher unable to observe too much as it is difficult for individuals to observe carefully when they are participating.

My role in this supplementary program called “English Through the Arts” is a voluntary facilitator and my main task is to carry out pre-planned sessions to help create more opportunities to encourage students to use English. I also collaborate with the

director of the centre of English Language Development (CELD) to design some activities for students to practise their English.

### **Data Collection**

In qualitative research, data can be collected in many ways including interview, observation, and document analysis (Creswell, 2003). In my study, I adopted artifacts elicitation interview and observation as ways of collecting data. Creswell (2007) encourages individuals “designing qualitative projects to include new and creative data collection methods that will encourage readers and editors to examine their studies” (p. 170).

For this study, I had been invited to be a facilitator in the program and had opportunity to observe the participants. I took the field notes by observing participants’ performance in the sessions including how they react to the artistic activities; how they interact with other participants; how they reflect their learning outcomes. Participants who attended the observation can have their own right to choose whether they wanted to take the artifacts elicitation part. Semi-structured interview and artifacts elicitation have been held to collect their demographical data, their experiences of this program and their attitudes on learning English through the arts. During the process, the participants chose to bring their artifacts they crafted in the sessions to help them recount their experiences. The interview, the traditional qualitative method of collecting data, did not always enable participants to answer questions in deep (Douglas, 2015). Artifacts served as the alternative to ask questions about some artifacts like physical and visual works that participants craft. Douglas (2015) argues that artifacts are comprehensive presentation of knowledge, skills and attitudes of creators. Therefore, artifacts elicitation can investigate

participants' attitudes deeply. 6 participants have been invited into the artifacts elicitation and semi-structured interview which took around 30 minutes and one participant has been invited into the normal interview part. The participants shared their experiences and insights regarding this program and provided some detailed description. Aided by the visuals, participants narrated some interesting stories in the context of learning English through the arts.

After the artifacts elicitation, I kept the recordings and photos in a locked cabinet which was only accessible to me. Those three different sources can help to construct a holistic picture of participants' feelings, experiences and thoughts surrounding learning English through the arts.

### **Artifacts Elicitation**

Varga-Atkins and O'Brien (2009) argue that interviews, as the widely-used method of data collection, are word-based exchange between the interviewers and interviewees. The 'elicitation' means that an array of techniques that the examiners can utilize to diminish potential bias occurred in the verbal exchange.

Artifacts can serve as a buffer to make the participants feel less upset when they are stating sensitive topics because they are talking about the topic with the materials, which will enable them to express difficult memories and emotions. Some researchers argue that the in-between artifacts are full of the informants' memories and it is easier to elicit some important data by encouraging the informants to converse with the objects directly (Prosser, 2011).



Douglas, Jordan, Lande and Bumbaco (2015) believe that artifacts elicitation interview has gained popularity for recent years in engineering education:

Recent research in engineering education has successfully drawn upon the inquiry method of photo elicitation, which uses photographs as interview prompts to elicit “thick description” from participants. Some studies have extended the methodology of photo elicitation to artifact elicitation, in which research participants are asked questions about artifacts (physical, virtual, etc.) that they have previously created and bring to the interview. (p. 1)

Artifacts elicitation have different names. Willig (2016) put forward object elicitation which is on a par with artifacts elicitation. Object elicitation acts as a vivid method of data collecting to simplify the process of communication between participants and researcher. It will be easier for the participants to converse with the researcher about their experience which is hard to share with others without visual stimuli:

Rather than asking participants direct questions about the nature and quality of their experience, object elicitation provides an opportunity for participants to talk about their relationship with the objects and in this way, hopes to shed light on their wider experience. Through reflecting on their relationship with their chosen objects, participants can perhaps more easily share the quality and texture of their life-world than if they were asked to talk about it unaided. (p. 3)

Artifacts elicitation was inspired by photo elicitation, photo production and photo voice. Willig (2016) believes that “Photo-elicitation works with already existing images which participants reflect on during interviews whereas photo-production involves

participants taking photographs as part of the research process” (p. 3). Photo elicitation and photo voice can be categorized into visual elicitation which has been mentioned by Prosser (2011):

Visual elicitation involves using photographs, drawings, or diagrams in a research interview to stimulate a response and remain the most popular and common method in participatory visual research. Photo elicitation is used as an “ice-breaker” or neutral third party when the power differential between researcher-researched is significant. (p. 951)

The photovoice is media-based method and it allows participants to take pictures and record videos. Lal, Jarus and Suto in 2012 argue that “photovoice combines photography and group work to provide people with the opportunity to record and reflect on their daily lives” (p. 182).

### **Visual Research**

Visual methodologies are becoming more apparent in social science. In 2004, Guillemin draws a conclusion about the visual methodologies and argued that “these methodologies encompass media such as film, video, still photography, electronic visual media, and material artifacts” (p. 272). Guillemin (2004) uses the drawing as a research method to explore how children treat their illness and the investigator encouraged them to draw some pictures and ask some questions regarding these pictures. The researcher believed that “drawings as a research method can potentially explore not just illness conditions but also other aspects of social research that are equally complex and multifaceted” (p. 287).

Cameron, Theron, Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) perform a research regarding the youth's experience in foreign countries using photo elicitation and videotaping analysis to explore their challenges and culture shock they encounter. They argued that those visual methods can allow participants reveal much more in-depth data which word-based interview cannot reach.

Wang, Burris and Ping (1996) utilize photo novella to explore Chinese rural women's living experience and to inform the Chinese policy makers to pay more attention to Chinese rural women's health and community. Photo novella means that the researchers allocate cameras to those women who seldom have access to those and those women use their perspectives to record their lives in rural China. The researchers argue that the roles of those women in this research are not just participants or not only data givers. In the process, they are all researchers and they see the world through their own lens. In photo novella, Chinese village women are visual anthropologists. They use photography to record images to which outsiders are much less likely to have access. They are lay anthropologists as well. They acquired their skill at observation not from formal schooling in the social sciences, but from watching "the crops grow, the seasons change, the animals being born and slaughtered." "They are also natural anthropologists. They draw on their existing relationships to serve the communities of which they will forever be a part" (p. 1399).

This dual role can provoke them much more valuable data and increase the reliability of this research. White, Bushin, Carpena-Méndez, and Ní Laoire (2010) explore the experiences of migrant children in Ireland using visual methods. They also compared artifacts elicitation and photo elicitation and they thought that using visual

methods in the research is successful in that there is a great amount of data elicited from their drawings and photos and the quality and the trustworthiness of those data. Doing research with children is relatively harder than with adults and how to establish rapport with children is the essential and necessary part of research. Visual methods act as a bridge connecting children and researchers naturally and “have the potential to facilitate communication between, and an element of empowerment within, adult-child research relations” (p. 155).

Mitchell (2011) investigates the gender violence in school with participatory visual work with girls in sub-Saharan Africa. The use of visual artifacts entailing photos, videos, drawings, and digital archiving in this research is to extend and elaborate the idea of feminism and to reveal the severe issue of girls’ safety and security. In 2006, Wall and Higgins embody a visual task into their interview process to lessen the tightness between the investigator and children participants. This visual task encouraged children to draw during the interview.

Prosser in 2011 demonstrates that visual research has been gaining much more attention for recent years and researchers should support this new methodology:

Visual research in North America, Australasia, Scandinavia, Italy, and the United Kingdom is long-standing, distinctive, and above all, burgeoning. The benefits accrued from the rapid uptake include increased vitality, diversity, and a firmament that invites intellectual exchange. However, with increased popularity comes the need to support those new to visual methodology. (p. 955)

Prosser in 2011 argues that art-based research can provide a wide range of possibilities of responses and make the researcher and participants creative:

More thought and imagination is needed in academic debate and that is why art is so important in visual research. Art can comprise complexity and contradiction, and unlike the arguments in an academic paper, art need not be linear. Art can describe, reflect, and evoke emotion, which dry facts or figures and cool logic rarely do. Art is often about stories, of lives and characters with whom an audience can identify. Above all, art can help us (researchers, participants, and interested communities) imagine what it might be like to live that life. It may not be obvious what the art is saying and maybe the artists do not know themselves, or do not know in a way that is communicated by words. Art is a tool for thinking and a very powerful means of expression and promoting discussion. Arts-based approaches invoke beyond-text sensations employed to access sensory phenomena that are highly meaningful in ways that are ineffable and invisible using conventional text-based methods. (p. 959)

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data collected from the on-site observation and artifact elicitation interview. The field notes have been read several times in order to gain deep insights on the research questions.

In addition, the recordings have been transcribed manually. The photos have been selected to illustrate the themes emerged from the interview data. After careful review of

the recordings, the data was coded and categorized. I attempted to identify patterns and themes.

### **Validity of the Data**

“Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell, 2007; Papamichael, 2007). In my study, I use triangulation and member checking to ensure the accuracy of the findings. “The use of several methods or strategies to gather data with the purpose of increasing the validity of findings” (Papamichael, 2007, p. 472). I collected data from semi-structure interviews, artifacts elicitation, and observation. In addition, I took the themes from the interview back to the participants to see if those themes were accurate.

### **Ethical Concerns**

This study was approved by the university’s Research Ethics Board. The participants were informed of their rights of voluntary participation of the research before consents. The confidentiality of the participants has been ensured.

In terms of the consent process, there are many ways of providing consents because of diverse cultures. The written consent is the most common way. The disadvantage of the written consent is that it may be regarded as a formal and legalized process to agree to participate the research but it can be interpreted as a lack of trust between each other; so, I should ponder which method is the best one but the written consent is a necessity which should be based on the mutual trust between each side. Oral consent, verbal agreement or the handshake, even giving the gifts in some culture will help establish the rapport between the researcher and the participants (TCPS 2, 2014). In addition, Sefton (2006) mentions that the process of consent should be ongoing and it

allows researchers and participants to negotiate, which can show the researcher's respect to the participants. Before signing the consent form, I informed participants that they have rights to withdraw at any time. I introduced my research thoroughly to them and whenever they have questions about my research, they can contact me to solve their concerns.

All the collected data was treated with confidentiality. Only my supervisor and I have access to the data. The recordings were kept in a password-protected laptop and in case of the break of the laptop, the recordings were copied to a hard drive which was kept in a locked cabinet.

During the process of data analysis and interpretation, all the data was analyzed and interpreted only by me. All identifying data has been removed from the results to protect participants' privacy. Next, in the writing part, all the participants were anonymized and during this part, it is difficult for participants to withdraw because all the information has been anonymized.

One potential benefit to participants for joining this study may provide those participants with some opportunities to reflect their previous strategies on learning English and to compare those strategies with new ones they learnt from this program. It is significant to shape their own reflection and comparison. Another benefit to participants may allow them to learn how to do interview and get familiar with the process of doing research, which can contribute to the well preparation for their academic life in university.

## **Research Plan**

English through the Arts is a new program of the Center for English language development, and this new program was established through the joint efforts of the acting

director and me. The first meeting with the director was in the Center of English Language development. We totally agreed upon the importance of the arts in English learning. As a result of this conversation, we started planning to initiate a program. We communicated through personal meetings and emails to outline the basic curriculum, and after several times of communications, we finalized our curriculum of sessions (see appendix B). The acting director and I jointly worked on the establishment of the curriculum with the help of resources from the internet. We did not heavily rely on online resources and we just glean some ideas from the Youtube videos. Then, we combined our creativity and imagination to design this curriculum. This program started from January 24 to March 30 lasting for 10 weeks. Each week, two sessions occurred on Tuesday and Thursday, from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. My Ethical Review protocol was cleared on March 3, 2017, after which I started to collect data through participant observation, semi-structure interview, and artifact elicitation. The maximum number of students attending each session varies between 12 students and 3 students. Students were allowed to choose to be present or absent. I performed the participant observation over the course of three weeks, (six sessions), between March 3 and March 30.

I performed the participant observation by focusing on their interactions with other participants when they did the artistic activities in sessions. Their facing expressions, actions, and contents of their presentation in the classroom were included my field notes. I took the field notes during each session in English. During the observation process, I did not pay attention to the specific object; instead, I openly observed whatever emerged in sessions.



After I had begun the observation phase of data collection, I started to conduct the semi-structured interviews and the artifact elicitation (see appendix A). Students sent emails to me showing their willingness to participate into my research, and I booked appointment with them individually to sign the consent forms in the Leddy Library. Then, I started the semi-structured interview. Each interview took around 20 minutes. I started talking to them with some general questions; participants were easy to start their conversation with me because the environment is quite and comfortable, and I prepared a bottle of water for each participant. I did not strictly follow the interview protocol (see Appendix A); when students provided some interesting information, I asked some further questions to clarify. During the process of interview, I focused on communicating with the participants rather than taking notes while conducting interviews because I thought that by doing that would distract me. The interview took around 20 minutes for all participants. During the interview, I found that Chinese participants would like to add more information that was not their experiences; they were more willing to share other people's stories to me. Participant from Saudi Arabia would talk much on their culture and would like use examples to support his sayings. The participant from Kazakhstan liked to talk about her family and love. After the interview, I transcribed the recordings by myself without adding additional information.

Each interview began with general questions about the participant's background and prior experiences with English language learning. During the second half of the interview, I conducted the artifact elicitation, which took around another 10 minutes. That was to say, the whole interview was about 30 minutes, 20 minutes for semi-structured interview and 10 minutes for the artifacts elicitation. The semi-structured

interviews took place between March 12 to March 16 because on around March 12, this curriculum has begun to repeat the previous activities. I recruited seven participants, and six participants agreed to participated in the semi-structured interviews, artifact elicitation, and participant observation; and participant seven agreed to take part in the participant observation only, because he was busy in preparing for his exams, and some of his artifacts had been lost. Participant 7 actively engaged when he attended sessions. As to the attendance of different participants, Participant 1, 3, 4 were present in almost sessions. Participant 2, 5, 6, 7 were absent for couple of sessions, but all of them sent me email to inform me in advance.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Results are derived from the scrutiny of the rich data based on participant observation, artifacts elicitation and semi-structured interview. This chapter shows the results which have been categorized based on the themes emerged from the qualitative data. The categorized data have been displayed in a logic way, and whenever I found relevant information, I pieced them together by careful analysis on the relevance and the usefulness and labeled the same titles so that I can easily piled them up. In observation results, the themes are: the relationship among students, the relationship between students and the instructor and participants' engagement in sessions. In the interview part, the themes are: background information, English learning motivation, methods of learning English, participant experiences of English Through the Arts, connections of arts and English learning, and comments and suggestions on English through the Arts. In the artifacts elicitation, the themes are the participant one to six's experience of learning English through the arts.

#### **Observation Results**

**The relationship among students.** In the music session, participants did not know anyone with each other, which made the classroom quiet. The classroom environment became stressed and embarrassed in a big classroom, which can contain 60-70 students. I sat behind them without saying any words and hoped the instructor can appear quickly. The classroom was normally used for examinations; so, the desks and chairs were set in rows, which was like Chinese style. In addition, in the middle of the class, a cart with a laptop and projector has separated the classroom into two parts, and

this segregation could be an indicator making students into different small groups. Students from the same country sat together. At the very beginning of the session of visual arts, Chinese, Arabic and Indian students occupied the most seats. A student from Kazakhstan (Participant 3) sat in the corner of the classroom because no one in the classroom was from Kazakhstan. There was no communication among different groups, but heated discussion in their own language made the classroom noisy gradually. The girl from Kazakhstan was quiet and looking her smartphone. Five minutes later, the instructor came with smile and introduced her briefly. When I came to the front and prepared to introduce myself, I found that the classroom became quiet, and students were surprised that I was the facilitator of these sessions. I just introduced myself quickly and briefly. Then the instructor and I wanted to divide those students into different groups and she hoped that students from different countries can sit together so that they can communicate in English rather than their mother tongue. Students strongly refused to be re-arranged because I thought that if they were in a group which was familiar to them, they were in a comfortable zone and they did not take any risks. Pulling them out of that comfortable zone can 'push' students to take risks, where education started. They looked unhappy and some students did not move at all. Only some of students changed the seats contributing to the stressed and embarrassed classroom environment. In the later five minutes, the classroom became deadly quiet, and students did their own things: they sent messages to somebody; wrote their homework from the ELIP program; even listened to music. Then, we started the session by asking students to listen to a piece of music by which students can construct a story based on what they heard. For example, there was a sound of a glass bottle being smashed, and students can make up a story with that sound.

What was happening? Who smashed the bottle? Students were immersed in doing this activity. Students set their smartphone aside and quickly wrote down something. After ten minutes, the instructor asked them to share their stories in their group and they also needed to share with everyone in the class.

Things have been changed. The ice among students had been broken. They started to communicate in English with their peers. Participant 3 actively faced round to talk with Chinese girls. Although they cannot talk with each other in English freely, they were smiling and even they exchanged their contact information. The whole class was full of happiness and the environment became relaxed.

Participant 5 was from Saudi Arabic and he was not in these sessions initially. He showed up in these sessions in the week 7 which was in the middle progress. All students were familiar with each other and they had their own topics and stories to share. It will be hard for him to join with them. Therefore, he decided to sit behind all students and kept silent. Today's session was about photography and students needed to take pictures out of the building. Ten minutes later, they came out of the building to take pictures. After 30 minutes, they were back. Surprisingly, a girl asked participant 5 the question: what did you take? He gave the answer quickly and he soon joined in that group. He started to introduce himself to the students in the classroom because the instructor allowed them to share their ideas with each other. After 5 minutes, he knew everyone in the class and he even shared his coffee from Arabic country with his classmates. Every student tasted Arabic coffee and they said thank you to him.

**The relationship between students and the instructor.** In the visual arts session, the instructor and I provided a picture with students who were required to construct a story with that picture. Every student came to the front and wrote down a sentence according to what they thought that how the story unfolds. Participant 1 and 3 suggested that the instructor should join with them. The instructor was not initially willing to participate because the laptop got some problems and she needed to figure it out. However, both encourage the instructor to take part in this activity. They said that we did not need the laptop anymore and we needed you. At that moment, the instructor quickly quit doing the things at hand and ran to the whiteboard quickly. It was just like a situation that when a baby cried, his or her mother came to her quickly for fear that anything would hurt her baby.

In the photographer session, when students were making a poster, participant 5 came to us and showed some videos to me. He said to me that I have helped him a lot and he did not want to let me feel separated because he saw me in the corner write something. I was writing my observational notes and when I attempted to describe a situation, I found that I was unable to seek a suitable word to depict that situation, which made me upset and look unhappy. I was delighted that he came to me to share his story with me. Although he cannot communicate in English fluently, he attempted to speak English with help of some gestures. Sometimes, I was confused about what he said to me but he attempted to explain to me repeatedly, even with drawings, which moved me.

In the music session, participant 3 and 4 were late because on that day, they have exams. It was rainy and windy. After waiting for 10 minutes, the instructor came to me saying that she needed to go outside for a while and if students came, I should tell them

she will be back soon. It was extremely cold outside and there were almost no people walking in the street. She came out and started her car heading for the downtown direction. I did not know what she was going to do and hoped that students can show up quickly. After 20 minutes, students showed up. After 5 minutes, the instructor came in with a box of Tim bits and a tray of coffee. She said that students must be tired and hungry because they just finished the exams. She gave every student a cup of coffee and when she came to participant 3, she gave her a cup of tea. She said that she knew she liked drinking tea rather than coffee.

**Participants' engagement in sessions.** Participants' engagement can be reflected on their facial expressions and actions. Participant 1,3, and 4 were excited in constructing a story according to a picture as a beginning of the story. Every student needed to draw a picture and write a sentence in the whiteboard, and no one knew what would happen in the following. Participant 1 faced round to talk with participant 3 quickly with smile on her face. Participant 4 was totally immersed in this activity and she set about designing her plots and checking some words in the electronic dictionary neglecting participant 1 and 4's sayings. Participant 1 made a face to participant 3 and turned back. Participant 3 had a pen in her hand and looked the ceiling contemplating what she wanted to express. Participant 1 frowned and put her pen in her mouth. The instructor walked around and helped students who had no ideas. Suddenly, my phone rung because I did not mute my phone. I felt embarrassed because I was afraid that the ringing would distract them. However, no one looked at me and no one heard opening the door. Everyone was immersed in their stories and even the instructor ignored my mistakes. After I answered my phone and came back to that classroom, they began to write down their sentences and

draw pictures. I was also invited to write down a sentence after participant 1 who described a situation that a boy was sent to the abandoned island. I came to the whiteboard with a smirk and wrote a sentence “the boy was killed by a bear.” At that moment, the whole class cried “oh, no.” Participant 3 came to the front quickly and confidently and wrote “that was only a dream.” The students were happy to see and applauded.

Cooperation among students can also be an indicator of their engagement. In the photography session, all participants came and they were required to take some pictures outside. Participant 1 sat in her seat for a long time after other participants went out. I asked her the reasons why she stayed in the classroom, and she answered that she wanted to ponder for a little while so that she could have a clear objective for what kind of things she wanted to express. After around 5 minutes thinking, she left the classroom. The instructor and I stayed in the classroom to wait them back. 30 minutes later, all participants came back with different and interesting photos. The classroom was noisy after they came back because all participants were curious what kind of pictures they took and they asked this questions with each other. They were so immersed in their own talking that they did not hear what the instructor’s sayings. Therefore, I came to them one by one reminding them to keep quiet. The instructor asked them to make a poster together to show their fruitful products. Drawings, lyrics, poems and stories can also be the contents of this poster, and they only had one piece of paper, which means that they needed to cooperate with each other. Participant 1 started to arrange the space of this poster to everyone and her leadership had been gradually revealed. She distributed different tasks to other students according to what they have collected and how they were



going to show their stories. Participant 4 had interviewed with the boss from a restaurant; so, participant 1 wanted her to write down her interview materials first because participant 4 did not record during the interview. Participant 4 started to recall what they had talked in the interview, and she quickly held a pen and checked her smartphone once she cannot describe some situations necessitating some certain vocabulary. Participant 3 was talented in drawing and her main task was to help other students to illustrate. Participant 2 wanted to show the lyrics of the 'Vicent'; so, participant 1 arranged him to write it down first with the help of participant 4 who drew some pictures attached to the lyrics. Participant 5 just wanted to show a sentence which can show his outlook on life. He wrote it down with his signature smiling at me. In the 20 minutes, participants actively participate in this activity.

The level of participants' eagerness to share can also show their engagement in the sessions. In the music session, the instructor asked students to listen to a song called 'I just called to say I love you.' They also needed to write a letter containing some words that they wanted to say to the people that they loved deeply. This letter would be put into the envelope and sealed; they should can mail this letter to them in the Canada Post. To protect their confidentiality, the instructor and I went out of this classroom and gave them ten minutes to finish this task. After ten minutes, everyone has put their letter into envelopes and some of students even wrote the address of the recipient. Only participant 5 sat still in his seat looking at outside without saying any words. I was afraid that he was not happy with this activity or he recalled some miserable experiences causing him almost to cry. The instructor and I were worried about him, and suddenly, he raised his hand with his letter in his hand. He said to the students that he wanted to share a story

with us. His eyes looked at the instructor and me, determined and strong. He came to the front with the applause from the other students. He decided to share a love story between people, his grandfather and animal, grandfather's camel. It was a touching love story and students in the class all attentively listened to him. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 6 sat together focusing on him all the time. After the sharing, he went back to his seat and calm down.

In the drama session, the instructor wanted students to guess what was happened based on a picture and asked students to act as a spokesman or spokeswoman to introduce their ideas. In that picture, a table where there was a phone and a note book was put in a booth which was put in a discarded garden. Students needed to guess the function of this booth and drew a picture to explain that. Participant 4 scratched her head and shrugged her shoulders, and she stared that picture for a long time. After ten minutes, all students got ready to share, but participant 4 was shy to share with her stories. She used her hands to cover her drawings and sat straight. When the instructor asked if anyone wanted to share, she lowered her head muttering something to herself. Suddenly, she raised her hand with a shaky voice. She was so nervous that she dared not to look at the students, and she just looked at the windows all the time. She said that she wanted to share this story with all of us. Her voice was low and sometimes I cannot hear anything. When she showed her picture, her voice became loud. Her English was better than what we thought before. After she introduced her stories, the instructor said that her story was alike the original version. She went back to her seat at a smart pace.

### **Interview Findings**

**Basic information.** There were seven participants who were willing to take part in this research. There were four females and three males and their levels varied from

ELIP program to graduate students. The demographic information has been presented in the table as followed:

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Language level</b>	<b>Major</b>
Participant 1	China	Female	Graduate student	Education
Participant 2	China	Male	Graduate student	Electrical engineering
Participant 3	Kazakhstan	Female	ELIP 2	Earth science
Participant 4	China	Female	ELIP 2	Electrical science
Participant 5	Saudi Arabic	Male	ELIP 2	Criminology
Participant 6	China	Female	graduate student	Education
Participant 7	India	Male	graduate student	Mechanical Engineering

**Reasons of coming to Canada to study.** In responding to the following question ‘why do you come to Canada’, participants’ answers vary. Participant 1 suggested that the idea of improving English encouraged her to come to Canada. Participant 1 and 2 thought that Canada was a multicultural country, and they wanted to experience different cultures in order to enrich their life experiences. Participant 6 was attracted by Canadian immigration policy. Participant 1 and 3 opined that Canadian tuition and living costs

were lower than other English-speaking countries. Participant 4 believed that Canada was a safe country. Participant 5 thought that Canadians were friendly, and willing to help other people.

In summary, low tuition and living costs, multiculturalism, safety issues, friendliness of the local people and the easy application for permanent living in Canada are determinants for those participants to choose to study and live in Canada.

**Future plans.** When referred to the question ‘what is your future plans’, participants shared their answers from different perspectives. Participant 1 suggested that she wanted to apply for the permanent residency permit after her graduation. Furthering study was also another plan for participant 1 and 3. Participant 1 and 4 suggested that it was necessary to find a job after their graduation. Participant 2 and 5 regarded Canada as a springboard to qualify themselves to find a job in their own countries. Although those participants had clear goals of graduation, yet participant 6 was in dilemma because she found hard to find a job in Toronto, she was not sure whether she decided to go back her home country.

Their future plans can be summarized in three aspects according to their accounts. Firstly, finding a job has been a priority after graduation for some participants who usually have the tendency for applying for the permanent residency in Canada. Secondly, some of them desire to further their studies in Canada. Finally, it is also acceptable for some of them to go back to their home countries.

**The previous experience of learning arts.** Five of the seven participants had previous experience in learning arts in courses. Only participant 4 learned dance and drawing by herself. Participant 1 learned piano and drawing when she was young;

participant 2 learned dancing, drawing, and Chinese traditional calligraphy; participant 3 learned Tambura, traditional Kazakhstan instrument when she was in her childhood; participant 5 learned Oud, a Saudi Arabic instrument; participant 6 learned drawing and music. All participants had the experience of learning arts but when the investigator asked them whether they kept learning those skills, their answers were consistent: they quit learning. The reason why they did not keep learning the skill was that they were busy in their study, and they were occupied by the examinations.

To sum up, all participants who I had interviewed had previous experiences of learning arts in different forms, but the majority gave up this habit due to their busy and heavy learning schedule

**English learning motivation.** In this part, I will demonstrate participants' English learning motivation in their home country and Canada individually. In response of the following question 'what is your English learning motivation in your home country', participants shared different answers. English learning motivation their home country is various encompassing passing examinations, the trend of English being a universal language, job qualification, and others. Participant 1, 2, 4, and 6 argued that their English learning motivation was to pass the mandatory English exams. Participant 1 stated that: "In China, we had to learn English because it was a mandatory subject. We had to pass the exams for the graduation. So, we had to study hard." Participant 3 and 5 believed that learning English was a must for the future as English had been a universal language. In addition, English has been a premise for some jobs according to Participant 3 and 5. According to participant 1, she said that she was fond of English from her inner

world, which was dissimilar with others. Another interesting story was shared by participant 3 to illustrate her English learning motivation:

After I took the grants from the local government, I had the opportunity to go to the university, and I saw a lot of students from other cities. Most students were not good at English, Russian and Kazakhstan because they had low communicative competence. If I can master those three languages, my future would be bright. So, I decided to learn English by attending the English courses near my university. There were only two students in a course so it was just like an individual tutoring. One month later, I fell in love with the teacher who was four years older than me. He was always pushing me to learn English.

To respond the question ‘what is your English learning motivation in Canada in the interview part’, participants’ replies concentrated on the communicative competence. Participant 2, 5, and 6 shared the similar opinion as participant 2 said: “I wanted to improve my English skills because I needed to communicate with the residents, professor and peers. So, I thought that I needed to continue to learn English, a useful skill in the future.” Participant 1, however, suggested that she felt the pressure from her peers because her friends were all fluent in speaking English, and this pressure push her to learn English.

To conclude, The English learning motivation in those participants’ home countries can be summarized as followed: Participants 1, 2, 4, and 6 learned English to pass tests because English is a mandatory subject in their curriculum; Participant 3 and 5 learned English because the trend that English has been a universal language in the world is unstoppable, and it is a useful language in hunting a job. However, communicative

purpose was the major reason for those participants to learn English in Canada because not only in the daily life did they need to interact with local people, but also in the workplace.

**English learning methods.** All participants described a similar situation of learning English in their home countries when they were asked the question ‘What strategies do you use to learn English before you take this program.’ They all had experience of learning English by text memorization. Participant 4 stated that “most of the time, we just tried to memorize the vocabulary, but for myself I really did not like this method.” Although all participants used to be pushed to recite words passively, yet participant 2 found an innovative method. He used the prefix and suffix to learn English words, and he even bought some books which were classified into different catalogues to help him to learn the words with similar meanings together.

There was another finding showing that all participants laid emphasis on the importance of language environment in learning a foreign language. They all believed if they were immersed in English language environment, they can learn English more easily as participant 1 stated:

In China, most Chinese students [have] learnt English for more than 10 years but some students cannot communicate with people fluently [in English]. I thought if I was immersed in the English-speaking environment, I would have more opportunity to communicate with local people [and] I can have more opportunities to practice my English.

When referred to the questions ‘how do you learn English in Canada?’, participant 1 thought taking courses in university was her efficient learning method

because taking courses can provide opportunities for her to communicate with her classmates and professor, contributing to improvement of her communicative skills. Participant 1 and 6 leveraged online resources to learn English. Participant 6 shared a creative method on learning English as she stated:

I watched some English TV series which were my favorite. I paused the video when I cannot understand or when I thought the expression of this sentence was good. Then, I took my time to situate myself and thought the question like if I were there at that moment, what would I say? Through the comparison between my version and the original version, I could learn much more than I just watched the video quickly. I could also learn some slangs and good expressions. That is effective for me to improve my English oral speaking.

Participant 2, 3, and 4 improved their English by communicating with local people through different ways. They would hang out with their domestic friends or they would communicate through emails.

In conclusion, leveraging the situational context of English-speaking environment is the common methods of learning English in Canada. Rich online resources, and educational resources are their methods on learning English.

**Connections of arts and English learning.** In response to the following question, ‘Based on your understanding, what effects on integrating arts into English learning?’, four of the participants suggested that arts have positive impacts on English learning. Participant 1 argued that arts can be refreshment in learning English as she said that “we were motivated in many interesting ways by arts. When we felt tired in speaking in English or when we have no ideas about writing in English, arts can refresh us.”



Participant 3 thought that arts can be a facilitator and guider in learning English because arts can help her to find new interests. In addition, participant 5 mentioned that arts can be a stimulus to promote him to think broadly, which can stimulate him to share his ideas with others.

In summary, arts in the learning English process can be a guider, refresher, stimulus and facilitator to make the learning process more interesting; make students be more willing to express EFL learners themselves, and make them open their mind. However, learning English through the arts may not be a good choice for the students who learned English for obtaining high marks in English exams.

**Comments and suggestions on English through the arts.** In responding to the following question, ‘Can you provide some comments and suggestions on English through the Arts?’, all participants gave positive comments. Participant 1, 2, 4, and 5 believed that the program English Through the Arts could provide them with more opportunities to practice her speaking ability. As participant 4 stated:

These sessions gave me opportunities to speak English, and to improve my English. Art was good, and it helped me to explain a lot of things. I was more willing to share my stories in English with others if I did some artistic activities.

Participant 2 argued that sessions in English through the Arts can provide him opportunities to make some friends. Participant 4 argued that learning English through the arts can make her relaxed, and at the same time give her a chance to practice her English. Participant 6 opined that “these art activities gave me learning autonomy and some space to be creative. When things became creative, they can arise my interests and motivation to explore.”

In summary, the informants thought that learning English through the arts can provide more opportunities for them to practice their speaking ability, and create a relaxed environment to learn English. It can also allow students to use their imagination to learn English and give students more self-learning opportunities.

Several participants provided suggestions for improving the course. Participant 1 suggested that more field trips to museum or art gallery can make these sessions more interesting. Participant 4 argued that it was beneficial for students to have their own exhibitions on the campus. Participant 3 hoped that more students from different countries can join with them because they had more opportunities to learn other countries' cultures. Participant 2 thought that more attention should be paid to the students who were shy and not confident to express themselves.

In summary, those suggestions can be classified into the following parts: more 'real world' experiences (e.g., field trips, student exhibitions), more opportunities to interact with people from different cultures, and more consideration for different student learning styles.

### **Artifacts Elicitation Results**

The table 2 below shows the activities in sessions. Those activities were designed to help students to learn how to decode the visual information; how to write in a logical way; how to narrate a story with the aid of pictures; and how to cultivate their interests in arts and English. Each activity provided students with a different way to learn English through the arts.

Table 2: Sessions Activities.

Session topic	Session activities
visual arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decode the visual information from a picture</li> <li>• Construct a story based on decoded information</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
visual arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write down favourite poems</li> <li>• Introduce the main ideas behind the poems</li> <li>• Draw a picture to illustrate the meaning</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
poem appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of bio-poems</li> <li>• Write students' own poems</li> <li>• Illustration</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
poem appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of shape poems</li> <li>• Write students' own shape poems</li> <li>• Illustration</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music warm up</li> <li>• Making a poster card</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
photography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of knowledge of photography</li> <li>• Go out to collect ideas and take photos</li> <li>• Making poster together</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
story-telling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music warm up</li> <li>• Songs appreciation---local songs</li> <li>• Stories behind the lyrics</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video clips appreciation</li> <li>• Construct a story</li> <li>• Rehearsal</li> <li>• Show time</li> </ul>
music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music warm up</li> <li>• Understanding the lyrics</li> <li>• Lyric rewrite</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>

**Participant 1 experience.** She decided to share the poetry writing activity (figure 1 and 2) with the researcher. It was an activity designed for helping students to use their imagination to write their own poems based on some certain topics provided by the instructor. She stated:

Through this activity, we could know some information and knowledge about poems. Poems were not just like the way we normally read with very strict format. They could have many other shapes. In this session, different formats will be provided and we can write poems according to those formats. I thought that it would be easy for us. It is not very difficult because it only needed us to write some single words. But those words should connect with each other logically and the shapes were like a diamond and a house.

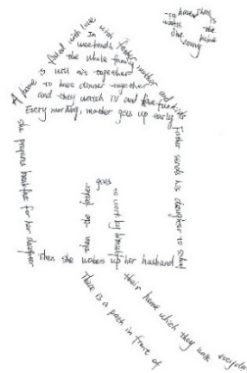


Figure 1

Apple  
 Red, sweet  
 biting, eating, drinking  
 health, Juice, fruit, freshness  
 picking, buying, planting  
 Yummy, delicious  
 Banana

Figure 2

She suggested that the activity helped her to learn how to think in a logic way and how to use some certain words to describe a topic. She stated that: “I thought I could learn to think something by myself in a logic way because when I created my poem, I needed to obey the rules of the shape and wrote a sentence related to the shapes.”

She also shared another artifact (figure 3) with me. This activity required students to “make a poster to the aliens telling them what you want to share with them.”

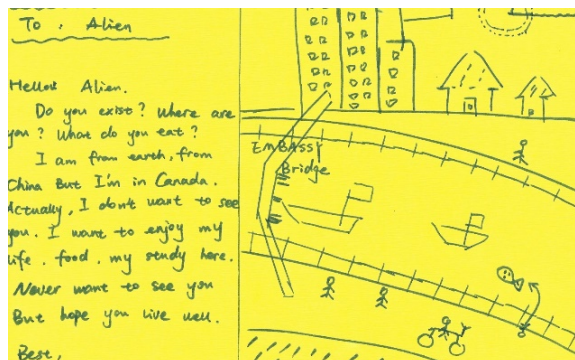


Figure 3

She believed that drawings can boost students’ learning interests and motivate students:

This was a poster card I made for aliens. Also, I wrote some sentences for aliens saying that I never wanted to see them and hoped they could live happily in their own places because I did not want to see the war in the world and I liked peace. Also, I drew a picture on the right side. This was about Detroit River and this side was Windsor and the other side was Detroit. This was the bridge between Windsor and Detroit. I told the aliens this the place where I lived now and I was very happy here. This activity practiced my imagination, writing skills and our drawing skills so I thought that was a good way to integrate art and English together.

**Participant 2 experience.** Participant 2 chose to share his experience in the photography session with me. In that session, students were required to go outside to take pictures and found interesting things, and came back to make it a poster. Participant 2 decided to go to the riverside which was the border of Canada and the United States. He was jogging along the riverside. While he was jogging, he saw the scene beside the riverside and took a picture of a house which reminded him of his family in China. Homesickness came over to him. When he came back, he worked with other classmates to finish a poster. He decided to pick up a song called “Vincent” to share with us. During the interview, he said:

At the beginning of the class, we learnt some basic knowledge about photography. Then, we went outside the classroom to do observation about the wild nature. I went along the riverside and I took some pictures. When we came back to the classroom, I draw some pictures and shared a Vincent song lyrics.

He also revealed that “during my jogging, the street scenery just reminded me of the song and my own experience.” After taking the pictures, he made a flyer with the pictures he took (figure 4).

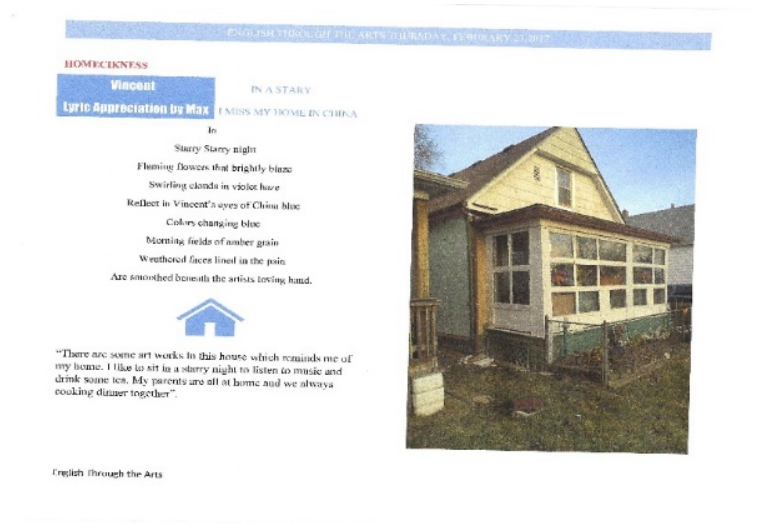


Figure 4

**Participant 3 experience.** One activity encouraged students to introduce their own culture to their classmates through music. During artifacts elicitation, she explained the meaning and significance (figure 5):

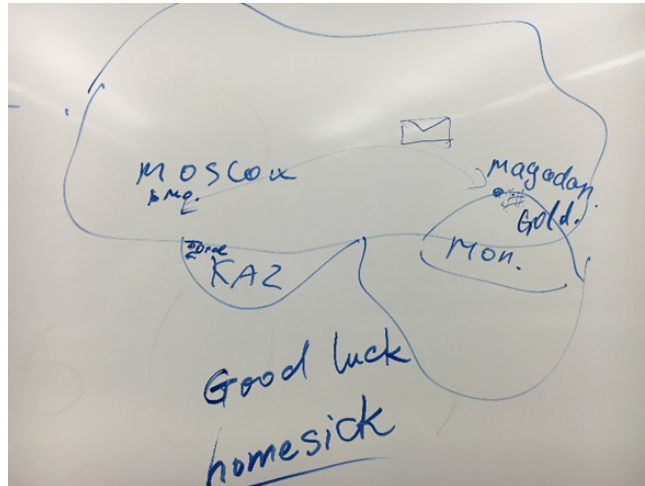


Figure 5

This song expressed good luck to themselves and the homesickness to their family members. There were two places in Russia: Moscow and Magadan. Magadan was a port town and it was famous for its golden in Natalka. This place was near to Mongolia and China. Those two places had a battle but Moscow has failed. Therefore, people who lived in Moscow had been sent to the Magadan. They were put into the prison. They have been the slaves and the cheap labor to dig out the golden for the boss, which was the only thing they were going to do at that moment. They would receive the letters from their family from Moscow and this song was about their homesickness.

She thought that this activity can provide a good opportunity for students who were shy to use English because it ‘forced’ them to use English. If they presented a song which was not in English, no one could understand the meaning. Therefore, they had to explain to students in English. Participant 3 said “I have to explain in English because no one can understand the language.”



The next activity that she shared with me was the bio-poem (figure 6). This activity allowed students to explore themselves with some phrases and adjectives, and students could illustrate it as well, using graphics.

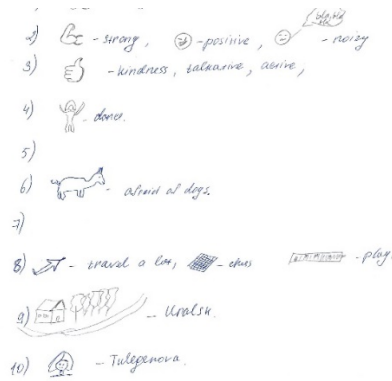


Figure 6

She stated that “as to bio-poem, you could go through your mind asking yourself those questions: who are you? And what do you want to do? This activity was just like a little brain storm and helped me to learn how to describe.”

In the photography session, like I have mentioned above, she decided to interview the boss of a bubble tea restaurant, and after that she came back and finished designing a poster.

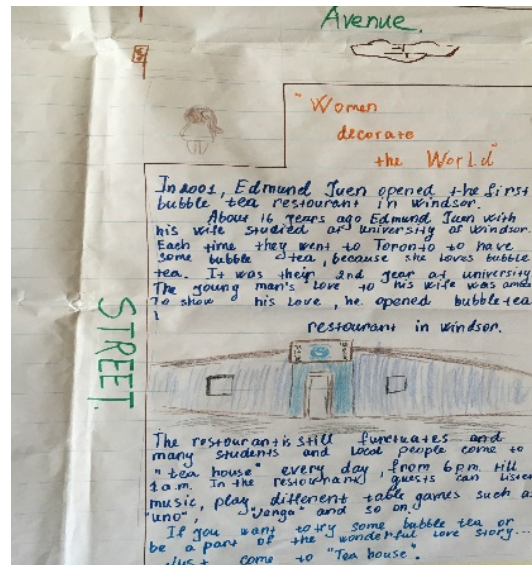


Figure 7

Through this activity, participant 3 can improve her communicative skill as she said that “it improved my English thinking and when I was taking interview, [and] it also improved my communicative skills.”

**Participant 4 experience.** Each student was required to write down a sentence to make up a story, and draw a picture to depict the story (figure 8). The fundamental idea of this activity was to combine drawings with story-telling to encourage students to express their own thoughts in English.



Figure 8

There are some advantages of this activity as she said:

This can help us to practice the writing sentence by sentence. We tried to make the story and we needed to make the story logical. It gave us more space to imagine what the story would happen. You did not know how other people write. You needed to think what he or she wrote and how to make it become a story.

She also mentioned the activity of graphic poem. It was an activity that gave students freedom to create a poem and students needed to follow the shapes that they drew:

I really liked that the topic about poem because sometimes when you tried to read the poem, you can try to describe your own feelings about the poem. You can shape your own ideas. Sometimes you can try to image the unreal thing and add it to your poem. Although some words were not logical in our daily life but those words are rational in the poems. When I draw the flower, I tried to use the poem I wrote and use the shape that I draw as a line. I was thinking that this flower was

about the attitudes on life. Something about death. While I was writing it, I was interested in drawing it as a flower.



Figure 9

Participant 4 also mentioned that this activity can practice students' imagination which Chinese students were short of. She thought that this activity allowed her to be a reader to decode the meaning of this poem based on her own understating. Next, she has been the writer and she needed to use her imagination to communicate with her audiences. This shift of role made her creative and innovative. She said that “when I read a poem, I not only tried to understand the literal meaning of the poem but to add my own feelings about the poem.” Next, she mentioned that drawings can aid her to be confident when she presented in front of the whole class as she stated:

Using the picture to present was the best way and sometimes you can use the cartoons to show. It can let other people know the stories easily. They can know more the details of the stories. When I drew the picture, I was able to remember the details of the story easily than I just read that story.

In summary, she believed that when people tried to draw something and if the drawings can combine with the words, it will be easier for people to understand. As the presenter, it was also easy to aid her to present in a logical and creative way.

**Participant 5 experience.** In the photography session which I introduced before, participant 5 narrated a story to me. When he was driving in the desert in Saudi Arabia, his car's condition was not good and it almost broken down. He needed help but he was in the desert. He waited for a long time and finally he met a person who drove a car passing through him but that guy ignored him. He was angry and thought that helping each other is very important. That was why he took a picture like the followed:

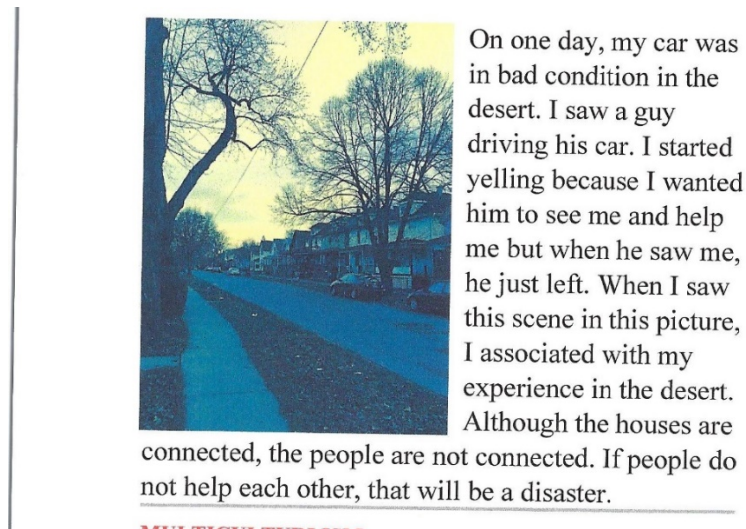


Figure 10

He believed that taking the pictures which were related to his life provoked his emotions; and that experience made him more willing to share his stories with others in English. He said:

I took a picture of four houses. If someone looked at it, what were they going to think about that? They may say nothing, just houses. But for me, I would connect

with something that happened to me in the past. The houses in the picture were connected with each other; but the people living in the house may not connect with each other. It was really nice because it helped students to present the photos. It helped students to learn how to do the presentation too because there were lots of students do not know how to do the presentation.

**Participant 6 experience.** Participant 6 was excited about the activity of self-identification although she thought it was challenging for her. This activity was designed to help students to better understanding themselves. Students were required to cut a paper in a shape of their hands, and find 5 or more words to describe themselves. She said as followed:

In this session, the teacher asked us to cut a paper, a hand-shape paper and then asked us to use five words to describe myself. Then, I needed to use these five words to describe myself. I thought this activity was a little bit challenging for me because it forced me to explore myself.

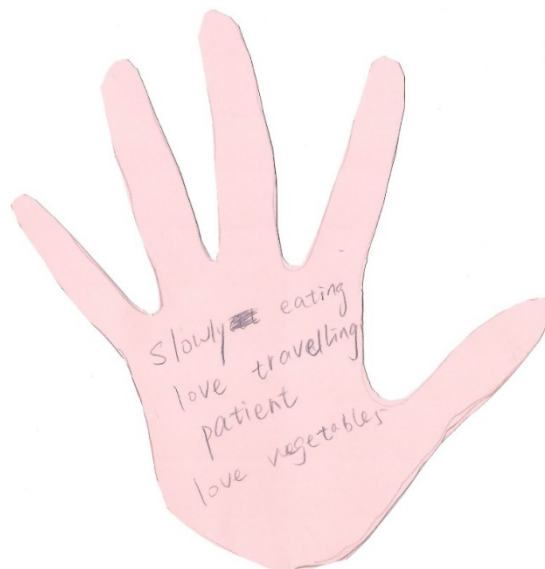


Figure 11

The next artifact she chose to share with the researcher was her drawings which illustrated her hometown (figure 12). Students were required to draw their hometown and introduced their hometown with their drawings. She believed that drawings can help her to open her mind and dig out much more thoughts than the written words. Also, she argued that drawings can also assist her in presenting her results to her classmates. In the drawing session, she drew a picture about her hometown and presented in front of the classroom.

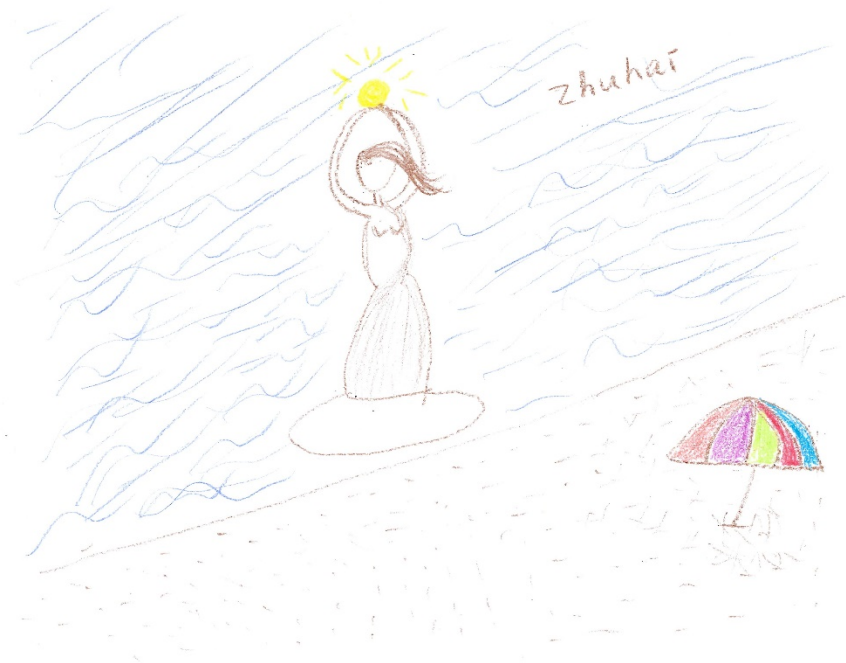


Figure 12

During the process of presentation, she believed that the advantage of the function of the language accentuated. Students in the process can share their stories with each other and if they have some questions, they can raise their hands to ask the question. She stated that:

It was happy for me to share my stories with others and listen to other students' stories. Through this process, we can talk with each other. The language becomes very functional in this process I think. We have to communicate with others and that gave learning English a purpose, a very practical purpose.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

This study was conducted through various methods. Research data was collected during the semi-structured interview from the participants who had attended the English Through the Arts sessions, concentrating on their perceptions and experience of learning English through the arts. In addition, the artifacts elicitation was incorporated into the semi-structure interview, and some visual materials were also collected. What is more, I, as a facilitator in those sessions, had taken field notes based on his observation. Therefore, rich data was derived from the semi-structured interview, artifact elicitation and observation. This study aims to explore what happens when arts activities integrated into EFL learners' English learning process, and to gain some insight into how students perceived the effect or influence of the arts influence on their English learning.

This qualitative case study research was guided by the following two research questions:

1. How does art integration influence EFL learners' English learning?
2. What are EFL learners' experiences of integrating arts into their English learning processes?

After presenting and sharing the results of the research, some key discussions, critical reflection and implications for future research will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **The Function of Arts**

According to the respondents, arts can be a stimulus, refresher, guider and facilitator. They believed that learning English through the arts can boost their interests

and motivate them to self-learning. These results are consistent with previous research. In addition, two of the participants believed that arts made the learning environment relaxed, as a result they are more willing to share their ideas with their classmates. Those opinions also confirm previous research.

**Arts can be a stimulus.** Participant 5 stated that arts can be a stimulus which can promote language learners to think broadly and open their minds. Arts serve as a stimulus can stimulate language learners to share their ideas with others when their minds have been activated. Arts can increase language learners' comprehension and can enhance their motivation for learning languages and engagement in the class. This confirms research by Hoyt (1992) and by Gullatt (2008).

**Arts can be a refresher.** Participant 1 mentioned that arts can be a refresher. For example, when language learners' ideas and thoughts were stuck because of different reasons like tiredness and confidence, arts can help them to refresh the ideas making the thinking process be smooth.

**Arts can be a guider and a facilitator.** Participant 3 and 6 shared a common idea that arts in learning language can be regarded as a guide and a facilitator. The role of a guider and a facilitator here was referred to motivating language learners to learn. Arts can guide them to find new interests and explore innovative ideas and those innovative ideas and new interests will facilitate their language learning.

**Arts can be cohesion.** Based on the observational data, the arts can also enhance the relationship among students and the relationship between instructor and students. The

maintenance of this good relationship can create amicable and relaxed learning environment which can also influence students learning achievements.

In summary, arts serve as a stimulus which can boost language learners' engagement and involvement in the class; then, language learners will be more interested in some of the ideas; those new interests guide and encourage to explore different new ideas but during this process, language learners may be lose and stuck in tons of materials. At that moments, arts can also be a refresher to make language learners refilled and revitalized which will encourage them to find much more new ideas; those new ideas can also facilitate language learning. In addition, arts can also enhance the relationship between students and instructor.

### **Engagement in Learning English through the Arts.**

According to the data through semi-structure interview, participant observation and artifacts elicitation, participants' engagement in the sessions of learning English through the arts is high. With analysis of participants' sayings, accounts and the subsequent sayings with their artifacts, it is self-evident to conclude that their engagement and participation of these activities are high.

### **Significance**

This case study investigated how arts influence EFL learners English learning and explored their experiences in the program "English through the arts." Based on the findings, I can conclude significance from the perspectives of pedagogy.

In terms of the pedagogical implication, arts can make positive impacts on EFL learners' learning process. Therefore, as a language instructor, inclusion of arts in their

teaching process can be an effective method to motivate EFL learners to practice English. In addition, a relaxed learning environment can also make students feel less stressed and anxious, thus being confident to speak English. Therefore, the instructor can add some artistic activities to make students more confident to speak English.

My research was not just focused on one type of activity and my participants were exposed to a variety of different types of activities, which allowed me to gather information about how they experienced different arts, and which of the activities or arts produced what effects on their learning. This is what makes my research different and significant.

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative case study has explored how does the arts influence EFL learners' learning process and what EFL learners' experiences when they learn English through the arts. Guided by the research questions, I found that arts can be a stimulus, refresher, facilitator and guider. Arts can be a facilitator and guider to help language learners make understanding process easy and visual. Arts can stimulate them to learn creatively and think broadly and they are more willing to express their ideas. In addition, arts can also be a refresher making the learning environment relaxed, thus improving learners' learning satisfaction. Moreover, arts can also establish the rapport among students even between instructor and students, which can enhance students' attainment of learning. Through the multiple sources of data, EFL learners in the program 'English through the arts' showed their high engagement, and communicated that they are in favor of the practice of integrating the arts into the English language learning.

Some suggestions for the future research can also be mentioned based on findings and my experiences of conducting this research. The findings of this study indicate how arts influence EFL learners' English learning and what their experiences are in learning English through the arts. During the process of artifact elicitation and semi-structure interview, I found that students' motivation of learning English has been changed compared with their learning motivation in their home country. Therefore, it will be interesting to further explore the research question: How does the arts influence EFL learners' learning motivation? In addition, this study just demonstrate arts can have positive impacts on EFL learners' learning but it does not guide how to design and include artistic activities into language teaching; therefore, exploring the question like 'How to design some lectures regarding English learning and arts learning' can give language instructors more pedagogical methods as to the inclusion of artistic activities into teaching process. Furthermore, the subject of this research is EFL learners and this research does not cover what the instructors' perceptions of learning English through the arts are, which can be of great significance because learning cannot be separate learners and instructors. Next, during the participant observation, I found that in some situations, there exists the gender difference between EFL female and male learners in learning English through the arts. Therefore, some research can be conducted regarding this topic.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

#### **General Questions**

1. Which country are you from?
2. Why do you come to Canada to study?
3. What is your future plans?
4. What is your motivation of learning English?
5. Do you have any experiences in learning arts?
6. Why do you take this English through the arts program?
7. What strategies do you use to learn English before you take this program?
8. Do you have the experience of learning English through the arts? Can you give me some examples?

#### **Artefacts Elicitation**

1. Can you talk about those artefacts?
2. How do you like this piece of art work?
3. Can you tell me the connections between learning English and those artefacts?

#### **Probe Questions**

1. How do you like this program?
2. What are your initial expectations of taking this program?
3. To what extend does this program serve your expectations?
4. Which activity do you like most/ least? Why?
5. Why do you take part in my research?

6. After this program, to what extent does this program influence your English learning?
7. Based on your understanding, what effects on integrating arts into English learning?

**Suggestions**

1. Can you provide some suggestions to English learning?
2. Can you provide some suggestions to this program?
3. Can you provide some suggestions to better integrate the arts into English learning?

## Appendix B: English Through the Arts: Session Outline

Week	Day	Session title	Language objectives
Week 1	Tuesday	Sound Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell a story</li> <li>• Predict/ Describe situations</li> <li>• Participate in discussions</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Drama--- Role Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in dramatization and discuss performance</li> </ul>
Week 2	Tuesday	Paint by Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use confidence to give a mini presentation</li> <li>• Interpret paintings</li> <li>• Discuss and compare ideas</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Music video analysis and critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss ideas, performers attitudes and emotions conveyed</li> </ul>
Week 3	Tuesday	Poem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand main ideas and details</li> <li>• Brainstorm ideas</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Music---Lyric Rewrite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate ideas effectively</li> <li>• Participate in discussions</li> </ul>
Week 4	Tuesday	Drama--- Role Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate and persuasively express ideas</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Cartoon Clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss changes in cartoon movies</li> <li>• Explore meanings and social representations</li> </ul>
Week 5	Tuesday	Photography-- -Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret meanings</li> <li>• Write descriptions</li> <li>• Deliver a mini presentation</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Poem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand main ideas and details</li> <li>• Brainstorm ideas</li> </ul>
Week 6	Tuesday	Music---Lyric Rewrite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express ideas through creative lyrics</li> <li>• Discuss and compare ideas</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Abstract Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze and discuss famous art pieces</li> <li>• Explore art from around the world</li> </ul>

Week 7	Tuesday	Newspaper Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use words to describe a theme and create a piece of art</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Architecture as a form of Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and discuss architectures</li> <li>• Develop and support opinions</li> </ul>
Week 8	Tuesday	Drama--- Mime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facial expressions to convey appropriate emotion and meaning in dramatization</li> <li>• Discuss strengths and challenges of nonverbal communication</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Movie Clip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret meanings</li> <li>• Deliver a mini presentation</li> </ul>
Week 9	Tuesday	Music Video Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present a critique</li> <li>• Explain and support ideas</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Photography-- -storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write descriptions</li> <li>• Interpret meanings</li> <li>• Deliver a mini presentation</li> </ul>
Week 10	Tuesday	Paint by Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a mini presentation</li> <li>• Discuss and compare ideas</li> </ul>
	Thursday	Drama--- Role Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice responding to questions for different academic and professional scenarios</li> </ul>

Appendix C: Poster



**TITLE: INTEGRATING THE ARTS INTO ENGLISH  
LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF EFL LEARNERS  
IN A CANADIAN UNIVERSITY**

**ARE U IN THE "ENGLISH  
THROUGH ARTS" PROGRAM?**

**I would like to talk to you about  
your experience of learning  
English through the Arts.**

**If you are interested in this  
study, email me at  
[chi3@uwindsor.ca](mailto:chi3@uwindsor.ca)**

**This research has been cleared by the  
University of Windsor Research Ethics  
Board.**

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