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Using Drawing to Learn about Figurative Language among Tertiary EFL English Literature Students

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Abstract

Visual art has gained popularity in education and highlighted remarkable results in terms of improving the learning experience. This has triggered a response to investigate how visual art, particularly drawing, can be applied in an educational setting. Nevertheless, there is still a missing link on how drawing functions as a tool for tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) English Literature students to learn about, specifically, figurative language. This paper employs an action research method to investigate how drawing using soft pastels is used to scaffold learning about figurative language at the same time, study its benefits. Using selected literary texts involving mainly eleven tertiary EFL English Literature students, this action research qualitative study incorporates Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning in three repeated cycles. This investigation may be construed as a means to transition from conventional pedagogical methodologies into contemporary paradigms, functioning as a facilitative instrument for the amalgamation of knowledge about learning literature while enhancing confidence, higher-order cognitive skills, and expressive capabilities. It allows educators to adapt their approaches, stimulating increased reflection and participation. The findings delineate two primary strategies employed in elucidating the efficacy of incorporating drawing as a

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pedagogical tool for English Literature students, i.e., mining to trigger thoughts and engaging with senses to assist EFL students in learning about figurative language. It can be asserted that integrating drawing empowers individuals to formulate idiosyncratic responses by exploring concepts, articulating emotions, validating responses, and discerning the profound dimensions of literary texts.

Keywords: English Literature, figurative language, learning literature, literature learning strategies, visual art integration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is part of the learning experience of a language student. It has always been related the contemporaries of a targeted author who wrote a text for an audience, and thus the role of the reader is to read the sketches in the collection of the author's works. However, Benfares (2023) raises the concern that tertiary EFL literature learners face problems in learning about literature. Firstly, they are mainly embarrassed to admit that they do not understand the text, and secondly, they lack time to read. Before this study was conducted, the researchers conducted a pilot study involving the participants within the context of this study to confirm this phenomenon. Based on the results, tertiary EFL learners in this pilot study face challenges in learning about literature due to the lack of English proficiency level, cultural barriers, and reading engagement problems. To extrapolate the problem, tertiary EFL English Literature learners also had low motivation, lack of confidence, lack of prior knowledge (Tayib & Hassan, 2020). Although some methods and approaches can be used to teach literature, such as Carter and Long's (1991) language model, cultural model, and personal growth model that have been practiced by educators, Salim (2023) argues that literature teaching should be diverse and that educators should intertwine these models in their practices. Despite the efforts, tertiary EFL learners still memorise literary devices, literary elements as well as "correct" answers. The monotonous self-study, copying of "right" answers online, inability to interpret texts, articulate or make connections, and restricted discussion-based activities, show that there is a need for a shift in learning about literature.

In light of this, Becker (2020) identifies that integrating visual art, specifically drawing, can serve as an alternate method in teaching and learning literature where learners will be able to interact, make sense and establish understanding and learning through an art form, serving as an alternative to communicating ideas and feelings, whilst making interdisciplinary connections. This simply coincides with how EFL learners are ready to learn independently, relying on their experiences and exploring various learning methods. Becker (2020) further fortifies the idea that integrating visual arts contributes to diverse social and academic outcomes. Visual arts have the potential to foster a more inclusive learning environment, surpassing traditional academic settings that primarily rely on texts and exams. This approach not only reduces academic performance gaps but also facilitates meaningful conversations between learners and educators. As such, Leavy (2017) suggests that integrating visual art does not demand expertise from educators and researchers in the arts; instead, it encourages flexibility, openness, reflection, provocation, and participation, which allows for multiple interpretations and promotes dialogue. Studies about how visual

art, in this case drawing, still remains at a novice stage in English Literature learning. Studies conducted by Catterall et al. (1999), Zakaria (2005), Catterall and Peppler (2007), Chi (2017), Becker (2020), Moerman (2020), and Cabrera (2022) and just to name a few, have highlighted the possibilities of visual art to increase student motivation, enhance learning experience and sense of anticipation, and lowering anxiety. These studies leaned towards the psychological benefits of using visual art. Whereas other studies, such as those conducted by Jäntti (2019) and Zhang (2022), claimed that there is a lack of experience in integrating visual art into lessons, resulting in educators often feeling inadequate to incorporate and use visual art in their teaching practice. Therefore, the potential of using visual art, specifically drawing, to scaffold learning is underestimated.

Hence, the primary aim of this study is to investigate the techniques that educators such as teachers and lecturers can employ to incorporate visual art, particularly drawing, into their instructional approaches. Simultaneously, the study seeks to comprehend the potential benefits for English Literature students when utilising this approach to delve into the nuances of literature, particularly figurative languages. For this purpose, the study is guided by two specific research questions:

1. What are the strategies of integrating drawing to assist English Literature students in comprehending figurative language?
2. How effective is drawing in facilitating English Literature students' understanding of figurative language?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Figurative language is used by authors to direct readers to understand something under its relation to another. Figurative language serves to create depth and complexity in literary works and to exert impact on their audiences through names, objects, event, and actions to represent something concrete associated with a symbol. Xiao (2016) argues that EFL students face difficulties in learning figurative language such as metaphors, personification and symbolism.

In terms of the teaching and learning of English Literature, Febriani et al. (2022) argue that although there are a variety of teaching approaches available such as the *language-based approach*, *reader-response approach* and *philosophical approach* as proposed by Carter and Long (1991) findings have suggested that educators should adopt a combination of either two or more of the approaches to facilitate critical thinking, allow students to create awareness about literary texts as well as to facilitate a personal response and experience about the text. More recently, Salim (2023) highlights the importance of allowing a combination and intertwining of these three approaches to avoid confining the teaching and learning of literature to one single approach. This, in return, will create a more versatile experience for educators to teach and for learners to learn. Whether it is to create a cultural understanding, gather insight about the text or enhance the learning experience of an EFL English Literature student, the researchers argue that it is important to first create a methodology in dealing with literary texts, to train students to approach the literary texts effectively and in this case, figurative language.

2.1 Learning through Art Integration

Mayer (2020) highlights that learners get greater benefits from a combination of pictures and words rather than textual information alone. Integrating drawing in the teaching and learning of literature facilitates a cognitive process wherein words are translated into learners' working memory, subsequently organised into a verbal model, and images are fashioned into a pictorial model. This process generates representations fused with existing knowledge, contributing to the construction of long-term knowledge. The incorporation of visual art leads to the formation of mental representations from words and images, organising information and transferring knowledge to learners.

Educators, upon encountering the concept of incorporating visual arts into literature instruction, naturally contemplate its purpose. The overarching question arises: What is the ultimate objective? Is it geared towards enhancing learners' comprehension of the text or fostering their ability to express emotions and reactions to literary works? The reciprocal relationship between responding to literature through visual arts encompasses both aspects. However, when seamlessly interwoven, leveraging visual arts as a pedagogical tool for literature instruction and implementing associated strategies can open avenues for enhancing argumentative thinking and problem-solving skills. This optimisation of cognitive processes, reduction of cognitive load, and stimulation of imagination ultimately contribute to knowledge creation (Schraw & Richmond, 2022).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of encouraging routines, creating a positive classroom culture via discussions, having clear expectations and focusing on learner-oriented tasks during interventions (Jäntti, 2019; Lok, 2014; Rosario-Regan, 2018). Even so, Jäntti (2019) reports that educators are still unsure about the guidelines on how visual art can be integrated into a classroom to improve learning. The researchers argue that in order for a successful integration to take place in an EFL setting, the focus should not be on the product or result of the integration, but rather on a process-driven experience, which will be highlighted in the following sections of this literature review.

2.2 Creating Interactions with the Text

The researchers argue that teachers must consider what learners must do to respond to the text. Within the context of literature, it is significant to emphasise rather than asking the learners to visualise characters, or in this case, the figurative language in the text as according to how the original author intends it, the learners must be able to articulate their personal attitudes and feelings as they read through the text and create their own representations of figurative language. These representations will then be able to be translated into an understanding of the overall interpretation of the text.

In light of this manner of how drawing is used, van Duinen and Mawdsley Sherwood (2019) suggest that meaning is also attributed to how the learner creates the artwork through his or her personal connections with the text. In addition, Poldrack et al. (1998) also assert that including visuals in learning increases brain activity, causing the brain to constantly shift, organise, and categorise data to enhance understanding and increase memory. Thus, integrating drawing into the teaching and learning of literature will create a space for students to personally encounter the text, engage with

their cognitive responses, and express their connections with the text through a specific method: drawing. Finally, Leavy (2017) states integrating the arts provokes, triggers and articulates nonverbal as well as preverbal knowledge. Thus, the researchers suggest that a learner's experience in a classroom may potentially become context-specific when a drawing is being integrated. Even though it is challenging to quantify the impact of integrating drawing due to the individualistic nature of art, when researchers delve into the local context, data will reveal how drawing can assist EFL English Literature students in learning figurative language.

2.3 Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

According to Mayer (2005), the *Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning* (CTML) simply builds its basis on the claim that integrating words and pictures, rather than words alone, will increase learners' construction of coherent mental representations by forming meaningful connections between words and pictures. In the first theoretical assumption, known as the dual channel assumption, learners can simultaneously engage with their verbal and visual channels in their working memory to increase their learning. The limited capacity assumption, on the other hand, suggests that there is a restricted amount of information that a learner can handle one at a time, while the active processing assumption explains that learners create relevant mental representations of the materials through active engagement with the information provided (Mayer, 2020). In CTML, learners pursue meaningful connections between words and pictures, and that the target of learning is to encourage learners to "construct clear and logical mental representations from the given content" (Sorden, 2013). Learners will actively select knowledge processed in their working memory, organising the material into coherent structures and integrate the new knowledge with prior knowledge stored in the long-term memory, which in return facilitates new information processing (Mayer, 2020). Within this context in the last couple of years, Chau et al. (2019) introduced "physical multimedia systems" as an addition to CTML where learning via touch is emphasised to extend learner's sensory channels, emphasising how learners interact and manipulate physical objects when learning to increase learning experience and decrease learner alienation towards a particular subject. According to Chau et al. (2019), an additional sensory channel that deals with the sense of touch (tactile) will navigate the learning experience towards engagement with audio, images and physical artefacts. Therefore, aligning with CTML and its assumptions, a conceptual framework (Figure 1) was used to ground this study, which will be explained in the next section.

2.4 Designing and Facilitating the Intervention

The researchers believe that integrating drawing is a useful exercise to increase learning opportunities about figurative language among EFL learners. Therefore, an intervention is required to provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their ability to process mental representations, transferring them into visuals that will promote reflection, knowledge sharing and critical thinking about literary works. Therefore, incorporating the elements and principles of visual art mainly line, shape, space, value, colour, emphasis, balance, unity, contrast, movement, pattern, and scale (Hameed, 2022) was necessary to guide the artmaking in the intervention. The use of

the elements and principles of art will allow learners to be able to have a basic foundation on how to start drawing. Based on the CTML theory that supports the notion that verbal and visual channels will support learning (Mayer, 2020), this study employs Yenawine's (2014) *Visual Thinking Strategies* (VTS) to explore and validate the discoveries made by the learners later during the intervention process. Yenawine's VTS incorporates elements such as considering the targeted group, the main subject, silently looking at pictures, asking good questions, encouraging facilitation, engaging in paraphrasing, linking, and providing relevant conclusions.

Finally, to confirm the effectiveness of integrating visual art, the researchers explored Showalter's (2003) concepts that involve students being able to develop skills to explain the meanings of texts, seek knowledge, cultural assumptions, think creatively, provide judgements and close reading of the text as the learning criteria of learning about figurative language. These concepts were then related to the data gathered and later theorised. Figure 1 reflects the intervention process:

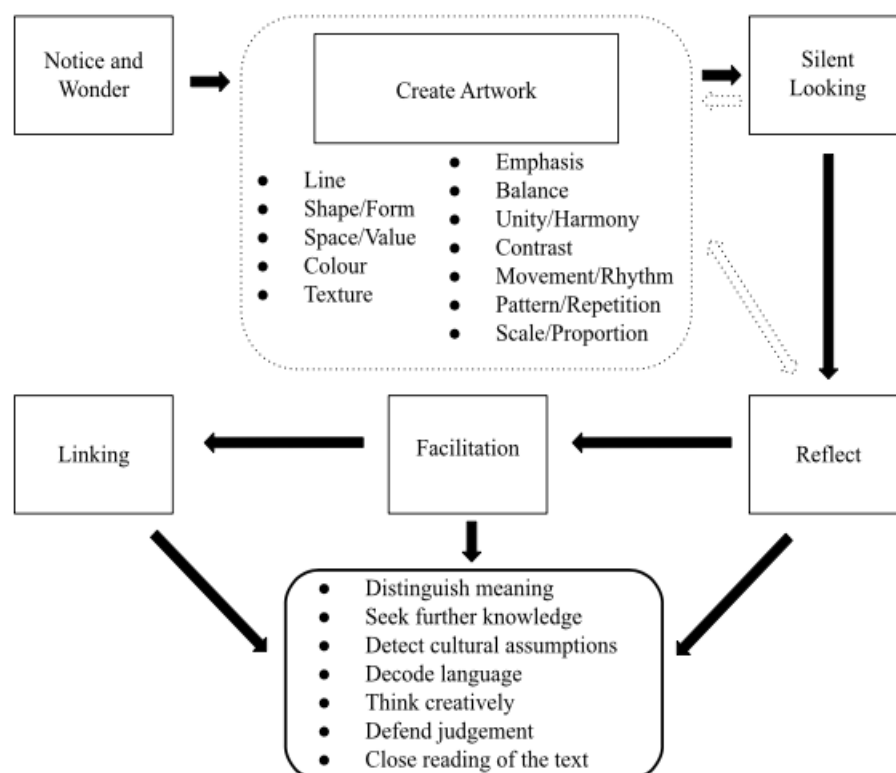


Figure 1. Visual art (drawing) integration framework illustrated in figure format to indicate how Showalter (2003), Yenawine (2014), and Hameed's (2022) concepts come together to guide the drawing interventions.

3. METHODS

This qualitative research falls within the frames of action research (AR) methodology interpreted by Mertler (2016). Figure 2 shows the action research process undertaken in this study. It is crucial to highlight that AR is not a traditionally linear process but has been regarded historically as cyclical in nature (Mertler, 2016). The

researchers' concern in conducting this research is to seek knowledge of how drawing can be used as a tool to construct EFL English Literature students' understanding of figurative language and, at the same time, involve them in developing and making changes to their learning. This study only uses selected literary texts, including three short stories and three poems: *Hills Like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemingway, *The Sick Rose* by William Blake, *Happy Endings* by Margaret Atwood, *I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud* by William Wordsworth, *The Diamond Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant, and *The Poison Tree* by William Blake. These texts were selected because the participants were familiar with the authors as these individual authors have been covered in their course. This is crucial as Alemi (2011) and Bibby (2014) highlight that text familiarity and length are part of the criteria for selecting literary texts for the EFL context.

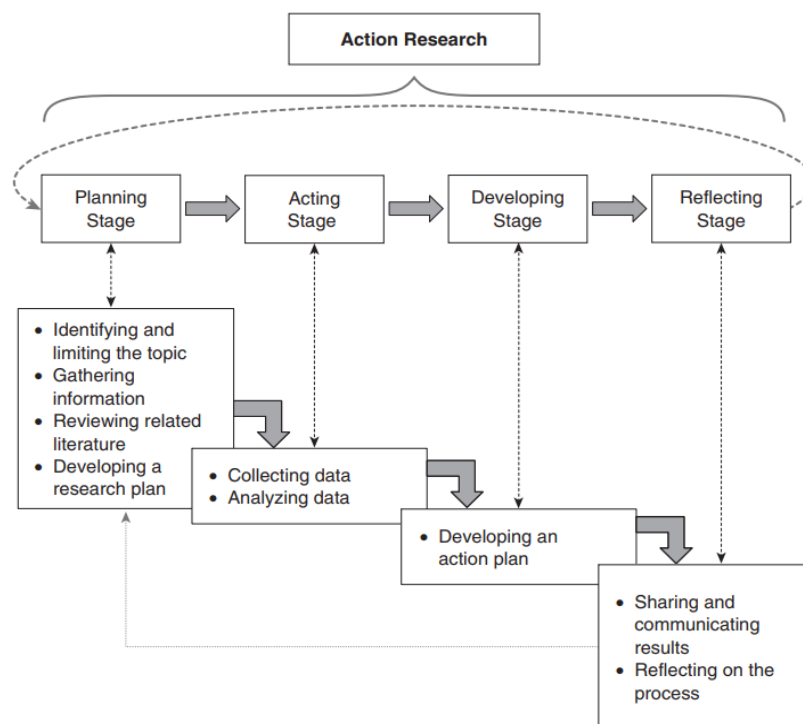


Figure 2. Mertler's (2016) action research process.

Eleven student participants between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one were selected using convenience sampling. They are EFL English Literature students from a private university in Malaysia. These eleven participants were sampled across the Year 1 to Year 3 intakes and confirmed their levels with their respective lecturers. There were eleven EFL students who fell under the sampling categories of this study and obtained a score of B- or lower in one of their core literature courses. A preliminary interview was conducted to confirm with the eleven participants to understand their struggles in learning about literature. Data were gathered through participant observations, open-ended preliminary and post-interviews which will be transcribed verbatim, field notes, and documentation of participant artworks. It is significant to highlight that the interview and discussion transcripts will be transcribed verbatim and may contain some grammatical errors which will not be corrected to highlight the accuracy and authenticity of the transcripts where it will help preserve the natural

speech patterns and thought process of the EFL students involved in this study in their figurative language learning process. Before the intervention, a preliminary interview was conducted using an audio recorder to confirm whether the tertiary EFL learners are facing such struggles mentioned in the literature review and to confirm the types of figurative language that they struggle with. During the intervention, the researchers collected data using observation notes, video recordings, and audio recordings to document each process. After the interventions, the researchers collected the data in the form of essays and post-intervention interviews via a voice recorder to understand the effectiveness of the integration. It is crucial to highlight that, given the nature of this research, the quality of the artwork will not be factored into the evaluation process. For this study, one of the researchers acted as the main author and practitioner researcher while the other two parties acted as supervisors to oversee, provide guidance and ensure that the research process was up to academic standards.

To ensure the trustworthiness, the researchers conducted member checking, where an external peer observer was included in the study to observe and review the research report thoroughly, providing insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the investigation (Merriam, 2009). Given the involvement of student participants, the researchers first obtained ethical clearance from the university and later provided a proposal to explain the research process to the Head of the department of the targeted university. Later, an official consent form and participant information sheet were distributed to the participants to obtain permission for data collection, recording, and usage, as well as to safeguard their personal information, following ethical approval.

This research was mainly conducted in three different cycles, each of which employed the following research plan, which was modified to incorporate the theoretical and conceptual framing into this study.

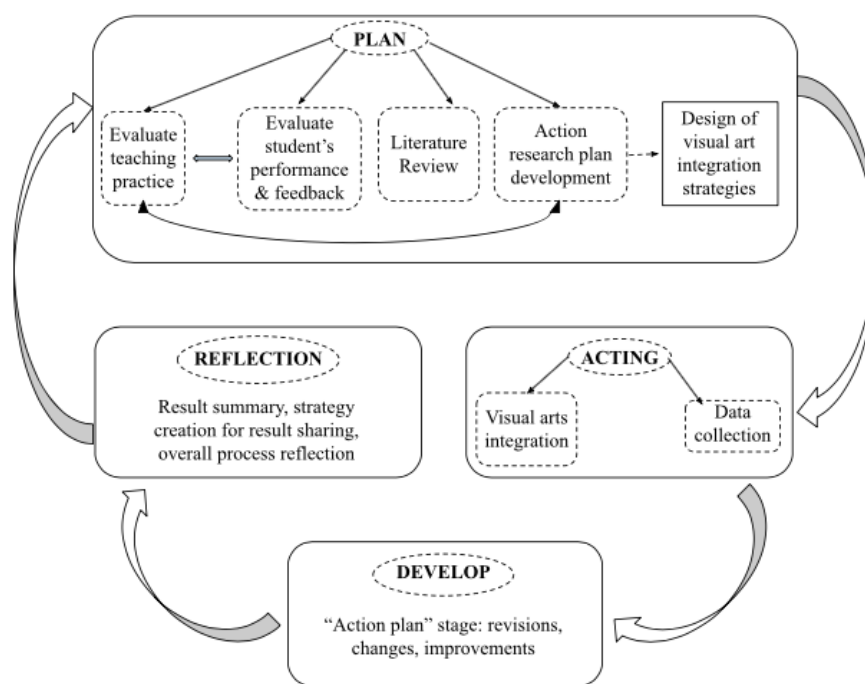


Figure 3. Action research process after incorporation of frameworks.

During each cycle, the researchers conducted an intervention (see Appendix A), each having a selected literary text as the main reference. The intervention was designed based on the theoretical assumptions explained in the literature review and the conceptual framework. At the beginning of each cycle, the participants were first given a fifteen-minute briefing about figurative language, its purposes and a basic introduction to the elements and principles of art based on Hameed's (2022) concepts, after which they will be given time to read the texts and engage in the drawing process. Three figurative languages were confirmed during the preliminary interview as the main categories they struggled with: metaphors, personification and symbols. These figurative languages were then included as part of the intervention. During the interventions, the participants were tasked to create artworks that were then displayed and a discussion was facilitated. At the end of each cycle, the participants were given a short essay task to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention before the post-intervention interview.

After each intervention, the data were analysed using a thematic analysis where Merriam (2009, p. 178) explains this process as "...making notations next to bits of data that strike you as potentially relevant for answering your research questions". The instructional moments, elements and strategies in which drawing was employed during the integration were remarked on and grouped as axial codes. These axial codes were then sorted into categories (focused coding). These data codes were then categorised according to subthemes and themes. Merriam (2009, p. 184) suggests "...the names of your categories can come from at least three sources (or a mix of these sources): yourself, the researcher, the participants, or sources outside the study such as the literature. The categories were compared to the strategies and elements indicated by other scholars to ensure that it is "responsive, mutually exclusive, exhaustive, sensitising and congruent," (Merriam, 2009, p. 185). Later, the data was then theorised to answer the research questions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Strategies for Integrating Drawing

Two main themes emerged from the data to explain the strategies involved in scaffolding the teaching and learning of figurative language among EFL students through drawing: engaging senses from image to expression and mining to trigger thoughts. These two main themes highlighted in this study act as ways in which the teaching and learning of literature through drawing can be integrated in an EFL context.

4.1.1 *Engaging senses from image to expression*

The primary focus of this central theme predominantly elucidates a strategy entailing the incorporation of drawing for the comprehension of figurative language. The involvement of the senses in transitioning from imagery to expression encapsulates the concept of a cognitive journey, wherein participants are exposed to figurative languages and actively interact with the textual content. Additionally, the participants immerse themselves in an expressive synthesis, intertwining visual art

elements such as colours, lines, and shapes into the drawing process while concurrently revisiting the text with vibrant descriptions.

Each cycle implemented drawing in a four-hour intervention, comprising two activities. The first activity explored short stories and the second explored poems, as mentioned in the selection of texts. Over three cycles, each drawing and discussion time was extended as the participants became more familiar with the intervention process. The researchers prioritised introducing figurative language and fostering textual engagement in the initial segment of the intervention. This aimed to establish a foundational understanding of concepts pertinent to the study for participants, including principles and elements of art. Given that the participants were not visual art majors, these concepts might have been unfamiliar to them. At the start of the first intervention in Cycle One, the researchers wrote in the field note:

(1) Practitioner researcher: “Students started reading the texts quietly...very quiet and silent”.

Later, Student V began circling and identifying figurative language expressions; however, the participants were still very quiet. Afterwards, there were at least four participants, Student Z, Student X, Student C and Student H, who continued to identify the figurative language. As the activity went on, the participants were still relatively quiet and later, the researchers took notice of how some of them started conversing in their own native language. Although in Cycle One the participants appeared to be quiet and nervous about using drawing, interestingly, by Cycle Two the participants started to gain confidence in using the material. For instance, Student H who was initially the last to mingle with the material became the first participant who initiated the drawing process during Cycle Two intervention.



Figure 4. Student H initiating the drawing process.

The researchers argue that integrating drawing initiates a students' journey of meaning-making, which is crucial for encouraging EFL students to construct their own narratives, supported by the artwork. This process influences learners' attitudes and behaviours toward the given topic, stimulating impulses that challenge them to establish connections within the brain, engaging sensory perceptions and language centres. Aligning with [Mayer \(2020\)](#), the researchers advocate for the sustained creation of meaningful connections between words and pictures, with the goal of fostering learners' formation of coherent mental representations from the presented material. Thus, learners themselves do play a vital role in actively participating in the

learning process to facilitate knowledge creation. As supported by Du (2022), educators should allow students to develop their own autonomy in learning about literature by relating new information to what is known to discover answers to cognitive questions. As this aligns with the drawing integration, the researchers would like to put forward the claim that this strategy will prepare students to engage in critical thinking by first triggering their senses to connect with a self-directive way of conveying their thoughts, leading the students towards engaging with the text effectively.

It was also observed in the interventions of Cycle One where participants were actively involved in incorporating visual art elements into the drawing procedure. This entails a dynamic cognitive process, requiring participants to interact with their thoughts and employ particular symbols, images, and colours to visually depict their reflections on physical drawing paper. This active engagement effectively involves participants in the process of creating meaning. As one participant claimed:

- (2) Student M: “I would say drawing out the symbol in the paper and making it and composing it so that it is related and reflected the story and the poem so that it could make sense and help me to understand the text better”.

When instructions were given to begin their drawing task, some of the participants immediately used different colours to draw images using basic art elements, as reflected in Figure 5.

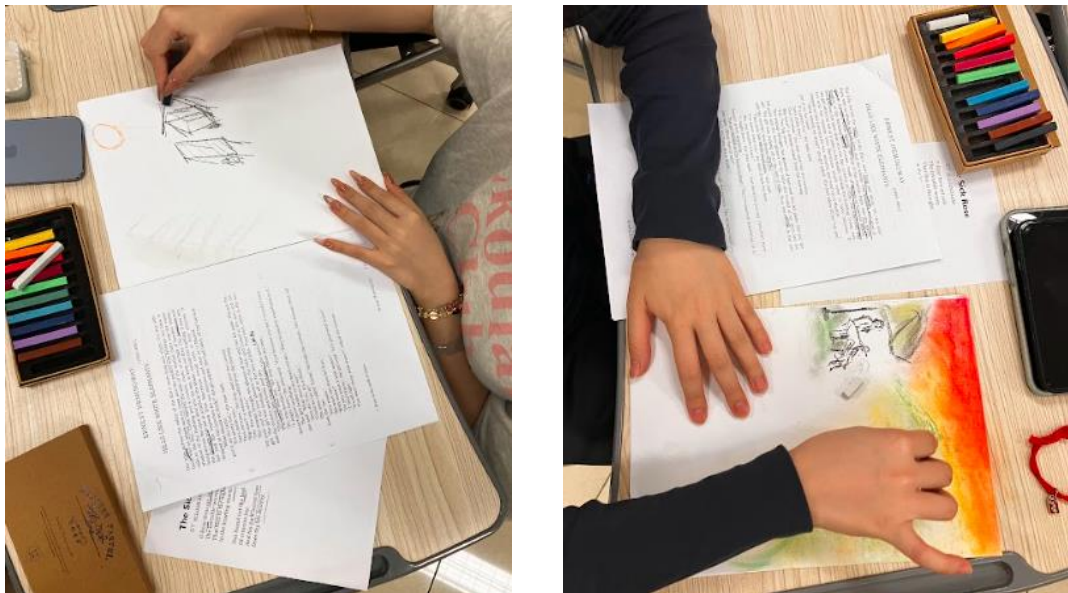


Figure 5. Student Y and Student F engaging in the drawing process using soft pastels.

The colour black, as shown in Figures 5 and 6, was used to illustrate the main subjects of their drawings, and the participants were also generally observed to use warmer colour hues to illustrate the background of their artworks. The use of lines and space in the participants' works was quite obvious, especially for the particular image they would emphasise. In the first intervention of Cycle Two, due to the nature of the

text that is broken down into six parts, most of the participants drew their artworks in a narrative sequence (see Figure 6).

As reflected in Figure 6, for example, the participants illustrate a symbol of the characters, John and Mary, in a narrative drawing following the sequence of events in the short story. Each sequence of events was carefully drawn to create a storyline to show the chain of effect that was going on in the characters' lives, suggesting different alternative endings. The main "happy ending" drawn in the artwork was presented as the main focus of the narrative, with each storyline breakdown attached to it. Visual art elements were used in the artwork creation process to show how John and Mary eventually detach from their symbolic "happy ending" by representing the symbols with human-like stick figures and the drawing of the house. Additionally, the drawing of the rainbow that signified promises showed what a "happy ending" should intend to look like; however, the contradicting drawing of the heart breaking proved otherwise. Even the drawing of the wedding ceremony and the contradicting pictures of the skull and graves drawn by the participants illustrated their interpretation of the "happy ending" symbol, which appears to be quite the opposite. In applying visual art elements and principles in the intervention, [Arnheim \(1974, p. 47\)](#) reinforces the claim that the shape of an object is affected by the "skeleton of visual forces created by the boundaries (that) may, in turn, influence the way boundaries are seen". This implies that a learner's understanding of a shape is affected by their visual experiences. Additionally, [Arnheim \(1974\)](#) elucidates that the subject shape is made up of the artists' selected boundaries, including lines, masses, volumes, and the shapes perceived by these material elements. Considering how balance and shape interact, the participants expressed their thoughts using these shapes to create boundaries of their experiences. Harnessing this with the use of vibrant colours to create a contrast, the results show how the participants engaged in visual art elements and principles to create a spectrum of emotional responses. The different hues strengthen the participants' visual channels and through the discussions accompanying the artmaking process, their verbal channels are also engaged with their working memory, engaging in processing information, resulting in enhanced understanding and learning. The implication of this data gathered in this study is that learners can represent and articulate their ideas in visual forms, as argued by [Schraw and Richmond \(2022, p. 82\)](#) in terms of "metaphorical thoughts, mental models, visualisation, and properly constructed sources of imagery" within a "symbolic, pictorial message to generate messages". This discussion asserts that the learners do have abilities to construct their own learning environment when drawing is being integrated, where students can be independent of the educator's intervention, and that they do possess the ability to stimulate their own engagement and reflection of the literary text. Thus, this spotlights the active processing assumption where EFL learners can learn and perceive texts effectively when engaging in cognitive processing to create a systematic mental presentation of what they have learned, organising this information into cognitive structures and integrating it with their prior knowledge ([Mayer, 2020](#)).



Figure 6. A display of the participants' artworks of Margaret Atwood's *Happy Endings*.

To confirm their understanding, the researchers recorded the participants' discussions, where Student J and M explained thoroughly about what they had understood about the figurative languages that they had managed to identify:

- (3) Student J: "The writer compared daffodils to stars and uhh...their personification he said in the first verse and we are the only people who can dance but the author says the daffodils were dancing, so this is a personification so this shows his life to the daffodils".
- (4) Student Z: "Maybe the flowers is come out of its root but it can symbolise the arrival of the spring and it can adjust in a way where the arrival of the..because spring is a flower, spring, lakes, trees and hill..it's something in nature so we can imagination that these are used to represent nature and the uhh...daffodils can come out it means the spring is coming and the ..renewal of something".

In addition, the participants also discussed how the use of visual art elements, especially colour, allowed them to engage with the author's feelings and emotions, as reflected in the following excerpt.

- (5) Student X: "I discovered that the colour I used uh actually uh show the same temperature, the the colour blue, green and yellow, they all give me a sense of delight, some kind of relaxation. So I can uh better relate to the uthor's feeling. And the least interesting part is to analyse the figurative language uh using, using words the same".

Furthermore, their understanding was confirmed through their drawings (see Figure 7). The participants articulated what was in their thoughts at that time when they read the text through these basic elements of visual art. When the participants were asked to further elaborate about their choice of colour use in their artworks in the first intervention of Cycle Three, especially the use of blue and black in their artworks, the participants responded:

- (6) Student J: “Blue is a colour of descent? And you, you, you want you elegant, elegant and uh the black also uh always bring the scent of dirty and uh something uh like that, decent, decent job labour, labour”.

Drawing upon the temporal contiguity principle, the enhancement of the participants' learning occurs when words and pictures are shown concurrently. This synchronisation is achievable through learners' engagement in the art creation process involving the elements of art. Through this cognitive exercise, learners employ their skills to represent thoughts in artwork, enabling them to transfer ideas from the text and express them more effectively through images (Akimova, 2020). The possible stance and interpretation of the literary text can be thoroughly analysed to discern its meaning, craftsmanship, and form, drawing parallels between the analytical approaches in both literature and visual art, which encompass formal analysis and aesthetic appreciation.

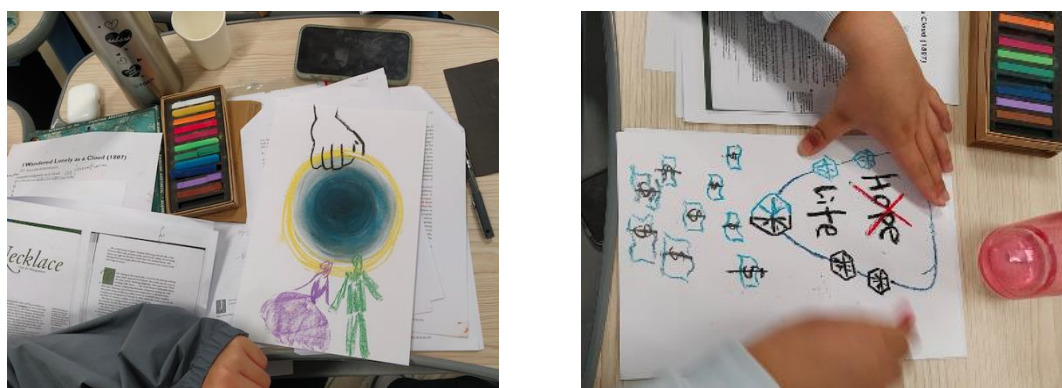


Figure 7. Student's sample works during the drawing phase in Cycle Three (intervention one).

In between the interventions, the participants' artworks were also displayed in the front of the classroom, as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8. A display of participants' work.

Interestingly, conversations about the displayed artworks started almost immediately and began very naturally. It was observed that the participants could identify the figurative language as recorded in their conversations about the artwork during the reflection and facilitation phase, where the participants were actively engaged in the discussion about their artworks. When asked about what they had observed in the artworks, Student F managed to convey her understanding of the figurative language and even provided examples from the poem.

- (7) Researcher: “How is that a personification?”
 Student F: “He is comparing his loneliness to the clouds”

Her response shows that she could identify the figurative language from the text accompanied by the artwork. With reference to the artwork, Student F provided a short description to reflect her understanding of the personification in the text. In the second intervention of Cycle Two, the participants commented that they took an interest in the way other participants presented those images, which allowed them to observe how others approached the figurative language. As a matter of fact, [Yenawine \(2014\)](#) argues that integrating the arts stimulates authentic learning, where learners embark on reading the meaning of the expressions (in artworks) without the need for them to draw from experiences and background knowledge. Rather, the social dynamics created by VTS facilitation pave the way for learners to lay a platform for others to learn by “tapping” or “climbing” on each other’s ideas or points ([Yenawine, 2014](#)). In addition, the participants agreed that displaying their artworks in front of their peers allowed them to gather more insight into their peers’ works during discussions and also enhanced their understanding of the text when the creator of the artworks explained their drawings during the post-intervention interview of Cycle Three.

- (8) Student A: “This uh the most excited part is to when the artist explain their art paintings. It's really interesting because uh it's one feeling when I reading the poetry myself and it's also another kind of feeling to see the drawings of the uh of other students. And also it's uh something different when they explain themselves. So uh it's have it offers me lots of dimension to understand uh work of literature”.
- (9) Student V: “I think both the drawing and discussion because the drawing itself is not enough because usually the drawing is based on the reader interpretation of the poem. But by seeing the other, the others drawing and also discuss together, I think we could have more perspective and what is the hidden meaning and perhaps the hidden clues that we miss when we are analysing the poem and the text”.

[Telfer-Radzat and Brouillette \(2021\)](#) highlight the connection between images and imagination in visual arts integration, emphasising the ability of individuals to generate visual representations of actions and embed these images into enduring concepts. In this case, [Yenawine’s \(2014\)](#) VTS coincides with [Arnheim \(1974\)](#) where the artistic practice itself is the form of inquiry aimed to provoke, describe, explore and unsettle ([Leavy, 2017](#)). Understanding how this works within this research implies that visual arts integration practice requires recognition of not just the construction of knowledge because of just the material but also being aware of the personal and collaborative experiences of how the arts can be used in an educational setting.

4.1.2 Mining to trigger thoughts

The mining experience mentioned here helps participants dive into deep analysis, trigger their responses towards the text and begin to discuss it. In Cycle One, the researchers prompted the participants using Yenawine's (2014) VTS, and the participants began speaking about first the colours and how the drawings made them feel that Hemingway's text was about a journey between two couples and an argument did take place; but the lady character in the story was masking something. Student F raised her hand and said she was curious to see Student M's work.

Out of this curiosity, the participants highlighted during the VTS session how there was a pair of scissors and a knife in Student M's drawing and also took notice of the red drops of blood on that cord-looking image. Student M responded:

- (10) Student M: "it's the surgery that they are talking about. I think this text is about abortion. So the description that she said about the mountain, the river, and the trees is about like the child, like their whole world, their future".

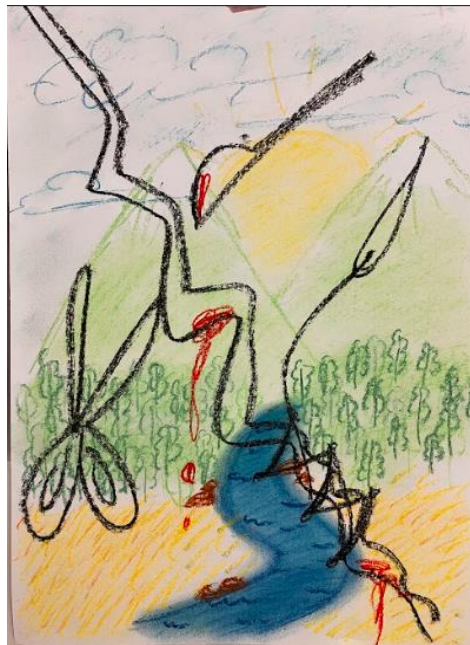


Figure 9. Student M's artwork of Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants*.

During each intervention, the discussion or the facilitation phase in this research was also crucial as participants commented about how the drawing phase itself had already helped them to transfer their understanding to a physical form. However, the facilitation phase enhances it:

- (11) Student J: "Because drawing is your self understanding but discussing it can be compounded and may be more complicated".

The notion highlighted by Student J confirms that drawing assists students' personal understanding of figurative language. However, it must be accompanied by a thorough discussion among the other participants to further enhance their understanding and promote more discussions and insight into the interpretation of figurative language.

- (12) Student J: “Maybe uh when we see the picture uh of others, we can see something or totally different from ourselves and we can uh by see, by combining the two pictures, we can see more, uh we can see more about the message or the article or the point that um we, our, we ourselves didn't see”.

The data gathered from Cycle One first and second interventions confirmed the implications of integrating drawing into the teaching and learning of figurative languages by the peer observer's observation, where the peer observer reported that the activity started with a reminder about the elements of art and reading of the text, *The Sick Rose* by William Blake. The peer observer noted that the participants automatically carried on with the drawing once they finished reading, and she also observed that the role of the main practitioner researcher was mainly to encourage and prompt participants to discuss and reflect. During the discussions, the participants were observed to be fully engaged with one another and were exchanging their thoughts, and this was also confirmed by the peer observer's observation notes:

- (13) Peer observer: “One of the students started sharing her thoughts/perspective with friends. Lecturer observes but does not interrupt. In the same group, other friends begin to share their understanding of the short story”.

An interesting observation was recorded when the participants demonstrated high engagement levels, actively articulating their ideas and engaging in critical discussions regarding their understanding and feelings about the text meaning. The researchers also witnessed instances where participants independently conducted research. [Telfer-Radzat and Brouillette \(2021\)](#) and [Benfares \(2023\)](#) foster this claim that such instances help learners to gain clarity, foster dynamic conversations and exchange of new knowledge. Notably, the results indicate an increased motivation level and engagement among the participants in this study, including those who were naturally quiet and less engaging in class prior to the intervention. Learners naturally began interacting with their artworks, leading to a reduction in learners' affective filters and creating a conducive space for open discussions about their artworks. This environment facilitated knowledge generation, offering learners meaningful learning experiences. [Moerman \(2020\)](#) supports this perspective, emphasising the importance of incorporating reflective discussions into integrating drawing to increase English literature learners' ability to create, articulate, and communicate their ideas, thoughts, interpretations and experiences – a valuable aspect for educators, practitioners and researchers who are interested in exploring arts-based practices in education.

4.2 The Effectiveness of Using Drawing to Learn Figurative Language

This section will highlight the effectiveness of integrating drawing into the teaching and learning of figurative language among tertiary English Literature students.

4.2.1 Fostering openness

The peer observer's notes hinted at a phenomenon that may potentially highlight how the role of drawing encourages learners to comprehend texts through open conversations:

- (14) Peer observer: Lecturer asks if other students have different views. Students volunteer. Students encourage one another”.

While engaging in the drawing process in the first intervention of Cycle Two, the participants were actively conversing about the text as well, as the researchers remarked in the field notes:

- (15) Practitioner-researcher notes: “Student I and Student M conversing in foreign language about the drawing. “Why did she do it”. Student M: “Is it because they were unhappy? Student F revisits the text. Student X revisits the text.

One of the participants, Student F, began her discussion to explain her drawing to her peers about how Atwood’s text refers to the quality of the character’s love. The other participants listened attentively while others, such as Student P, were observed to begin a conversation with Student H about the red sign in Student F’s drawing. The participants in this group began to mix their conversations and discussions in Mandarin. Student H starts to converse about the character’s childish love while Student P listens. Later, the practitioner-researcher took notice of a very interesting phenomenon that took place where the participants began to automatically engage in their own conversations and discussions about the text without the interference of the researcher:

- (16) Practitioner-researcher notes: “Student F moves over to group one (the next table), starts discussing and explaining her drawing”.

Student F was observed to immediately move over to the other group and started discussing and explaining her own drawing. The participants from group one were very engaged with her and started replying to her as well; some were seen nodding in agreement. As the researchers continued to observe the group, the other participants also began their own conversations and explanations about their own artwork.

- (17) Practitioner-researcher notes: Student M explain her drawing to peers - “I drew this because it is part of their life. They got married and end up unhappy. This symbolises that”. Student H and P starts discussing. Student A shows drawing to others and explains her drawing to others”.

The discussion session emerged very naturally among the participants, and they were even engaging in these discussions while drawing. [Eubanks \(2002\)](#) highlighted how visual cues and communicated simple instructions encourage peer tutoring during lessons and incorporated cooperative learning to encourage learners to share. In addition, [Ortuño \(1994\)](#) also claims that visual art stimulates active exploration where learners communicate about artworks. This helps stimulate analytical skills, eases the transition from language acquisition to focus on exploration of literary concepts and broadens cognition. In this case, the researchers agree that it is rather important for literature students to dig deeper into responding to literary texts by communicating their reflections because this helps them make connections between knowledge gained from one person to another, leading towards further socialisation and cooperation in class.

4.2.1 Textual enlightenment

Based on the interview, the participants pointed out that drawing assisted them in presenting abstract ideas clearly and explicitly. The use of colours highlighted the mood and tone of the literary work setting and intensified the aesthetic stance (feelings) of the text. For instance, Student S commented on how it helped her illustrate “invisible” messages, and Student U agreed that drawing assisted her in immersing in the text.

(18) Student S: “It made something invisible into something invisible, and it can help me to...see the character better.”

Student U: “If you just see the characters on the paper, you'll feel that it's abstract and you feel you are detached from the whole story. But if you can draw, then you can better immersed in it”.

To maintain the clarity of this section, the researchers investigated the comparison between the participants’ previous assignment sample and the essays of the same participant after the intervention. Figure 10 shows a sample of Student D’s essay before and after the intervention.

Theme Where did you get all these ideas from? You will need to provide proper citation Hymn to Virtue is a lyric poetry written by Aristotle in memory of his friend Hermias and to phrase the resplendent virtue that he displayed. Tone The speaker of the poetry utilizes a serious, solemn, and sad tone to express the phrase of Hermias’ deeds and great virtue. Character Type The character mentioned in the poetry like the twins of Stout Herakles and Leda, Aias and Achilleus are typical representative who would like to endure toil even death for virtue. The speaker tried to make use of these well-known figures to express his phrase of the brave deeds of Hermias.	From the poem, ~~we can~~ find that the first sentence is an ~~metaphor~~ application of the metaphor. It compare the woman to a rose that is sick through this figurative language. ~~the~~ the author provides a vivid picture of a beautiful woman. The ground of these two ~~objects~~ is the beauty and the sickness. In addition, the invisible worm that flies in the night ~~re~~ refers to ~~the~~ a man who has a romantic relationship with the sick woman mentioned in the first line. The ~~poem~~ theme of the poem
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Figure 10. Student D’s sample essay of previous assignment (left) and post-intervention sample essay (right)

From Student D’s sample essay, as presented in Figure 10, it can be derived that this participant had made an improvement in expanding her discussion of the targeted figurative language. As observed in her previous assignment, Student D could only identify and explain very briefly about the literary devices in the assigned text. However, after the intervention, it was observed that Student D could confidently identify and explain the figurative language in more detail and context. The major claim of the short essay after the intervention appears to be more insightful as compared to the previous one.

Next, there comes the most important one —the analysis of some literary devices used in it. The first sentence employs an imperative mood as the “DO not” is a command to fight against death. And whats closely followed is the “good night”, which is a metaphor for dying. Someone holds the belief that the “good” here is ironic; because they think the speaker definitely does regard death as a “good” thing.	Secondly, symbolism (or imagery). This article is especially focusing on the ~~descriptive~~ description of colours. The hills ~~are~~ were white in the sun and the country was brown in the ~~the~~ writer’s text, which picture a landscape ~~was~~ shot with blurred and dim background, symbolizing the confused and upset heart of the heroine.
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Figure 11. Student J’s sample essay of the previous assignment (left) and the post-intervention sample essay (right).

Furthermore, Student J's essay shows that although there is not much difference in terms of the length of the paragraph that discusses the figurative language, the post-intervention essay is more critical and in-depth and, at the same time, sufficient in providing evidence from close reading. Compared to her first essay, which simply concludes the meaning of the text based on an unsupported assumption, Student J's post-intervention essay provides a deeper connection to the text during the interpretation process.

During the peer observer's post-intervention interview in Cycle One, she confirmed that Yenawine's VTS helped participants bridge the participants' understanding,

- (19) Peer observer: "I think that was very interesting because it sort of filled in the gaps a little bit when students were not sure what to say. So those questions helped them to look at the drawings and observe it a little bit more and reflect on the reading material that they were given"

During the post-intervention interview of Cycle Two, the participants commented that the drawing session during the intervention was the most interesting for them because it helped them articulate their understanding.

- (20) Student P: "...it actually transforms the text into our image in, in our heads so that we can better comprehend the content"...how I can turn this text into images in my head and draw this out because uh drawing these images out. Uh...It really helps me to uh show what I think of this. Uh the..the author wants to deliver to us".

The drawing process helped them connect abstract information visually. When the participants had the chance to view their peers' works, they gained another perspective of the figurative language, for instance:

- (21) Student M: "I think it's really a fun experience because a different person has a different take and drawing that they wanted to interpret from the story that they are reading".

The data reveals that integrating drawing into the teaching and learning of literature benefits participants in critical thinking, creating reflective discussions whilst enhancing their knowledge of literature. [Febriani et al. \(2022\)](#) explain that by engaging in such practices, the process of reflection is enhanced and, as the researchers argue, eventually stimulates learners to explore the meaning beyond the text, including explaining their feelings, analysis and evaluation of the literary text. The use of drawing, in this case, simply concerns the process of how students can use drawing as a tool to engage with the text, and in return, enhances their learning experience. Among the advantages, drawing helps students interpret the text in several ways, allowing them to build their experiences, see the perspective of others and, most importantly, foster their involvement.

As expected, drawing involves a meaningful process of connecting words and pictures, enabling learners to increase their construction of mental representations, making the intangible tangible. The researchers would like to highlight that when learners engage in drawing, they are constructing mental representations by forming meaningful connections between words and pictures, a core argument positioned by [Mayer \(2005\)](#) in CTML. When learners engage with the presented material and articulate their ideas and thoughts during discussions, they simultaneously engage with

their verbal and visual channels to increase their learning capacity. This fosters openness among the learners to engage with their working and sensory memories to increase their learning chances by pursuing active engagement that was previously absent in existing learning approaches. This active processing assumption, according to Mayer (2020), will then help learners to actively engage in meaningful information-making. Additional sensory engagement, according to Chau et al. (2019), further fortifies the stance that by drawing, learners are then able to coherently structure their learning with an emphasis on engaging with their sensory channels, allowing interactions and manipulation of the drawing experience to create familiarity towards the subject. Aligning with these navigations, the researchers posit that drawing helps learners engage simultaneously with their learning channels to increase their learning about figurative language, enabling them to arrive at textual understanding.

5. CONCLUSION

From this study, drawing has been observed as a hybrid tool that can be used in teaching and learning about figurative language. By integrating the two strategies, engaging with senses and mining to trigger thoughts, tertiary EFL learners will be able to express the intangible in tangible forms, carefully expressing their mental representations of the selected figurative languages. Through these sensory engagements, the learners are then able to foster their learning experience in the working memory.

However, the integration of drawing in an EFL classroom may face resistance due to the perception that it is time-consuming and demands extensive preparation from educators, potentially diverting focus from learning. Baker (2016) highlights the insufficient understanding of how educators can integrate art into education, causing anxiety and reluctance among educators who may then abandon the idea. In light of these challenges, the researchers propose further exploration of the incorporation of drawing in literature, emphasising its flexibility. The need is emphasised to delve into how drawing can realistically be integrated into teaching to enhance learning. The researchers also recommend a quantitative study approach to assess the viability of these practices in terms of measuring the outcome of integrating drawing that affords learning about figurative language as well as the attitudes of the learners.

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APPENDIX A

DATE/DAY	<i>*to be filled in when research starts</i>
TIME/DURATION	<i>*to be filled in when research starts</i>
TEXTS	<i>Happy Endings</i> by Margaret Atwood <i>I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud</i> by William Wordsworth
LEARNING OUTCOMES	1. Identify and demonstrate an understanding of figurative language. 2. Apply knowledge of figurative language to text interpretation. 3. Demonstrate skills in the analysis of literary works. 4. Discuss and defend judgement and interpretation of text before peers.
SKILLS ASSESSED	1. Cognitive skills 2. Affective skills
TOOLS	Literary text, soft pastels, drawing paper

INTERVENTION:

STEPS	DURATION	ACTIVITY PART 1 (Intervention 1)	ACTIVITY PART 2 (Intervention 2)
Introduction to lesson	15 minutes	Researcher will give instructions to participants • Identify figurative languages involved: metaphors, personification, symbolism • Explain how participants can incorporate the elements and principles of visual art as a form of expression	
Introduction to text	10-15 minutes	Reading of <i>Happy Endings</i> by Margaret Atwood	Reading of <i>I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud</i> by William Wordsworth
Identify figurative language	10 minutes	Participants will attempt to identify the figurative languages in the literary texts	
Create artwork	20 minutes	Researcher will prompt participants to use the elements and principles of art. Remark: The researcher will not guide the students how to create the artwork but rather allow them space to reimagine the images based on what they understand about the figurative language.	

Silent looking	3 minutes	Participants will be guided to display their artworks in front of their peers and look silently at the artworks
Reflect	5 minutes	Participants will be given time to reflect on the artworks of their peers and make additional amendments or additional images to their artwork if needed.
Facilitation	20 minutes	Researcher will incorporate Yenawine's (2014) VTS: • What is going on in these pictures? • What makes you say that? • What more can you find? Remark: Participants will begin to discuss their thoughts and interpretations of the figurative language based on what they can observe from the artworks.
Linking	2 minutes	The researcher will summarise the discussion made by the students. The researcher will not provide answers to the students or explain the meaning of the figurative language
Evaluation	20 minutes	Participants will be given one short answer essay evaluation.
Interview (post-intervention)	30 minutes	Participants will be interviewed.

SHORT ANSWER EVALUATION QUESTION:

1. *Happy Endings* by Margaret Atwood is a short story that contains instances of figurative language use. Explain how these figurative languages work in reflecting what the text means. Write your response within 80 to 100 words.
2. *I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud* by William Wordsworth is a poem that contains instances of figurative language use. Explain how these figurative languages work in reflecting what the text means. Write your response within 80 to 100 words.