

**Where Words and Selves Bloom: Learning English through Arts and Identity**

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## **Dedication**

For the girls and the women who taught me to listen, to question, to love, to care, to  
create, and to resist.

For those whose strength, love, hope, compassion, creativity, and resilience continue to  
illuminate my path.

And for every learner who has ever searched for a place where their voice matters.

May your words, and your selves, always bloom.

## Acknowledgments

This project was never only about learning English. It was also about creativity, identity, self-expression, and the possibility of creating classroom spaces where students can feel seen, heard, and valued for who they are. For that reason, there are several people and influences I would love to acknowledge.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my students. This project would not exist without their voices, creativity, courage, and willingness to participate in every artistic exploration we shared. They trusted me with their ideas, their experiences, and pieces of who they were, and in doing so, they shaped this project alongside me. Although this research bears my name, it was built with them, and their presence can be found on every page.

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Beyond academia, I would like to acknowledge the influences that inspired the heart of this project. Art, music, literature, and creative writing have long been spaces where I have found questions, comfort, possibility, resistance, and hope. They taught me that creativity is not a luxury but a deeply human way of understanding ourselves, connecting with others, and imagining different futures. They nurtured my critical consciousness, strengthened my social awareness, and reminded me that self-expression is a necessary act of resistance in a world that often attempts to define people before they can define themselves. In many ways, this project emerged from those beliefs.

I also wish to thank the women who have nurtured my life and shaped my understanding of the world. Through their strength, compassion, resilience, creativity, love, and unwavering commitment to others, they have inspired me to keep listening, questioning, learning, and

believing in the transformative power of empathy. They have taught me that caring for others, making space for different voices, and advocating for more just and humane ways of being are not small gestures, but meaningful forms of resistance, love and hope. Their examples encouraged me to continue creating spaces where people can feel safe expressing themselves and recognized for who they are. While the convictions that guide this work are my own, they have undoubtedly been enriched by the women around me whose lives, stories, and wisdom continue to inspire my soul.

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Finally, I would love to acknowledge myself. This project began with a conviction that remained constant despite every challenge and moment of uncertainty: that language education can be more than the teaching of words, it can become a space for creativity, self-discovery, critical reflection, belonging, and transformation. Holding onto that belief required persistence, trust, and hope, but also reminded me why I chose to become a teacher. Completing this project reaffirms my commitment to an education that values human experiences, embraces diversity, encourages self-expression, and recognizes every learner as a person with stories worth telling and identities worth celebrating.

To the art that inspire it, to the students who gave it life, to the women whose voices nurtured my spirit and lit my path, and to the many selves that bloomed along the way, thank you so much.

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative action research project explored the effects of art-based self-expression on identity in second graders' English vocabulary learning in a public school in Bogotá, Colombia. The study was carried out with young learners who showed a beginner pre-A1 level and limited literacy development, as well as difficulties in vocabulary recognition, speaking, and writing. To address these needs, the intervention integrated visual arts, symbolic creation, and other expressive activities that allowed students to represent personal and social aspects of their identities while learning English vocabulary in meaningful and contextualized ways. Data was collected through observations, field notes, students' artifacts, semi-structured interviews, and vocabulary assessment. These findings suggest that art-based tasks created more engaging and participatory learning conditions, helping students develop both receptive and productive vocabulary. Learners were able to recognize words through multimodal input, reuse previously learned vocabulary in new contexts, and express personal meanings with greater confidence. In addition, motivation and self-confidence increased as students produced creative and personally meaningful artifacts. On the whole, the project shows that art-based self-expression of identity can positively support English vocabulary learning by connecting language, creativity, and personal meaning in the EFL classroom.

**Key words:** art-based pedagogy, self-expression of identity, English vocabulary learning, young learners, EFL.

## **Resumen**

Este proyecto de investigación-acción de enfoque cualitativo exploró los efectos de la autoexpresión a través del arte en el aprendizaje del vocabulario en inglés y en la construcción de la identidad de estudiantes de segundo grado en una escuela pública de Bogotá, Colombia. El estudio se llevó a cabo con estudiantes que presentaban un nivel inicial pre-A1, un desarrollo limitado de alfabetización, así como dificultades en el reconocimiento de vocabulario, la expresión oral y la escritura. Para atender estas necesidades, la intervención integró artes visuales, creación simbólica y otras actividades expresivas que permitieran a los estudiantes representar aspectos personales y sociales de su identidad mientras aprendían vocabulario en inglés de manera significativa y contextualizada. La información fue recolectada mediante observaciones, diarios de campo, artefactos producidos por los estudiantes, entrevistas semiestructuradas y evaluaciones de vocabulario. Los hallazgos sugieren que las tareas basadas en el arte generaron condiciones de aprendizaje motivadoras y participativas, ayudando a los estudiantes a desarrollar vocabulario receptivo y productivo. Los participantes lograron reconocer palabras a través de insumos multimodales, reutilizar vocabulario previamente aprendido en nuevos contextos y expresar significados personales con mayor confianza. Además, la motivación y la autoconfianza aumentaron a medida que los estudiantes elaboraban productos creativos y significativos para ellos. En conjunto, el proyecto demuestra que la autoexpresión de la identidad mediada por el arte puede apoyar positivamente el aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés al vincular lenguaje, creatividad y significado personal en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera.

**Palabras clave:** pedagogía basada en el arte, autoexpresión de la identidad, aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés, estudiantes de segundo grado, inglés como lengua extranjera.

## **Characterization and Problem**

This chapter aims to cover the understanding of local and institutional educational dynamics, the challenges faced by students in English as a Foreign Language setting, their characterization or profile and their English level.

### **Local and Institutional Context**

Colegio Prado Veraniego (IED) is a public school in Suba, Bogotá, with two branches in the Prado Veraniego neighborhood: *Sede B* and *Sede A*. *Sede B* has kids from preschool to fourth grade, and *Sede A* has from fifth to eleventh grade. At present, these institutions are situated in a commercial and industrial neighborhood of Suba, which is also surrounded by auto parts stores, repair shops, and small-scale markets. Most students come from socio-economic levels 1 to 2, despite the area being classified as mid-level (strata 3-4) by planning authorities. Also, families face frequent housing changes due to employment and rent instability, and living in overcrowded conditions (p.12).

In terms of the school facilities and infrastructure, the school where the practicum is being conducted (*Sede B*) consists of two floors and serves exclusively the primary education level, including students from pre-primary (prior to first grade) through fourth grade. On the first floor, there are several classrooms, a large physical education area, and a big schoolyard. This floor houses a computer lab that supports digital literacy and educational activities. The second floor contains additional classrooms, as well as the head teacher's office, the office of the school counselor, the teacher's lounge and restrooms. Additionally, all classrooms have ceiling-mounted projectors and accommodate an average of 20 to 30 students. Overall, the school's infrastructure is well-organized, and its hallways are decorated with the principles of the school and other handcrafted creations made by the students.

In accordance with the institutional Educational Project (PEI) of Colegio Prado Veraniego IED (n.d.), the importance of English in the curriculum aligns with goals towards linguistic proficiency, including social, cognitive and personal development and allowing students to express ideas, concepts, and information effectively. In this frame, as outlined in the *Malla Curricular* for the Humanities-English area, the objectives extend beyond language acquisition, aiming to cultivate critical thinking, life skills, and a sense of responsibility, which creates a foundation for students to apply and practice their skills meaningfully in real-world contexts (Colegio Prado Veraniego, pp. 124-138).

In this case, the methodology incorporates modern, learner-centered approaches. The PEI mentioned the implementation of the communicative approach, task-based instruction, and cooperative learning, all of those complemented by frameworks like multiple intelligences and cross-cultural studies, ensuring that English instruction is inclusive and adaptative to diverse learning needs. Furthermore, the document alludes to resources such as textbooks, multimedia tools, videos, audios, educational platforms, online applications, and worksheets (p. 138).

### **Characterization of Participants and Contextual Variables**

In this matter, two instruments were designed in Spanish. The first one was for the students, combining written drawing-based questions to explore their backgrounds, contexts, preferences, interests, aspirations, among other valuable insights. In line with this instrument, and because participants are minors, a consent format with the pertinent information was signed by their parents, which allowed students to participate willingly (see consent format in annex 1). The second instrument was meant for the teacher, a 14-question written questionnaire about teaching dynamics and other factors influencing first graders (for further understanding of both instruments, consult Annex 2).

**Students:** The teacher identified several challenges and strengths faced in the classroom. That concern included students' difficulty following instructions, inconsistent parental support in revising schoolwork, and lack of basic school supplies. Literacy processes were also challenging, as many students struggled with reading and writing words independently; this highlights the impact of the journey they have had regarding their reading and writing skills in their native language. Despite these obstacles, she mentioned the students' strengths: solidarity, creativity, and a positive attitude toward learning new topics. Moreover, the teacher noticed that her students work better in collaborative environments, and described them as cheerful, creative, supportive, and participative.

**Sociodemographic Characteristics:** At the moment of the diagnosis, most of the students of the 104 group (later 204) were seven years old, with a few aged six or eight. In terms of household composition, most of the students live with both parents, and some of them are residing alongside siblings and extended family members (just a few live solely with their mothers). Also, most of the students live close to the school in Prado Veraniego, while others commute from nearby neighborhoods.

**Learning Preferences and Interests:** This group expressed a strong interest in English and most of them stated that they enjoy it or would like to learn it (85% of the class) and speak it (95%); almost everyone believed English is important (90%). However, there were two students that said in Spanish they did not consider English important because "*las personas no nos entenderían*". When asked how they would prefer to learn the language, the majority favored creative and artistic methods, specifically through drawings and colors (71% of the group). Others liked choices included learning through fairy tales (the 2nd most popular choice with 61%), then songs (57%) and finally, games (47%).

**Affective and Leisure Activities:** In terms of what the students like and what they do in

their free time, they expressed they enjoy social and outdoor activities such as playing with friends and family, going to the park, and engaging in recreational sports. The most popular activities among boys include playing soccer and videogames, while others developed an interest in drawing, writing, and using the computer. In this sense, by trying to appeal to the idea that learning should be full of creativity, joy and fun as their favorite activities are, another question was asked: what they would like to do at school. Many of them expressed their desire to play with friends, engage in creative activities like drawings and watching movies. Also, some students mentioned interests in learning to read and write and completing fun assignments.

**Identity:** When students were asked about characters or identities they admire and who they wanted to be, they provided a range of responses that reflect their imaginative thinking and diverse influences. Their answers included beloved animals (cats, dogs, wolves, lions, rabbits) as well as fictional heroes and popular figures (Spiderman, Shakira, Harley Quinn, Wonder Woman, etc); a few students chose well-known public figures, while others preferred fantastical characters, or even more abstract identities, such as animals with superpowers. These drawings and responses reflect students' admiration for traits such as strength, bravery, beauty, humor, and leadership. Students' creative answers, particularly their interest in role-play and imagination, along with the teacher's recognition of art as a tool for fostering self-expression, underscore the potential of these approaches to explore themes directed to self-expression of identity in English learning.

### **Diagnosis**

The diagnostic assessed 30 first graders from the mentioned public school (*Sede B*), using a designed instrument according to *Mallas de Aprendizaje* (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016, pp. 87-115) guidelines, along with the topics the teacher covered with her students (for further analysis, consult Annex 3).

The diagnostic consisted of five dynamic exercises to assess first graders' foundational English vocabulary, recognition, writing and speaking abilities. Each section involved a clear question structure aligned with its skill focus. First, the oral assessment featured simple questions, “What is your name?” or “How are you”, focusing on basic conversation and pronunciation. Second, the listening tasks required students to respond physically by pointing to colors or shapes when named, assessing receptive vocabulary and attention. Third, the matching activity involved short visual-verbal association, where students matched written words to pictures (e.g., family members), requiring word recognition. Fourth, the writing component included short prompts, “Write the number three/the month of January”, reflecting basic literacy skills and familiarity with English vocabulary. Finally, the speaking recall section consisted of memory-based questions, “What day is today?” or “What color is this?”, indicating vocabulary retention and oral production.

Later on, first graders demonstrated a beginner, pre-A1 English level which reflects their age and limited instruction. First, these students retain familiar vocabulary, but they have issues with most of the topics (especially the Present Simple) and regarding writing skills. Second, speaking abilities are just emerging and their pronunciation is good but limited due to the lack of meaningful practice. Third, students are engaging and energetic, which means that with interactive and creative tasks, they can be highly responsive to art-based activities. These challenges emerged from the reliance on videos, repetition, transcription and no interactive elements; nonetheless, ways to approach those difficulties are now in the spotlight to be gamified and artistic.

### **Students’ Proficiency Level**

The students showed a beginner, pre-A1, level of English Proficiency. While they retained some basic vocabulary and showed enthusiasm, gaps remain in expected vocabulary and skills. Also, their speaking abilities are emerging with varying confidence, but their energy and efforts indicate potential for growth with suitable strategies.

According to the Colombian Ministry of National Education (MEN, 2016), students in *Grado Transición* are expected to begin developing basic communicative skills in English, such as understanding simple vocabulary, following basic instructions, and responding to common expressions. At this stage, learners should address competencies related to following rules, expressing emotions, environmental awareness, and cultural or social identity through basic structures such as introductions, the verb to be, and imperatives (pp. 43-47). For First Grade, expected competencies expand to themes such as personal hygiene routines, respect for physical and gender differences, and habits at home. These areas involve vocabulary related to appearance, household objects, and daily routines, primarily using present simple structures and expressions such as “there is/there are” (MEN, 2016, pp. 87-89).

In line with the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), the diagnostic results place the students at a pre-A1 level. At this level, learners are expected to recognize familiar words and simple expressions, understand basic written phrases, participate in simple interactions with support, and produce short sentences about personal information (Council of Europe, p. 1). However, classroom observations revealed limited recognition of familiar phrases, difficulty understanding basic vocabulary, and challenges producing simple responses. Writing production was also minimal; they rarely produce structured sentences or convey personal information, although some students were able to write isolated words such as colors, days of the week, or numbers. These findings confirm their pre-A1 level and highlight the need for targeted support to strengthen foundational English learning.

All these matters considered, the diagnostic assessed the students’ mastery of topics that they were expected to learn significantly. These findings revealed some aspects to review. The first aspect is vocabulary recognition; students have limited knowledge of colors beyond primary shades, and they struggle identifying body parts or school supplies; plus, they do not have the vocabulary expected before First Grade. The second aspect is grammar application; students rarely

use full sentences, except for “My name is”; however, they struggle with expressions in general. The third aspect is interactive competencies; students are hesitant in responding to simple questions and they do not understand the imperatives. The fourth aspect is sociolinguistic characteristics; students require encouragement to participate in group games. Nonetheless, they are energetic and enthusiastic towards English, which is deeply valuable for motivating them and promoting English learning while exploring art-based activities.

### **Problem Statement**

Observations revealed that English instruction is limited by the lack of trained teachers, low motivation, and limited use of contextualized and appropriate responsive approaches. Furthermore, a significant issue became evident: their English vocabulary building is extremely limited and superficial, making it difficult for them to recognize familiar words, understand simple phrases and respond in basic interactions. Writing skills are also weak, as most cannot produce simple sentences or share personal information. Although a few can recall isolated vocabulary such as numbers or days, this does not reflect consistent language use. Due to the absence of a specialized English teacher, instruction relies on passive and traditional methods (copying words from the board or watching videos without mediation); while students are exposed to English vocabulary, their recall is vague and inconsistent.

These issues suggest a lack of meaningful learning and connection to the language, which limits early literacy development. Early literacy can be understood as “an all-embracing concept for a rich range of authorial and responsive practices using a variety of media and modalities, carried out by people during their early childhood” (Gillen and Hall, 2003, p.5). It must therefore be recognized as “a much more complex activity involving cognitive and strategic behavior” (p.6). From this perspective, literacy expands beyond reading and writing to include multimodal practices that engage students in meaningful and contextualized language learning.

Another issue is the predominance of decontextualized grammar-translation activities.

Assuming that young children can memorize isolated vocabulary without purpose or context results in boredom and disengagement. As Richards and Rodgers (1986) note, translation courses were “remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose” (p.4). This highlights how such practices fail to support early literacy and meaningful language learning.

Many classroom activities rely heavily on repetition and mechanical memorization, offering little room for exploration, interaction, or engagement, and the students become passive recipients of isolated content. In this matter, Vygotsky (1978) argued; “learning that is oriented toward developmental levels that have already been reached is ineffective from the viewpoint of a child’s overall development” (p. 89). Therefore, current methods do not match the children’s cognitive and emotional needs, particularly at such an imaginative and expressive age. From a “Zone of Proximal Development” view, mechanical activities that fail to stimulate imagination, creativity or expression cannot promote meaningful development.

In this sense, English classes rarely engage the student’s creativity or self-expression. Whereas arts classes allow some exploration, English lessons are typically mechanical, missing the opportunity to connect language learning with imagination. This absence of creative pedagogy is especially critical in early childhood. As Paulo Freire (1970) states, “knowledge only exists through invention, through reinvention, through the restless, impatient, and ongoing inquiry that human beings undertake in the world, with the world, and with others” (p. 52, *own translation*). Similarly, Eisner (2022) notes that “the arts provide opportunities for students to make connections between personal experience and subject matter, creating meaning through expression” (p. 70). Nevertheless, artistic and identity-based expression are largely absent from English learning in this context.

Despite the institutional frameworks and resources on paper, creative and identity-centered practices are rarely implemented in the class. The students struggle with their English skills but show creativity and interest when engaged in expressive activities. The lack of personal and meaningful learning experiences therefore limits vocabulary development. In response, this project explores arts-based self-expression related to identity as a tool for enhancing vocabulary learning in second graders. Through games, Total Physical Response (TPR), songs, and especially visual arts, this intervention aims to transform vocabulary learning into dynamic, expressive processes. As Greene (1995) explains, “imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible” (p. 3), empowering learners to connect with others while expressing themselves through language.

By bridging the gap between the macro-level bilingual policies discussed earlier and the micro-level realities of the 104 Prado Veraniego classroom, this research focuses on the need for innovative and inclusive pedagogical approaches. Art-based activities can strengthen vocabulary learning, fostering students’ holistic development. In this way, language learning becomes not only functional but also personal, empowering, and reflective.

### **Rationale**

Arts provide a powerful medium for exploring identity and fostering self-expression among young learners. Although children are often considered too young to engage with identity and social awareness-related themes, the arts offer age-appropriate ways to explore emotions, develop English vocabulary, and build awareness of themselves and others.

First, art-based activities support English vocabulary learning in young learners because artistic practices create multisensory learning environments. In agreement with Desk (2023), the art uses visual and tactile aspects, allowing children to associate words with creative expressions such as paintings, storytelling, drawings, role-play, among others. Consequently, these experiences strengthen connections between language and meaning-art which promotes deeper understanding and longer vocabulary retention.

Second, exploring self-expression is essential not only for language learning but also for identity development, self-confidence, emotional growth and a sense of belonging to the world. Art activities allow children to communicate feelings, ideas, and perspectives in a non-verbal manner, fostering self-awareness and empathy (Rowville, 2022). Furthermore, this process nurtures cognitive and interpretative skills, encouraging children to connect artistic creation with personal experiences while recognizing diversity and their role within a broader community.

Third, integrating arts in EFL classrooms helps create supportive environments where children feel safe experimenting with language. Research shows that arts integration promotes language learning while fostering critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness (Anderson, 2017). Engaging children in drawing, singing, storytelling, and role-play provides first “literacies” that precede and support reading and writing, allowing them to process emotions and explore societal concepts. Therefore, enhancing socio-emotional skills is clearly positive for children and their mental health, and it becomes pertinent to include practices that reflect children’s interests, allowing them to grow emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially.

This research explores how art-based self-expression of identity can enhance second graders’ English vocabulary while fostering inclusive and meaningful learning aligned with their interests and developmental needs. By noticing the importance of social themes in early childhood; self-expression of identity can align creative activities with the language through appropriate and contextually relevant learning experiences.

### **Research Question**

What effects does art-based self-expression of identity have on enhancing second graders’ English vocabulary learning?

### **Objectives**

### ***General Objective***

To identify the effects of art-based activities that encourage identity expression on second graders' English vocabulary learning.

### ***Specific Objectives***

To implement art-based activities designed to encourage student's self-expression of identity and English vocabulary learning.

To explore how students express their identity by using the visual arts and describing themselves in English.

To analyze the effects of art-based self-expression activities on students' English vocabulary learning processes.

## **State of Art and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter presents key studies relevant to English vocabulary learning in early childhood. First, international and national investigations examine the relevance of art-based activities and self-expression of identity in an EFL setting. And second, focused on art-based methodologies, this section highlights concepts, theories and notions and their crucial role in enhancing self-expression, emphasizing the significance of nurturing personal and social identity in early stages while promoting English vocabulary learning.

### **State of Art**

#### ***Arts Education in EFL settings***

First, a study in Greece by Argyriadi and Sotiropoulou-Zormpala (2017) delves into the impact of aesthetic flow activities on first graders' engagement in language arts and compares it to traditional curriculum activities. Here, the arts-flow tasks included role-play, dramatic expression, creative movement, visual arts, and embodied storytelling to promote multimodal learning. This study specifically explores how these creative methods influence students' participation, verbal

expression, and emotional involvement in language learning. Data were collected through observations and a five-point satisfaction scale evaluating both the emotional and intellectual responses of children in experimental and control groups.

The analysis of results revealed that the students showed greater verbal engagement, creativity, and positive emotions during the art-flow activities. These results indicate that aesthetic approaches foster participation and support language development, particularly vocabulary acquisition, in affectively and cognitively rich learning environments for young learners.

Second, in Colombia, Delgado and Chapetón (2015), through a qualitative and ethnographic vision, delved into a core methodology of the *Iconography* approach, which is artistic, multimodal, and prioritizes holistic and communicative development through visuals and oral work, and how young children from preschool to second grade and early primary settings communicate meaning and construct identity through drawings, symbols, and embodied storytelling before mastering written language. A key pedagogical strategy involved a symbolic teddy monkey that mediated between the teacher and students, encouraging storytelling, emotional expression and identity exploration. This method, along with songs, handicrafts (drawings), role-plays and games created a multimodal learning environment where meaning-making and emotional literacy emerged naturally.

This work is deeply important due to strong evidence that young learners can convey complex ideas and emotions through visual and symbolic forms, especially when supported by playful, emotionally responsive teaching. As such, the book provides both theoretical foundations and methodological inspiration for integrating arts and symbolic mediation into language education with young learners.

### ***Identity formation in Childhood***

Third, Stroumbos (2022) conducted a study in the United States examining how expressive arts interventions support identity formation in children aged 7-9. It also explores how art-based

therapeutic interventions impact personal and social identity development, focusing on emotions, self-expression, self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Using qualitative instruments (observations, therapist notes, and reflective journals), the study implemented arts-based sessions combining visual arts, movement, dance, and play therapy. Hence, the primary objective was to develop and test a holistic, child-centered arts therapy method designed to foster trust, confidence, emotional regulation, and stronger peer relationships through creative exploration.

Children engaged in structured and progressive sessions using visual arts to express feelings, personal narratives, movement to embody emotional states, and imaginative play to explore social roles and self-concepts. Examples of the intervention include the “Snap Cup” ritual to write, draw, and share positive affirmations or the “Rose and Thorn” task, encouraging reflection on personal strengths and challenges, and fostering self-awareness, empathy, and mutual sharing. The author observed that with this mix of modalities—visual art, movement, meditation, play, and dialogue—children demonstrated increased comfort expressing emotions, greater self-recognition, and enhanced empathic connection with peers, recognizing expressive arts therapy as a developmental bridge between emotional awareness and identity formation.

The study concluded that the expressive arts therapy method effectively enhanced children’s emotional regulation, self-esteem, and interpersonal trust, thereby supporting healthy identity exploration before adolescence. And although this project does not address psychological research, it shows that art-based tasks support identity formation in the EFL classroom.

Fourth, Wielgosz and Molyneux (2015) conducted a qualitative study in six primary schools in Melbourne, exploring how visual arts programs support identity construction among English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) learners. The study addressed how EAL/D learners face linguistic and cognitive demands, as well as cultural and identity-related challenges that affect their sense of belonging and self-concept. The authors aimed to examine the role of the specialist teacher and the visual arts classroom as spaces that enable learners to “be themselves” and negotiate

identity within multilingual and multicultural contexts. The methodology consisted of four case studies of four selected students, complemented by classroom observations, teacher questionnaires, and both group and individual interviews across the six schools.

Regarding the pedagogical process, visual-arts programs took place in a designated art space where students participated in multimodal activities such as drawing, painting, sculpture, and collage. These tasks were open-ended and encouraged personal reflection as the expression of cultural and linguistic identity. During these sessions, the specialist art teacher facilitated discussions about the students' work, personal narratives and cultural artifacts, encouraging peer collaboration and sharing. Researchers also observed students' transitions and interactions in their mainstream classrooms.

The results showed that learners felt greater agency in the art programme: they “got to be themselves” (p. 282), subtly resisted marginalization, and built more positive self-concepts as EAL/D learners. Specifically, the art room functioned as a “safe space”, where identity work occurred: learners expressed belonging, engaged with peer feedback, used visual modalities to communicate aspects of their linguistic/cultural identities beyond the limits of spoken English. This contributed to stronger identity construction and smoother social transition into mainstream classes. However, the authors caution that many art programmes still overlooked the full students' cultural/linguistic capital while stating that art-based EFL tasks must explicitly involve identity/representation and not just “fun art”.

Fifth, Sengsavang's doctoral dissertation (2018) examined moral identity development from middle childhood to adolescence in Canada. It conceptualized moral identity as a multifaceted and layered construct encompassing moral values, motivations, personal narratives that evolve with age and social context. Using a personological approach, the research employed structured interviews and questionnaires to capture the complexity of moral identity, integrating dispositional

traits, motivational dynamics, and autobiographical accounts. The sample comprised 190 participants divided into 3 groups: middle childhood, early adolescence and mid-adolescence.

The study consisted of three interrelated segments examining different layers of moral identity: the trait layer, measuring the importance children assign to moral values across social contexts and considering parental support as a predictor; moral identity motivation, addressing how age and social factors shape children's reasons for moral behavior, distinguishing between autonomous preferences and external pressures; the narrative layer, analyzing children's and adolescents' stories about moral and immoral actions to understand moral identity development. Coding systems with high inter-rater reliability categorized motivations such as personal-moral preferences, fairness concerns, self-interest, and references to external rules. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to identify age-related patterns in how participants internalize and express moral identity.

Results showed that moral identity is dynamic and context-dependent, emerging in middle childhood as a social construct becoming more autonomous and internalized with age. Younger children often relied on external rules or self-interest, whereas older children and adolescents demonstrated integrated motivations related to fairness and personal moral values. Moral reasoning also became more complex over time, and parental support predicted positive moral identity formation. The study concludes that moral identity develops through interacting narrative, cognitive, emotional, and social processes, marking middle childhood as a key stage for moral development, moving from external compliance to autonomous moral self-concepts.

### ***Vocabulary building in Primary School EFL***

First, Malia (2004) examined strategies for teaching English to young learners aged 4-12 in EFL contexts in Indonesia. Malia focuses on the importance of engaging, developmentally appropriate activities that support language learning while addressing children's cognitive, motor, social, and

emotional needs. Thus, she proposes analyzing tasks based on goals, input, procedures, outcomes, teacher and learner roles, and classroom organization.

This paper advocates for activity-based learning, incorporating meaningful tasks such as songs, chants, games, storytelling, drawing, and mini-projects to teach lexical sets (animals, body parts, actions, etc.) in context. These tasks foster motivation, creativity, autonomy, and vocabulary retention, while adapting materials to students' specific needs and attention spans. Child-friendly resources—such as visuals, toys, games, illustrations, and storytelling props—help maintain engagement in children's natural desire to communicate, and make language concepts more accessible, encouraging communication and creative experimentation.

Methodologically, the study analysed classroom implementations with children aged 4-6 and 7-9, focusing on how activity-based materials supported naturalistic learning in mixed-ability groups. Results showed that children recalled and used new vocabulary more spontaneously in songs, games, and short dialogues, demonstrating greater confidence in speaking English and transferring vocabulary to new contexts, such as describing pictures or retelling stories. Their improved ability to connect meaning, sound, and action suggest that play-based, multimodal activities effectively foster retention and communicative use.

Second, Rivas Ballesteros, Torres Flórez, and Valencia García (2017) investigated how visual materials support vocabulary teaching among Colombian second graders in an EFL classroom. The study focused on the effects of visual arts on vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and creativity. Data were collected over a three-month intervention through structured observations, reflective journals, and teacher and student interviews.

The method involved a practical arts-integrated vocabulary instruction project, using visual arts to present and reinforce English vocabulary. Students worked with images, tangible objects, posters, and realia while engaging in creative activities such as drawing, coloring, crafting to contextualize and concretize language input. The study emphasized that multimodal, sensory-rich

experiences and creative expression help young learners internalize language more effectively, making learning meaningful and motivating.

Results showed that visual arts enhanced vocabulary acquisition and learner motivation. Students demonstrated clearer understanding and use of new vocabulary, effectively linking words to images and creative productions. Besides, the creative process fostered self-expression and critical thinking, positively influencing their overall language learning experience. This research underscores the value of visual arts and multimodal pedagogy in strengthening vocabulary learning in young EFL learners

Third, two studies highlight the role of Total Physical Response (TPR) in EFL vocabulary learning. Benavides (2016) examined TPR with third-grade students aged 7-9 in Colombia, focusing on English verbs related to commands and movement. Lessons combined oral commands with corresponding physical movements, creating a multisensory, stress-free learning environment. Data were collected through classroom observations, lesson plans, and students' performance. Results show that TPR significantly improved vocabulary learning outcomes and retention, while enhancing students' attitudes towards English, demonstrating the method's suitability for middle childhood learners.

Building on this, Ángel and Londoño (2023) conducted a mixed-methods research study in Colombia with 34 students aged 10-11 using a pre-test/post-test design along with observations and interviews. Students participated in movement-based drills, responding to verbal commands accompanied by gestures and physical activities. Findings revealed significant vocabulary gains (25% increase in post-test scores) and that 85% of learners could correctly produce target words in role-play tasks previously inaccessible to them. Observations also showed increased willingness to participate, spontaneous use of target words, and active negotiation of meaning. The study concludes that TPR supports retention and fosters learner autonomy and positive attitudes toward

English, recommending the teachers integrate gesture-and movement-based tasks in primary EFL vocabulary instruction.

### ***Contributions of Investigations to the Present Research***

Integration of aesthetic and expressive strategies—as shown by Argyriadi, Sotiropoulou-Zormpala (2017), Delgadado and Chapetón (2015)—demonstrates how artistic mediation enhances engagement, emotional connection, and communicative development in young learners. Likewise, identity-focused research (Stroumbos, 2022; Wielgosz & Molyneux, 2015; Sengsavang, 2018) highlights that art-based experiences help children construct a sense of self, develop empathy, and strengthen confidence in social and linguistic interactions, recognizing learners’ linguistic and cultural capital. Exploring self-expression through creative and symbolic means also increases learners’ motivation and sense of belonging (Stroumbos, 2022).

Research on vocabulary building in EFL contexts (Malia, 2004; Rivas Ballesteros, Torres Flórez & Valencia García, 2017; Bayona Ángel & Alape Londoño, 2023) indicates that multimodal, playful, and movement-based activities improve vocabulary and foster positive attitudes toward English. Through art and gesture-supported strategies, students internalize and use new words spontaneously, associating meaning, sound, and action in memorable ways (Malia, 2004; Bayona Ángel & Alape Londoño, 2023). These approaches, rooted in creativity and bodily engagement, enhance retention, motivation, and autonomy; key factors for effective EFL learning in middle childhood.

Collectively, these investigations show that art-based strategies promote self-expression and identity formation while creating conditions for meaningful vocabulary learning, even when students are still developing oral and written English as it is the current situation. Consequently, this project encourages linguistic, emotional, and social growth, nurtures inclusivity and critical awareness, and provides young learners with a safe space to explore identities, building foundational language skills in a context that values creativity, diversity, and holistic development.

Accordingly, this project does not position art as an inherently transformative tool but rather examines how artistic practices acquire pedagogical meaning through intentional mediation, contextualized tasks, and reflective classroom interaction. In that sense, the reviewed studies suggest that arts integration can foster creative thinking, engagement, and meaningful language learning when supported by purposeful pedagogical design and socially situated learning experiences, rather than emerging spontaneously from artistic activities alone.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Arts Education and Art Learning***

The United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2023) defines Arts Education (AE) from two perspectives. First, art as a subject focuses on developing learners' artistic skills and sensibilities. Second, art as a pedagogical tool ("learning through the arts") uses artistic media to enhance other areas of education. AE transcends language by delving into alternative ways of knowing through symbols and signals, offering a unique form of knowledge (pp. 9-10). UNESCO's *Roadmap for Arts Education* (2006) further highlights AE objectives: uphold the human right to education and cultural participation; develop individual capabilities; improve educational quality; promote cultural diversity expression (pp. 3-6).

AE fosters creativity, cooperation, and appreciation for the arts in diverse and multicultural societies. Implementation develops skills in visual, musical, performative and multimedia arts, while promoting critical civic engagement, problem-solving, and critical thinking UNESCO (2023). It also benefits academic achievements (improved test scores, writing skills), personal growth (confidence, self-expression), and social outcomes (empathy, perspective-taking) (UNESCO, 2006). Thus, AE is valuable for education and society by recognizing diverse knowledge systems and raising awareness of social themes (pp. 12-13).

Dewey (1934) in *Art as Experience*, emphasizes reconnecting art to human experience and daily life, rather than treating it as elite or remote. Artistic expression is not only aesthetic

enjoyment but a means of meaningful engagement with the world, fostering creativity, critical thinking and cultural understanding by linking students' personal and social realities to artistic expressions (pp.3-8). Dewey further asserts that connecting fine art to ordinary experiences reveals the factors that promote or hinder the development of everyday activities into artistic values.

Additionally, in *The Act of Expression*, Dewey (1934) frames art as a process transforming innate impulses into meaningful actions through interaction with the environment. These impulses evolve into conscious-deliberate expressions, allowing students to communicate meaning through creative arts. Art education thus promotes the transformation from spontaneous impulses to expressive, conscious creations, linking students' inner selves to the external world (pp. 56-65).

Crucially, contemporary arts education should be understood as a way of knowing and a set of pedagogical conditions, not as decoration. UNESCO states that culture and arts education should be holistic, transformative, inclusive, and oriented toward creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and the development of reading, writing, speaking, empathy, and solidarity from early childhood onward (UNESCO, 2024, pp. 2-6). Pant et al. (2023, pp. 1-3) argue that science and art are contemporary ways of knowing and stress the importance of critical reflection so that art is recognized as epistemology rather than ornament. Samaniego et al. (2024, pp. 1-4, 27-28) show that creative thinking in art and design education is fostered through experiential learning, interdisciplinary projects, artistic practice, nature-based activities, and digital tools, and they identify originality, fluency, flexibility, and elaboration as core skills.

In line with the previous ideas, Denée et al. (2024, pp. 1035-1045) add that visual arts learning becomes pedagogically meaningful when teachers have practical engagement with materials, sustained professional learning, relational trust, and intentional leadership. Taken together, these studies show that art does not automatically generate creativity; rather, creativity emerges when artistic experiences are deliberately scaffolded, critically framed, and contextually supported.

Here, it is pivotal to delve into the arts as pedagogy concept as it is deeply rooted in the belief that art can foster personal growth and enhance educational experiences. Makovets, Panuykova, and Lukina (2019) argue that art pedagogy is not limited to teaching artistic skills but also contributes to the development of personality through self-expression, creative thinking, and communication. These authors note that education systems are often constrained by standardized methods, highlighting the need for more creative and dialogic learning environments that actively engage students. In this sense, art becomes an intermediary for deeper understanding, not a tool for creativity, but a vehicle for self-exploration with a path of reflection ahead (p.14).

Likewise, Naughton, Biesta, and Cole (2017) mentioned the transformative power of the arts in education, challenging conventional views of creativity as just individual expression; instead, they propose a pedagogy that encourages learners to engage in critical dialogue with the world, confronting the complexities and the uncertainties of the human experience (pp. 4-6).

Thus, art as pedagogy extends beyond traditional art instruction to emphasize its role in nurturing emotional intelligence, critical thinking and empathy skills. When integrated into teaching, artistic practices become powerful tools for fostering personal and social awareness. This approach illustrates flexible and inclusive educational environments where art provides a safe space for self-expression while serving as a transformative means for interpreting and engaging with the world.

### ***Arts Education applied in EFL***

Arts-integrated EFL approaches merge creative disciplines (music, visual arts, photography and drama) with language instruction, transforming vocabulary learning into a dynamic multimodal experience. According to Chi (2017), arts-integration positions the arts not as supplementary tools but as mediating modes that engage learners' cognitive, affective and identity dimensions. Art can function as stimulus, refresher, guide and facilitator in the EFL contexts (pp. 42-43), identifying three key aspects for integration: learners' prior cultural and artistic resources, the affordances of

multimodal expression (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), and peer-teacher interaction within the arts-infused setting (pp. 55-57).

Drawing on Liora Bresler's typology of arts-integration styles (subservient, co-equal, affective, social) (p.60), Chi explains that language tasks may either marginalize the arts (subservient) or co-construct identity and meaning (co-equal). In co-equal approaches, language becomes embedded in creative self-expression, enabling identity-rich, meaning-making learning opportunities. Thus, art provides a safe space for experimentation with language and self, where learners reshape personal meaning, and negotiate bilingual/multicultural identities (pp. 70-74). Tasks such as storyboards, role-play vignettes, audio-visual production, and visual-metaphor-drawing allow learners to anchor new vocabulary in their own creations and emerging identities (p.72). Under this light, art bridges self-expression and language use, allowing students to explore emotions, gender perspectives, and interests while developing linguistic abilities.

Chi also proposes several implementation dimensions for arts-integrated EFL. First, task design must provide multichannel entry points (visual, auditory, movement-based) and connect with learners' identities (p.65). Second, classroom interaction must shift toward peer-co-constructed artifacts, encouraging sharing, reflection, and identity negotiation (p.68). Third, assessment should value artifacts, multimodal outputs, and identity narratives, validating learners' expensive voices (p.75). When these elements align, arts-integrated instruction strengthens instructor-student relationships and peer cohesion, generating an environment where learners feel confident experimenting with the target language (pp. 70-74). Thus, combining identity formation with vocabulary building through visual and performative arts can cultivate both linguistic competence and creative confidence in early EFL classrooms.

Another crucial contribution is David E. Gullatt's (2008) study carried out in terms of arts integration in education, which provides a strong basis for applying arts-based methodologies into EFL instruction. Gullatt emphasizes the cognitive and affective power of the arts to transform

traditional learning into embodied and meaningful experiences. Drawing on Damasio (2003) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Gullatt explains that human condition—the way people think and make sense of the world—is inherently emotional and sensory, validating the use of arts—often viewed as “non-academic”—as cognitively rich learning tools (p. 14). This perspective is relevant in EFL contexts, where drama, visual arts, and music provide multiple pathways for language internalization through metaphors, movement, and emotional resonance.

Gullatt (2008) also draws attention to the potential of arts integration to enhance learning through active and student-centered practices. Citing Smith and Herring (1996), he notes that aesthetic responses—expressive writing, creative movement, soundscaping, and informal drama—deepen students’ comprehension and motivation to engage with texts. Although discussed in L1 contexts, these strategies resonate strongly with EFL pedagogy, particularly when the goal is to go beyond rote memorization toward meaningful language use. Similarly, the success of mini-performances in early grades (Morado, Koenig, & Wilson, 1999), specifically among at-risk students, signals how the arts empower learners who struggle with traditional language formats by engaging in bodily-kinesthetic, musical, or spatial intelligences (pp. 17-18).

In line with Gee (2000), Gullatt (2008) further explains that visual arts act as a communication system with their own vocabulary (line, texture, shape, space, and color) and principles (balance, rhythm and unity). When students are encouraged to explore these elements across disciplines, they develop the ability to ask questions and generate new understandings. Berghoff’s (1998) also argues that students build meaning through alternative sign systems—visual arts or drama—, allowing them to express comprehension beyond written language (pp. 19-20). Therefore, integrating the arts into instruction promotes both creativity and deeper cognitive engagement.

Here, visual arts include a wide range of artistic expressions (drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, photography, and crafts) that engage learners through visual perception.

According to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999), children initially explore their environment through sensory-rich learning contexts (p. 8). Visual arts therefore nurture sensory awareness, emotional sensitivity and creative exploration. Likewise, Lynne and Seam (2010) note that arts integration allows students to demonstrate understanding through tangible products, moving beyond traditional assessments (tests and written reports) (p. 4). In this project, visual arts are implemented mainly through drawing, painting, crafts, realia, and images to stimulate creativity and reinforce learning through visual objects and means.

Understanding the role of visual arts in education is pivotal for explaining their relevance in this project. Research consistently shows their positive impact across disciplines. Eubanks (2012) argues that because artistic activities do not have “right answers”, students experience less pressure to perform perfectly and greater freedom to take risks, encouraging authentic self-expression. This reduced fear of failure increases motivation and communication, making visual arts an ideal medium for language learning for students who may struggle with more rigid instructional formats (pp. 40-45).

Further support comes from *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Fiske, 1999), which demonstrates that arts integration engages students often disconnected from conventional instruction, transforms classrooms into spaces of exploration, promotes self-directed learning, and improves peer relationships through empathy and appreciation of diversity. Arts activities also present meaningful challenges for all learners and support students from socioeconomic backgrounds by offering inclusive context-sensitive learning (pp. 9-11). Similarly, Jensen (2001) states that artistic engagement strengthens the sensory, emotional, cognitive, and motor systems underlying academic achievement (p. 2). Thus, this project uses visual arts to enrich English learning and as a means to create a more authentic environment.

### ***Self-Expression and Identity Formation in Young Learners***

First, defining personal identity involves understanding how memory, self-awareness, and interpersonal relationships shape the self from early childhood. Wilson and Ross (2003) discuss that personal identity is shaped by how individuals interpret and remember their past selves, as current goals and beliefs influence one's recollection of former experiences, building a sense of continuity (p. 137). This reflective capacity relates to what Gardener (1999, as cited in Abdallah, 2010) calls "intrapersonal intelligence", the ability to understand one's emotions, motivations, and inner life and use that knowledge to guide behavior. Likewise, Laughlin's view (1999, as cited in Abdallah, 2010) noted that individuals with strong intrapersonal intelligence are reflective, emotionally aware, self-driven, and in pursuit of deeper existential understanding (p. 82). Hence, identity formation begins in childhood, where early expressions (emotional articulation or the pursuit of personal goals) mark the initial stages of self-construction.

This developmental process is also tied to social relationships. Schaffer (2006, as cited in Raburu, 2015) distinguishes between personal identity (the child's sense of individuality) and social identity (the sense of belonging to social groups), both emerging through interaction with peers and family (p. 83). Similarly, Dunn (2004, cited in Abdallah, 2010) explains that friendships support emotional well-being and shape identity, fostering belonging and resilience. Thus, identity arises from a blend of emotional, cognitive, physical, and contextual factors, shaping one's uniqueness (Olson, 2002). Philosophically, Locke (1960, as cited in Noonan, 2003) associates identity with self-consciousness (p. 33). Likewise, Norton (2013, as cited in Preece, 2016) defines identity as an evolving understanding of one's relationship with the world across time and space, highlighting its dynamic and contextual nature (p.2).

In early childhood, identity formation is linked to the development of autonomy. According to Erikson (1968), this stage involves the tension between "holding on" and "letting go", extending beyond physical control to emotional and behavioral regulation. As children learn to manage

impulses and explore their environment, they begin building a sense of autonomy. Through experiences of self-assertion and external regulation, children negotiate their emerging identity. Positive parental guidance is essential in balancing self-control and self-expression, helping prevent feelings of shame or doubt that might negatively affect self-concept.

Erikson further explains that early childhood is a period when children explore the meaning of “I” and “mine” along with evolutions of self-awareness. Through experiences with caregivers and their environment, they test boundaries and express their will. Environments that encourage creative self-expression and affirm child’s choices enable healthy identity development, whereas controlling or punitive contexts may produce feelings of inadequacy and a need for perfection. By nurturing autonomy while providing supportive boundaries, children develop confidence and expressive freedom (pp. 107-114).

Deepening the connection between education and identity formation, Erikson (1968) describes in “Childhood and the Anticipation of Roles” how growing mobility and language abilities allow children to explore environment and imagination, contributing to the formation of self-identity and the anticipation of future roles. As imagination develops, children may experience emotional tensions related to power, gender, and identity, leading to an early internal crisis (pp. 115-117). These experiences prepare them for the next developmental stage, “School Age” and “Task Identification,” where school becomes central to identity formation. In this stage, imagination becomes task oriented as they develop social and technical skills through interaction with adults and peers. Within educational contexts, experiences of success or failure heavily impact children’s sense of competence and self-worth (pp. 122-127).

Erikson (pp. 122-127) also describes that during school age children develop a sense of industry, learning to take pride in producing things and aligning their actions with societal expectations. Nonetheless, feelings of inferiority may emerge if children feel unsupported in their learning environment. A supportive teacher can mitigate these effects by recognizing individual

strengths and talents. If these needs remain unmet, learners may feel disconnected not only from their tasks, but also from their sense of self. Thus, incorporating artistic and creative activities become valuable, as they allow children to experience mastery, express individuality, and gain recognition. Balancing discipline with creativity, and work with play, is therefore crucial for supporting children's developing competence and identity.

Here, the teacher's role becomes fundamental in shaping identity formation within the EFL classroom through their pedagogical choices, interactions, and learning environments. Rendón (2019) highlights how teachers' identities are shaped by the interaction between personal beliefs and institutional constraints, influencing their ability to implement flexible and creative pedagogies that encourage student self-expression. When teachers exercise professional autonomy and adapt methods to students' cultural and individual needs, they foster authentic communication and support learners' emerging identities as language users (pp. 45-49). These ideas align with Goffman's (1959) and Gee's (2001), who view identity as socially constructed and contextually negotiated (pp. 26-32). Such perspectives reinforce the relevance of teacher agency in creating classroom environments that support expressive, art-based vocabulary activities.

Recognizing these aspects enables teachers to implement strategies that encourage self-expression and creativity (salient for identity formation). Approaches such as art-based storytelling, visual arts projects, and multimodal tasks involving drawing, crafting, and role play can contextualize vocabulary within meaningful, sensory-rich experiences, giving personal voice to language use. Combined with dialogue and peer sharing, they create supportive socio-affective environments that nurture learner confidence and identity development (Gardener, 1983; Maley & Peachey, 2015; Wright & Tomlinson, 2014; Nation, 2013; Thornbury, 2002; Hinkel, 2014; Krashen, 2009; Lightbown & Spada, 2013, as cited by EFL Café, 2024).

Empirical evidence also supports these approaches. Ramírez Contreras (2024) demonstrates that integrating vocabulary instruction with self-regulatory practices (goal setting, reflection, and

collaborative projects) enhances language processing and learner motivation (p. 38). Her study in Colombian public elementary classrooms shows that multimodal materials stimulate motivation and socio-emotional involvement. By mixing expressive arts (drawing, movement, and reflective tasks) within a constructivist framework, the intervention strengthened self-expression, emotional regulation, and active participation, improving receptive vocabulary. These findings reiterate the importance of multimodal, creative, and socio-emotionally supportive activities that allow children to integrate new vocabulary while exploring identity and emotional expression (pp. 39-50), encouraging a holistic approach within the present intervention, where materials will serve both cognitive and socio-emotional functions in language learning.

Similarly, it is key to emphasize the value of materials such as picture books, drawing, realia, posters, and craft tools to engage learners physically with vocabulary. Strategies including visual storytelling, craft-based vocabulary games, collaborative drawing, and reflective dialogue allow children to externalize their identity experiences alongside language learning. Through these methods, teachers act as facilitators who create safe spaces where learners can understand their environment and express themselves through language, supporting both linguistic and socio-emotional development. (Rivas Ballesteros, Torres Flórez, & Valencia García, 2017, pp. 45-52).

In this scenario, the relationship between foreign language learning and identity development is multifaceted. While English is often associated with cultural immersion, a critical view suggests that it functions primarily as a communicative bridge rather than a replacement of learners' identities (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 8-12, Council of Europe, 2020, pp. 10-15). This means using English as a tool to empower learners to express their own identities instead of adopting external cultural identities (Norton, 2013, pp. 1-20, 71-85). The CEFR supports this by focusing on language use for meaningful communication rather than cultural assimilation (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 21-22). Thus, English becomes a medium through which learners negotiate

identity (Norton, 2013, pp. 71-81), underscoring the teacher's role in fostering inclusive learning environments where language development with identity affirmation coexist.

Ultimately, these theoretical insights underpin the present project, which proposes art-based vocabulary activities as spaces for children to explore and express their identities through English. By connecting language learning with creative production, this project aims to strengthen both communicative competence and self-awareness, transforming the EFL classroom into a meaningful environment for personal and social identity development.

### ***Vocabulary Learning in EFL Contexts***

Vocabulary acquisition in EFL contexts for young learners, particularly second graders, is deeply influenced by their developmental stage and learning preferences. According to Piaget's concrete operational stage, children learn more effectively through tangible and concrete experiences (Mounoud, 2001, as cited in Williams & Burdem, 1999). Hence, integrating visual and kinesthetic stimuli such as drawings, flashcards, and other visual support facilitates vocabulary learning (Llach & Gómez, 2007, p. 10). Likewise, Halliwell (1994) notes that young learners interpret meaning through context, body language, and tone, suggesting that vocabulary instruction should be embedded in meaningful and relatable activities. Bloor (1991) further states that children acquire vocabulary more effectively when engaging with real objects and situations, reducing reliance on abstract explanations or translations into their mother tongue. (Llach & Gómez, 2007, pp. 10-11)

In this way, art-based activities match these developmental needs and provide dynamic approaches for vocabulary teaching in EFL settings. Activities such as role-play, drawing, and collaborative art projects draw on children's curiosity and sociability, supporting Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis. As stated by Dulay and Burt (1977), affective factors (motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety) impact second language learning: learners with positive attitudes have a "low" affective filter, facilitating access to comprehensible input, whereas negative attitudes create a "high" filter that blocks language acquisition (pp. 30-32). This point highlights the importance of

safe and supportive environments for self-expression. Similarly, Zanon (1992) emphasizes connecting vocabulary learning with students' interest and personal experiences, since meaningful learning allows new knowledge to integrate with prior experience and remain in long-term memory (Llach & Gómez, 2007, pp. 11)

Building on these ideas, Llach and Gómez (2007) discuss the pertinence of incorporating relevant semantic fields, such as leisure and games, in young learners' vocabulary development, as these themes increase engagement and relatability. Creating opportunities for students to communicate about their creations and collaborate with peers strengthens vocabulary retention and practical use. Therefore, communicative and context-based teaching approaches that incorporate meaningful interaction and creative expression are key for supporting long-term vocabulary development in young EFL learners.

### ***Receptive & Productive Vocabulary***

Receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners recognize and understand in context but cannot use actively in speaking or writing yet. According to Webb (2005), it includes words identified during reading or listening but not produced by learners. Thus, receptive vocabulary is closely linked to reading and listening skills. Hu and Nation (2000) and Schmitt (2000) note that reading comprehension largely depends on vocabulary familiarity: learners with broader receptive vocabularies grasp both general meanings and details of texts. Conversely, unfamiliar words hinder comprehension and lead learners to rely on dictionaries or teacher explanations, which may limit deeper language internalization. Similarly, limited receptive vocabulary can cause confusion in listening tasks, especially when exposure to language input is insufficient (Hu & Nation, 2000, pp. 403-405; Schmitt, 2000, pp. 45-47; Webb, 2005, pp. 33-35).

Productive vocabulary, in contrast, includes words learners can both comprehend and actively use in speaking and writing. Webb (2008) defines it as the subset of receptive vocabulary that learners can recall and apply appropriately to communicate meaning. This requires the ability

to pronounce words and construct meaningful messages. Productive vocabulary therefore involves active language output. Learners with limited productive vocabulary may struggle to participate confidently in conversations, discussions and roundtables. Effective spoken communication also depends on pronunciation and intonation, while writing demands correct spelling and grammatical usage, reflecting the learner's true control of the language (Webb, 2008, pp. 79-82; Schmitt, 2000, pp. 50-53).

From a didactic view, distinguishing between receptive and productive vocabulary has key implications for young EFL learners. Since students usually develop receptive vocabulary before productive use (Segura, 2021; Webb, 2008), teachers should first provide rich contextual input (stories, songs, interactive visuals) to expand recognition and comprehension. To move vocabulary from receptive to productive, tasks must encourage active language production, including games, peer discussions, drawing and labeling, and project work (Schmitt & McCarthy, 2000; Segura, 2022). In this project with second-grade learners, who respond well to visual and creative tasks and are still developing writing and speaking skills, vocabulary should be scaffolded across both dimensions: multimodal recognition (listening/reading supported by art) followed by guided production opportunities that allow safe language and self-expression. This progression ensures vocabulary learning moves toward meaningful use, linguistic competence, identity expression, and increased learner confidence.

### ***Vocabulary Selection and Sequencing***

This section outlines the principles guiding the vocabulary selection in the intervention: (a) starting from concrete, perceptually salient lexis and high-interest topics; (b) pairing lexical items with stable communicative frames to promote early production; (c) recycling and gradually increasing cognitive demands so receptive knowledge becomes productive; and (d) embedding vocabulary practice in arts-based, socially mediated tasks that enhance involvement and retention.

First, beginning with concrete, familiar topics (Cycle 1: colors, emotions, likes, animals, fruits, body parts) aligns with recommendations for young learners because perceptually salient, everyday referents reduce cognitive load and provide strong multimodal cues (visual, tactile, kinesthetic) that support initial encoding (Nation, 2017, pp. 1-4). Concrete nouns (animals, fruits, body parts) and familiar adjectives are easier for children to map onto meaning and represent in art tasks, increasing meaningful encounters with each word—a core condition for vocabulary learning (Nation, 2017, pp. 2-5). Also, introducing frames such as “I am” and “I like” alongside likes/emotions provides learners with simple structures to express identity and personal interests while practicing early speech acts (Nation, 2017, p.6).

Second, classifying the vocabulary by lexical and communicative function (nouns for referents; adjectives for description and feeling; verbs for actions) while pairing them with reusable frames (e.g., “I am”, “I like”, “I feel”, “I am wearing”, “I can”, “He/She is”, etc) supports the shift from receptive recognition to productive use. Research shows that pairing vocabulary with predictable sentence frames accelerates production because learners face fewer processing demands when producing whole utterances (Nation, 2017, pp. 6-7). This allows students to speak about personal experience while practicing vocabulary and grammar (Nation, 2017, p. 7).

Third, the progression from receptive to productive skills across the project cycles promotes vocabulary retention: Cycle 1 focuses on receptive knowledge (identification, matching, drawings); Cycle 2 expands descriptive and social vocabulary with controlled sentence production (self-portraits, clothing descriptions, value statements); Cycle 3 requires collaborative and reflective production (family descriptions, pronouns structure, celebration verbs). Evidence shows that repeated, varied encounters with output meaningful tasks strengthen retention (Laufer & Hulstijn, pp. 1-2; Hulstijn, 2001, pp. 258-260). According to Involvement Load Hypothesis (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001), tasks that require stronger motivational-cognitive involvement (elaboration,

rehearsal, and automaticity) lead to better vocabulary learning (pp. 1-4), which arts-based activities can promote through creation, explanation and evaluation.

Here, Hulstijn (2001) highlights three cognitive mechanisms for durable learning: elaboration (deep processing of lexical form and meaning during initial exposure) (pp. 17-18); rehearsal (repeated activation across time) (pp. 17-19); automaticity (fast lexical access through repeated exposure) (pp. 18-19). The author also notes that retention depends less on whether learning is intentional or incidental and more on the frequency and depth of processing (pp. 17-18). This framework better accounts for the pedagogical design of Cycles 1-3, which promote elaboration, repeated use, and gradual movement toward automatic and meaningful production.

Moreover, semantic clustering (grouping related words: fruits + texture/flavor adjectives; animals + physical adjectives; emotions + feeling verbs) reduces memory demands by letting learners rely on shared features. However, this strategy is effective only when clusters are recycled across contexts, providing spaced repetitions and varied contexts, both critical for moving knowledge from recognition to production (Nation, 2017, pp. 3-5). This approach is reflected in art activities that introduce vocabulary with strong support and later reuse it in more demanding social and performative contexts.

Fourth, embedding vocabulary learning in arts-based, multimodal activity is pedagogically effective because arts integration (visual arts, music, drama) provides multiple retrieval cues (visual, kinesthetic, affective) and socially meaningful contexts for language use. It also supports identity construction and self-expression (Valbuena García, 2021, pp. 9-13; Rocha-Bernal, 2024, pp. 164-167), which were central aims of the cycles. Research in Arts-Based Teaching in ELT further shows that combining artistic modalities increases opportunities for meaningful output, and promotes creative language use (Valbuena García, 2021, pp. 12-13, 50-52; Rocha Bernal, 2024, pp. 164-166).

The sociocultural view also explains the role of art as a mediating tool in learning, through which higher psychological functions (concept categorization and self-narration) develop via socially-supported tasks and semiotic tools (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 57-60). In this design, Cycle 1's art tasks mediate basic labeling and emotional literacy; Cycle 2's identity and role play tasks mediate perspective-taking and role language; Cycle 3's collaborative productions foster social language and reflective speech, indicating mediated learning (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 56-60).

Finally, the cycle sequencing represents a gradual increase in abstraction and social complexity that is developmentally appropriate and pedagogically strategic. Moving to 1-concrete to 2-social role to 3-collaborative reflection reduces cognitive load initially while progressively raising communicative demands, enabling learners to reuse and extend vocabulary in more socially sophisticated contexts (Nation, 2017, pp. 6-8; Valbuena García, pp. 50-52). Embedding every lexical cluster within arts activities ensures meaningful repetition, multimodal encoding, and higher involvement load; conditions associated with productive vocabulary learning in young EFL learners (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001, pp. 1-4; Rocha-Bernal, 2024, pp. 164-167).

### ***Techniques for Integrating Visual Arts and Vocabulary Building in the classroom***

The techniques to teach vocabulary through visual arts in EFL contexts, where retention and meaningful use often present challenges, are now presented. During this project, students frequently struggled to retain new words, revealing the need for creative and multisensory approaches. Visual arts offer an ideal avenue to make vocabulary learning engaging and memorable, as activities such as realia, drawing, and illustrations create sensory experiences that anchor language in tangible contexts (Jensen, 2001). For this reason, incorporating the following techniques supports vocabulary learning in EFL settings.

1. **Realia** involves using real-life objects so learners can see, touch, and manipulate materials directly. Richards and Rodgers (1986) describe realia as resources that help teachers create meaningful classroom scenarios, including visual media (pictures, maps, slides, flashcards,

classroom objects); auditory media (songs, riddles, rhymes); audio-visual media (audio videos, movies) (p. 80). These elements help contextualize vocabulary and promote meaningful learning.

2. **Drawing** is another powerful tool in the visual arts department regarding language instruction. Fay (2013) refers to drawing as a key human form of communication that often emerges before oral language, allowing students to express ideas and emotions visually when they may not yet be able to articulate in a verbal or written way; thus, visual representation turns into a bridge towards linguistic expression (p. 6).

3. **Pictures and illustrations** also support vocabulary learning by linking visual imagery to meaning without relying on translation. Carpenter and Olson (2012) found that visual support improves both understanding and recall, enabling learners to interpret vocabulary directly in the target language.

4. **Crafts** provide another hands-on artistic strategy. Bastianoni (2006) explains that working with materials such as clay, paper, or coloring tools anchors language in sensory-rich experiences and tangible products. Through this process, learners do more than simply repeating words; they experience them through multiple senses, which strengthens memory retention while encouraging creativity, collaboration, and deeper cognitive processing.

### **Methodological Framework**

This chapter outlines the methodological foundations of the study, including the research approach, research type, and data collection instruments used within the educational setting. It specifies the procedures and data sources through which classroom practices, students' productions, and pedagogical interactions are documented and analyzed, ensuring coherence between the research objectives and the intervention design.

### **Research Approach**

This study adopts the qualitative approach, a form of scientific inquiry that seeks to answer research questions by systematically gathering evidence and offering findings that are not predetermined.

Within the interpretative paradigm, its main strength lies in understanding phenomena from the perspective of the participants involved. As Hernández (2010) explains, qualitative data collection involves obtaining participants' perspectives and viewpoints in order to interpret what is being observed (p. 9). This approach goes beyond surface-level data by examining culturally situated values, behaviors, social norms, and contextual factors. Descriptive analysis is essential to capture the complexity of human experiences, emotions, and social interaction, as well as intangible elements such as gender roles, socioeconomic influences, and cultural dynamic, which contribute to understanding a phenomenon in its whole picture (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, pp. 1-2).

In the present study, qualitative research is appropriate because it allows an in-depth exploration of how art-based self-expression of identity influences second graders' English vocabulary learning. It also emphasizes contextual and cultural considerations, aligning with the action research methodology implemented in this project. Through this perspective, the study seeks to understand and improve practices by examining students' engagement, behaviors, emotions, and identity expressions.

### **Research Type**

Action research is a form of applied research designed to address specific problems or implement new approaches within a particular context (Cohen & Manion, 1944 as cited in Burns, 2010, p.6). Its method adapts according to the information required, allowing practitioners to identify areas for improvement and conduct the research themselves to develop recommendations for effective practices. Through this process, targeted changes in procedures and systems can enhance both organizational and individual performance (Denscombe, 2010 as cited in Burns, 2010, pp. 6-7). It includes collecting robust data while implementing and evaluating a diverse range of outcomes, followed by further investigations to refine practices (Denscombe, 2007 as cited in Burns, 2010,

p.7). This methodology follows a cyclical process that involves the four interconnected phases of a) planning, b) acting, c) observing, and d) reflecting (Burns, 2010).

In the planning phase, the researcher identifies a pedagogical problem through reflective inquiry and classroom observation; in this project, a semester-long process revealed the need to connect English vocabulary learning with art-based identity self-expression among second graders, leading to the design of an intervention aligned with manageable research goals (Burns, 2010, pp. 22-25). The acting phase involves implementing these strategies as instructional activities become sources of evidence (pp. 55-57) with art-based tasks functioning as learning interventions and data-generating moments. The observing phase entails examining the evidence in which analysis and reflection occur continuously (pp. 104-107). Finally, the reflecting phase allows the teacher-researcher to build personal practical knowledge and reconsider beliefs, emotions, and classroom decisions (pp. 142-144), particularly regarding the impact of identity-based artistic on vocabulary learning outcomes and participation.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

### ***Observations & Field Notes***

In this study, participant observation serves as a key qualitative method for understanding the dynamics of art-based activities and their effects on second graders' English vocabulary learning. Participant observation has the researcher immersed in the classroom environment, looking at the development of the class trying to learn as an "insider" while remaining an "outsider" (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p.13). Observations are recorded through field notes, which register how artistic activities relate to English vocabulary learning. Thus, participant observation helps researchers understand phenomena and complement data from other methods (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p.14).

Field notes derived from participant observations capture both objective events and subjective aspects of students' experiences (see Annex 4). Researchers need to make sure they

“include as many details as possible” (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p.21).

In this study, field notes will document pertinent moments such as students’ verbal descriptions of their artworks, peer interactions, and the context where the activities take place.

### ***Artifacts***

In this research, artifacts refer to objects—physical and conceptual—created through human activity that function as tools or mediums of expression (Díaz-Kommonen, 2004). From this perspective, artifacts integrate cultural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of learning (Wartofsky (2004), as cited in Díaz-Kommonen, 2004, p. 1-2). Here, Wartofsky’s concept of tertiary artefacts explains how creative processes, such as works of art and symbolic creations, shape the way learners perceive and reinterpret their realities (2004, p.2).

Within this project, artifacts refer to students’ art-based creations, which function both as learning products and as visual expressions of identity. Additionally, the students’ artworks and their verbal descriptions will be collected as primary data to analyze their use of vocabulary related to colors, shapes, emotions, and identity themes (see Annex 5).

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews & Vocabulary Assessment***

A simple pre- and post-test will be used to assess students’ English vocabulary learning before and after the intervention. The test will be age-appropriate and designed to measure vocabulary related to the art-based self-expression activities implemented in the project. It will also include vocabulary recognition and short sentence production tasks (see Annex 6).

Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to follow guiding questions while remaining flexible during the conversation. This format is suitable for exploring students’ perceptions of the art-based activities and their learning processes, allowing researchers to maintain a predetermined set of open-ended questions while providing opportunities to probe deeper into answers. This instrument requires careful preparation and execution to support the identification of emotions, motives, and detailed perceptions that a questionnaire might miss; hesitation, tone, or enthusiasm

during responses have the power of revealing dimensions of students' experiences that nurture the data (Bell, 2010, pp. 162-163).

After the whole intervention, brief one-on-one semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected students to discuss their artworks and the vocabulary used to describe them (see annex 7). Additionally, data collection will be supported by worksheets (see Annex 8), and audio recordings of classroom exercises, providing complementary evidence for analysis within the vocabulary assessment exercises.

### **Categorical Matrix**

Murcia (2017) defines the categorical system as a structured set of interrelated categories that guide the research process and support data analysis. This operates as a relational and dynamic structure in which categories may be organized at different levels (central, first-order-second-order, or transversal) depending on the study's objectives (own translation, pp. 80-82). Additionally, the construction of the categorical system is understood as an iterative and progressive process, in which categories are continuously refined to ensure coherence between the research problem, objectives, theoretical framework, instruments, and analysis (own translation, pp. 83-84, 90-92).

In this study, the categorical matrix was constructed deductively from the research question and aligned with the theoretical framework. The main categories were derived from the key concepts embedded in the research question, while the subcategories emerged from their articulation with the theoretical foundations of the study. This process resulted in a hierarchical organization of categories, first-order categories such as identity formation, self-expression in young learners, then arts-based education and vocabulary learning in EFL contexts as relevant concepts as well. These were further specified into second-and third-order categories that address more precise dimensions, such as intrapersonal development, social identity, multimodal expression, and vocabulary learning processes. This categorical matrix ensures coherence and analytical depth by systematically linking theory, data, and research objectives.

| <b>Research Question:</b> What effects does art-based self-expression of identity have in enhancing second graders' English vocabulary learning?                                                                                                          |                                      |                                                                   |                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Specific Objective</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>1<sup>st</sup> order category</b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> order category</b>                              | <b>3<sup>rd</sup> order category</b>                                                         |
| <p>To implement art-based activities designed to encourage student's self-expression of identity and English vocabulary learning.</p> <p>To explore how students express their identity by using the visual arts and describing themselves in English</p> | <b>Identity formation</b>            | <b>Self-expression &amp; Identity Formation in Young Learners</b> | Intrapersonal intelligence and self-awareness                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                                                                   | Social identity development                                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      | <b>Influence of Arts Education on Identity Expression</b>         | Multimodal expression                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                                                                   | Emotional and social outcomes (self-expression, empathy, social inclusion, cooperative work) |
| <p>To analyze the effects of art-based self-expression activities on students' English vocabulary learning processes.</p>                                                                                                                                 | <b>Vocabulary Learning in EFL</b>    | <b>Receptive Vocabulary</b>                                       | Recognition (written & spoken)                                                               |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                                                                   | Contextual comprehension                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      | <b>Productive Vocabulary</b>                                      | Retention & Integration (written & spoken)                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                                                                   | Contextual use (appropriateness)                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                                                                   | Motivation & Self-confidence                                                                 |

*Table 1 – Categorical Matrix of the Project*

### **Analysis Method: Content Analysis**

Content analysis is a systematic method for examining messages through processes of categorization and inference. According to Bardin (2011), categorization consists of classifying elements of a message into groups based on shared characteristics, using previously defined criteria such as semantic, lexical, or expressive dimensions (own translation, p.90). This process allows researchers to transform raw data into organized and simplified representations, making it possible to identify patterns, meaning, and underlying structures within the data. Thus, content analysis

enables a controlled and rigorous interpretation of qualitative information through systemic coding and classification.

Content analysis operates through a structured process that involves two main stages: inventory and classification. First, the researcher isolates relevant units of analysis (words, themes or expressions). Then, these units are organized into categories that reflect common features and respond to the research objectives. Bardin (2011) emphasized that categories must meet criteria such as mutual exclusivity, homogeneity, pertinence, objectivity, and productivity to ensure analytical rigor (pp. 90-92). Once categorized, the data allows for inferential interpretation, understood as deriving meanings beyond the explicit content of the message. Content analysis not only describes what is present in the data but also reveals underlying meanings, relationships, and patterns through a systematic and recursive process of organization and interpretation.

In this research, content analysis is used to examine how second-grade learners express identity and develop English vocabulary through art-based tasks. Data collected from field notes, students' artifacts, and interviews will be coded into categories related to identity expression (emotions, self-perception, social relations, etc) and vocabulary use (lexical fields). Following Bardin's framework, this categorization will allow the transformation of raw classroom into meaningful analytical units, facilitating the identification of patterns between artistic self-expression and language development. Through this process, the study aims to generate informed interpretations about how multimodal and identity-based practices contribute to vocabulary learning in an EFL context.

To address the analytical process of the study in greater depth, it is important to clarify how categories and codes were constructed from the collected data. The analytical process followed a progressive and inductive-deductive logic, in which theoretical categories derived from the research framework (identity formation and vocabulary learning) were initially considered as sensitizing concepts, but were subsequently refined through empirical engagement with the data.

The coding process began with an initial open coding stage, in which meaningful segments across field notes, students' artifacts, interviews, and classroom observations emerged. These segments were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and were not restricted to predefined categories, allowing patterns to emerge directly from the data.

During this phase, recurring expressions, behaviors, and representations were labeled with descriptive codes such as participation in artistic tasks, emotional engagement, vocabulary recall, spontaneous oral production, self-representation through drawings, peer interaction, and use of English in contextualized situations. These codes functioned as initial analytical units that allowed the fragmentation and organization of the data corpus.

Subsequently, a second-level axial coding process was conducted, in which relationships between codes were identified and grouped according to conceptual proximity. This stage allowed the transition from descriptive coding to interpretative categorization. Codes that were related to emotional involvement, self-expression, and symbolic representation were grouped under emerging identity-related categories, while codes associated with vocabulary use, retention, comprehension, and production were clustered under language development processes.

After this stage, selective coding was applied in order to refine and consolidate the final analytical categories presented in the categorical matrix. This process ensured that each category had internal coherence, analytical relevance, and explanatory power in relation to the research objectives. The categories were not treated as fixed or predetermined structures, but as evolving constructs that emerged through continuous comparison and interpretation of the data.

In this sense, category construction was understood as a dynamic analytical process rather than a mechanical classification procedure. The triangulation of multiple data sources strengthened the validity of the categories by allowing convergence between students' discourse, artistic production, and classroom interaction patterns.

Finally, it is important to clarify that the operational definitions of the analytical categories

and key concepts used in this study are not fully developed within this methodological section. Instead, they are explicitly discussed and interpreted in the analysis of results, where each category is defined and exemplified through empirical evidence from the classroom intervention. This decision was made in order to avoid overly abstract definitions detached from practice, ensuring that meaning emerges from the interaction between theory and data.

### **Pedagogical Intervention**

This section presents the pedagogical foundations of this research through an integrated view that brings together language learning, identity, and art as pedagogy. These dimensions are treated as interrelated processes that inform the design and implementation of the intervention. From this standpoint, language learning is conceptualized as a socially situated and expressive practice, deeply connected to identity formation and supported through artistic and creative pedagogical approaches.

### **Vision of Language Learning**

This pedagogical proposal is framed within post-method pedagogy, moving beyond prescriptive methodologies to emphasize contextual responsiveness, teacher autonomy, and critical reflection as central elements of language learning. Kumaravadivelu (2001) conceptualized post-method pedagogy through three parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility, which call for context-sensitive language education, empower teachers to construct their own theory of practice, and encourage engagement with sociopolitical realities that shape identity formation and social transformation (p. 537).

Similarly, Norton (2013) extends this view by introducing identity as a crucial element in language learning, arguing that language learners' access in language communities is deeply linked to power dynamics, social structures, and individual agencies. Therefore, she emphasizes investment, rather than simple motivation, as a key factor in learners' engagement with the target language (p. 2).

Both perspectives recognize the complex interplay between individual agency and sociopolitical context. While Kumaradavadivelu stresses teacher reflection and pedagogical adaptation, Norton advocates for learners' identities and their negotiation of power structures. Together, they suggest that effective language learning emerges from inclusive, meaningful, contextually relevant practices that empower the teachers and learners. Here, the classroom becomes a transformative space where language learning aligns with learners' aspirations, agency, and equitable opportunities, fostering linguistic competence and social commitment. This intervention sought to embody this vision by designing art-based learning cycles in which second graders explored identity, emotions, preferences, and social relationships while developing English vocabulary.

Within this proposal, identity is closely linked to language as a medium of self-expression. Tudor (2001) argues that language goes beyond transactional communication: it is the primary means through which individuals define themselves, express emotions, articulate aspirations, and construct personal meaning. Drawing on Lewis (1993), Tudor emphasizes that language shapes social identity and personal self-definition, influencing how individuals, and others, understand who they are. From this perspective, learners are not merely performing communicative tasks but they are affective and reflective beings whose engagement with language involves the expression of personal experience. Therefore, when language is viewed as self-expression, learning goals extend beyond linguistic accuracy to include what learners wish to communicate about themselves (p. 65).

This take also matches with the humanistic perspective discussed by Tudor (2001), which foregrounds feelings, social relationships, responsibility, intellect, and self-actualization as essential dimensions of language education (pp. 65-69). In this way, language becomes a tool for personal fulfillment and self-realization. Tudor points out that when opportunities for self-expression are absent, language learning may become impersonal and disconnected from learners'

identities, weakening meaningful engagement. In this intervention, such insights support the integration of art-based activities that create supportive spaces for second graders to express emotions, preferences, and emerging self-concepts in English, allowing vocabulary learning to stem from personal to meaning-making, merging identity construction and personal affirmation within the EFL setting.

### **Intervention Plan**

The following intervention plan (for further details, see Annex 9) was designed for the second-grade learners in Prado Veraniego school. It spans one academic year while integrating English vocabulary instruction with visual performing arts. Activities encourage learners to express personal identity themes while practicing the target language, aiming to develop receptive and productive vocabulary alongside emotional and social growth.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, arts integration, identity development, and vocabulary learning inform the pedagogical design of the intervention. These foundations support that arts-based pedagogy is highly pertinent for second-grade EFL learners in Colombian schools. Arts education embodies meaning making (Gullat, 2008), identity formation emphasizes self-expression and belonging in middle childhood (Erikson, 1968; Norton, 2013), and vocabulary learning theory confirms that young learners require contextualized repetition and productive opportunities (Nation, 2013; Webb, 2008). Accordingly, the three-cycle structure of the intervention (*1. Who Am I?*, *2. Who Am I Becoming?* and *3. I Am Who I Am*) is designed to scaffold vocabulary learning through progressive identity exploration, moving from sensory self-description toward social reflection and collaborative expression.

The cycles progress from concrete to more abstract, social themes, matching children's developmental trajectory. As Nation (2017) and Valbuena García (2021) mentioned, starting with familiar, sensorimotor vocabulary and gradually introducing more relational and reflective content reduces initial cognitive load and allows previous knowledge to be reused in richer contexts. For

instance, Cycle 1 topics (colors, basic adjectives, animals, likes, emotions) are tangible for 7-8-year-olds, while Cycle 3 topics (family roles, friendship, collaboration) are more socially complex. Consequently, embedding each lexical set with art projects ensures meaningful repetition and multimodal encoding of vocabulary. These three cycles are now presented:

### ***Cycle 1: Who Am I?***

This cycle focuses on self-identity through perceptual categories and feelings. This introduces receptive and productive vocabulary related to the self and its surroundings (emotions, adjectives, colors, etc.). The students learn structures in present simple (I am, I like): they draw self-portraits and label them with colors, likes and emotion words; they make emotion emoji plates and write “I feel excited”; they decorate animal masks and use sentences like “I am a lion, I am strong, I am yellow”; or they model clay fruits to express tastes and personality traits. Here, learners receive comprehensible input connected to familiar referents, aligning with Nation’s (2017) view that concrete nouns and familiar adjectives are easier for young learners to map meaning.

In this frame, from a Krashenian perspective, Cycle 1 tasks ensure input is understandable (through visuals and demonstrations) and affectively engaging, lowering the input threshold. From a Vygotskian view, tools like drawings and realia mediate the labeling of self and feelings; by physically creating a representation of “me”, children internalize the language for describing themselves. Also, the multisensory art activities exploit multiple retrieval paths: coloring, sculpting, and moving make learning multimodal, which research shows enhances retention. Cycle 1 uses semantically clustered, sensory vocabulary to give children an accessible linguistic foundation, engaging their creativity.

### ***Cycle 2: Who Am I Becoming?***

This cycle focuses on self-descriptive language, values, and future roles. This part expands the students’ personal expressions to include their names, personal qualities, clothing, and dreams. Vocabulary structures include: descriptive adjectives of personality (kind, generous, loyal, brave,

etc.), clothing items and colors, and professions with ability verbs (“I want to be a doctor, I would save lives”). For instance, in “My Name is Special” each child crafts a decorative name badge with symbols representing their interests and origin, practicing sentences like “My name is” and “I am kind”. In “My Dream Outfit”, the students design an avatar’s clothing and describe (“I am wearing a cap, I am wearing shoes”, etc.), linking clothing vocabulary to identity. Likewise, in “My Superhero Identity”, children make a superhero eye-mask and imagine a superpower, constructing sentences like “I can... because I am...” with descriptive adjectives.

These tasks provide rich  $i + 1$  input because children must comprehend slightly new vocabulary (professions, abilities) within a meaningful personal context. This points out Krashen's take on comprehensible and contextual input. Moreover, Nation’s (2017) principle of classification by communicative function is applied: nouns (professions), adjectives (qualities), and verbs (abilities) are introduced together, which reflects their real use in sentences. Pedagogically, this cycle engages the three components of involvement (elaboration, rehearsal, automaticity) noted by Laufer and Hulstín (2001): inventing a story about future self or superhero prompts deep processing and original output.

In social terms, Cycle 2 activities involve both individual creative work and peer sharing. As Vygotsky (1978) suggests, portraying oneself in different roles mediates perspective-taking and identity formation. When the students share their future self-puzzles or superhero descriptions with classmates, they practice new language in collaborative communication. Crucially, each task in this cycle explicitly connects language to personal meaning: describing one’s values, clothes or aspirations makes the vocabulary relevant and memorable. Additionally, the continued use of “I” as subject maintains familiarity while adding new grammatical structures (modal verbs or future-oriented sentences). In short, Cycle 2 transitions smoothly from concrete attributes to abstract self-concepts, while aligning with Nation’s (2017) advocated progression (using known “I am/ I like” frames with new word types) and sustaining the mediated, creative approach begun in Cycle 1.

### ***Cycle 3: I Am Who I Am***

The focus of this cycle is on relationships, social values and group identity. This final cycle shifts attention from the self to others and the collective. In this phase, new vocabulary includes family members, friendship expressions (e.g., “my friend”, “my best friend”), personality adjectives for peers, and collaboration traits (“team players”, “problem solvers”, etc.). Also, grammar structures extend to second and third person (You are, She/He is) and plural forms (We are, They are).

In this cycle, each activity involves at least a pair or group. For example, in the “Friendship Bracelet” task, the students decorate bracelets for peers and attach cards stating “You are..” with chosen adjectives; the “Fortune Teller” papercraft allows them to reveal likes/emotions in pairs; crafting a “Bottle Body” model of a classmate gives them the opportunity to describe each other (height, age, personality traits); or, as a final example, the “Class Constellation” collage asks each child to decorate a star with personal traits and then write “We are..” statements (e.g. “We are good listeners”) to describe the group.

These social-focused activities exemplify Vygotskian (1978) mediation of higher-order functions: learners use language to represent and reflect on social relationships, under the guidance of peers and the teacher. The group nature of tasks provides abundant opportunities for comprehensible output: speaking and listening in pairs, cooperative decision-making, and mutual correction naturally occur. According to Krashen’s affective-filter principle, students feel motivated when working with friends and proud to show their artworks, lowering barriers to language use. Also, from a cognitive standpoint, Nation’s (2017) condition of moving from recognition to production is met as students actively use the vocabulary in meaningful utterances about real people they know. Additionally, the use of pronouns and plural verbs (you, we, they), broadens their syntactic repertoire in context.

Cycle 3 points out the theory on moral and social development in middle childhood: children begin to understand their roles within family and peer groups. The arts facilitate this by

providing a safe space for identity negotiation; studies (Wielgosz & Molyneux, 2015) show that art programs allow EAL/D learners to express linguistic and cultural identity beyond spoken English, fostering belonging. Here, the friendship and family crafts allow children to externalize their connections and values. Such reflection on social identity strengthens empathy and group cohesion. According to research (Stroumbos, 2022; Wielgosz & Molyneux, 2015), these identity-focused art experiences help children construct a sense of self and strengthen confidence in the classroom. Thus, Cycle 3 culminates the intervention by having students synthesize vocabulary and self-knowledge in collaborative projects that celebrate their emerging social identities.

### **Data Analysis**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected throughout the implementation of the intervention, focusing on the artifacts, classroom interactions, field diaries and learners' productions generated during the tasks. The data is organized through the categorical matrix, addressing identity formation and vocabulary learning in EFL. This section identifies key patterns and relationships to interpret how art-based activities supported both self-expression and English vocabulary development.

#### **Category 1: Identity formation**

Identity is understood as a developmental and relational process through which children build a sense of self in connection with others, experiences, and meanings (Wilson & Ross, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Norton, 2013, as cited in Preece, 2016). Here, identity formation is analyzed through learners' artistic and linguistic productions, focusing on how they represent and express personal and social meanings. This category is divided into self-expression and identity formation in young learners and the influence of arts education on identity expression.

#### ***Self-expression and identity formation in young learners***

Art and language allow children to externalize feelings, preferences, values and experiences in meaningful ways. Artistic production can mediate learning, expression and identity construction

while developing autonomy, industry and confidence through creative environments (UNESCO, 2023; Dewey, 1934; Chi, 2017; Erikson, 1968). This second-order category examines how the learners use visual and verbal resources to explore who they are, how they feel, and how they connect with others. It is organized into the following subcategories.

### **Subcategory 1: Intrapersonal intelligence and self-awareness**

This examines how learners reveal awareness of their inner world through their productions, especially through emotions, preferences, and personal meanings. It is grounded in the idea that identity begins with self-recognition and the ability to connect experiences with language, as discussed by Wilson and Ross (2003) and Gardener (1999, as cited in Abdallah, 2010). The analysis here focuses on moments when children show reflection, personal choice, and awareness of themselves while creating and describing their artworks. It draws primarily on artifacts collected during the intervention, specifically from these tasks: *My Identity Drawing*, *My Identity Mask Animal*, and *My Body & My Identity Poster*.

Evidence from *My Identity Drawing* reveals that learners began to express their emotional states through images and simple written structures. In this activity, the students were asked to represent themselves and complete sentences such as “I am” and “I like”, which allowed them to connect language with personal feelings. Here, the students drew themselves with happy faces, soccer balls, animals, books, musical notes, and paint brushes when describing “I like painting”, nintendos for “I like videogames” or cleats for “I like soccer”. This representation was reinforced visually through facial expressions and symbols, matching their descriptions.



|  | Student B | Student C | Student E | Student F |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|  |           |           |           |           |

*Table 2 - Samples of “My Identity Drawing”*

This indicates learners were able to recognize and externalize their emotions, even with limited linguistic resources. Every symbol matched linguistic expressions: the colors they liked, the cleats when they wanted to say “I like soccer”, the books for “I like books”, the animals they drew on their shoulder and hand (Student E) or beside them (Student B and F) for “I like animals”, their faces often smiling or with their tongue out when expressing “I am happy”. Additionally, Student C added “I am strong”, showing recalled vocabulary. According to Wilson and Ross (2003), self-awareness begins with the identification of internal states, and here, artistic production functioned as a mediating tool that supported this process, showing that the integration of drawing and writing enables students to communicate meaning beyond purely verbal expression.

Similarly, *My Body & My Identity Poster* provided evidence of how learners expressed personal preferences related to themselves. In this activity, the students described parts of their body using structures “I like my” and “I love my”, visually emphasizing these elements in their creations. Here, they drew themselves and often pointed out their favorite part of their body, adding hearts, stars around their figures, redrawing their favorite part or even decorating the whole poster with stickers, landscapes and sunny days.



Table 3 - Samples of “My Body & My Identity Poster”

The combination of linguistic and visual emphasis indicates learners were not only identifying preferences but also assigning value to them, reflecting an important dimension of intrapersonal intelligence, as described by Gardner (1999), which involves recognizing one’s own characteristics and developing a sense of self. As one entry of the field diary notes:

Some of the students said they liked everything about themselves, so they wrote all the vocabulary in the two sentences, “I like” & “I love”. Another one told me that he loved his knees and legs (Student G) because he was able to run and play soccer with them (28 march 2025).

This suggests they were able to develop a sense of body appreciation and self-expression, adding relevant personal elements. Thus, these artifacts show that even simple language structures can support meaningful self-expression when embedded in creative contexts.

Further evidence of self-awareness emerged in *My Identity Mask Animal*, where learners constructed identity through symbolic representation. In this activity, the students selected an animal and described themselves using “I am”. Here, they used different adjectives despite choosing the same animal (in this case, cats), showing the desire to be small or big in order to be faster or stronger. As noted in the field diary, “I was always asking if they identified with the animals they were making and why, and they would answer ‘sí’ and ‘porque es bonito’ or they would say they were coloring and decorating their own cats” (field diary, 07 march 2025).

This showcases that they were reflecting on the symbolic meanings of animals and their

characteristics regarding familiarity, love, care and appreciation, and they connected animal attributes and personal interests, plus adding their favorite colors.

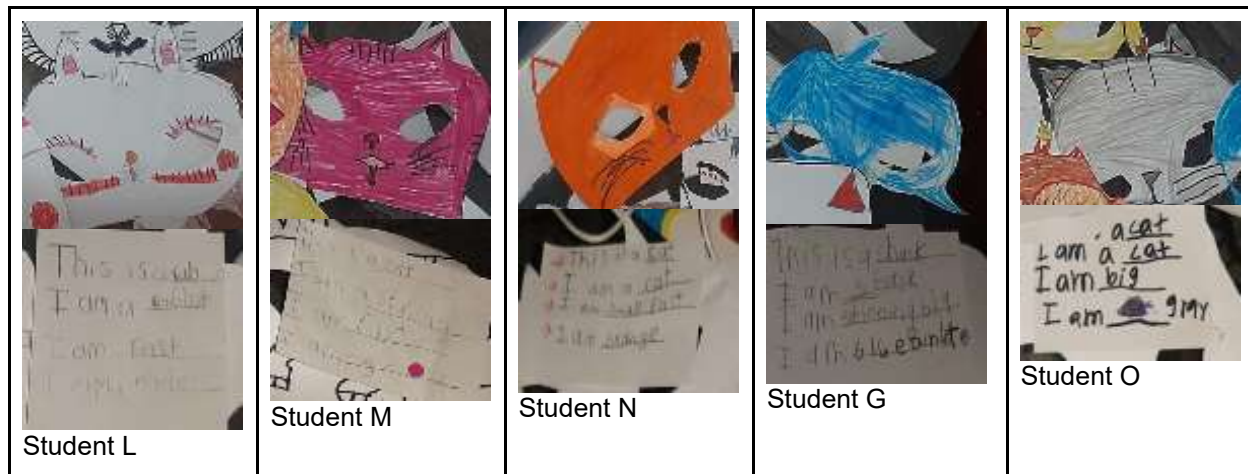


Table 4 - Samples of "My Identity Mask Animal"

These choices reflect a process of personal identification as learners associate themselves with specific traits represented by the animal. Rather than producing isolated vocabulary, the students used language to convey meaning about who they are, aligning with Erikson's (1968) view of identity as a process shaped by interpretation and personal meaning-making. These artifacts demonstrated how symbolic thinking supports the development of self-awareness.

### Subcategory 2: Social Identity development

The analysis examines how learners construct and represent their identity in relation to others. It explores how vocabulary and artistic choices reflect belonging, roles and interpersonal connections. Attention is given to how students position themselves within collective contexts through their productions, identifying patterns of inclusion, differentiation, and relational meaning-making (Schaffer, 2006, as cited in Rabury, 2015; Dunn, 2004, as cited in Abdallah, 2010; Norton, 2013, as cited in Preece, 2016).

In this matter, *Cycle 3, I am who I am*, represented a shift from individual identity expression toward social and relational construction of identity. From a sociocultural view, identity is not fixed but co-constructed through interaction, language, and shared practice (Vygotsky, 1978).

Here, the activities *Friendship Bracelet*, *Bottle Body* and *Constellations: We are stars* created opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, recognize others, and construct a sense of belonging while simultaneously developing vocabulary in English.

In the *Friendship Bracelet* task, learners used the structure *You are + adjective* to describe their peers. However, beyond a linguistic exercise, this became a social act of recognition, where the students positioned each other positively using adjectives such as “happy”, “sad”, “magical”, “kind”, “honest”, and “fun”.

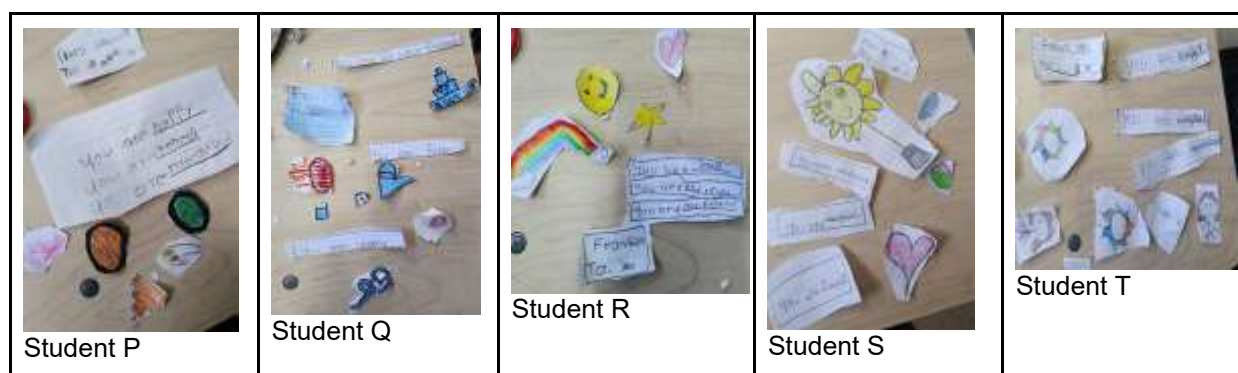


Table 5 - Samples of "Friendship Bracelet"

This activity engaged the students to express appreciation and recognize peers' qualities, fostering empathy and collaboration; field notes stated "they enthusiastically asked each other personal questions to create meaningful, personalized designs, demonstrating attentiveness to classmates' interests and personalities" (field diary, 29 August 2025). The drawings, rainbows, hearts, animals, favorite meals, flowers, happy faces, and key items such as soccer balls reflected each student's uniqueness and social awareness. This production also highlighted the differentiation of just "my friend" or "my best friend" and enhanced motivation, focus, and cooperative interaction linked to the impact of art-based activities.

Here, the activity used to reinforce the structure was key as "they corrected each other, they were rooting for each other when for example I would hear a girl saying just the adjective and not the whole sentence *You are...* and the other girls would tell her '*No, acuérdate que es You are honest*'" (field diary, 29 August 2025), demonstrating reflection, peer collaboration, and the

willingness to learn. This illustrates how learning occurred through peer mediation, aligning with the idea that knowledge is constructed socially within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vigotsky, 1978). Also, the activity fostered a low-anxiety environment, as students felt comfortable speaking and making mistakes, which supports the role of affect in language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

The *Bottle Buddy* extended this process by requiring learners to represent a peer using the structure “He is/She is” along with personality and physical descriptions. The students described aspects such as age, height, and personality, integrating vocabulary in a meaningful and contextualized way. Field diary observations (19 September 2015) indicate that “learners were engaged in observing and interpreting their peers, often asking questions such as *¿cómo se dice amable?* or checking with classmates to confirm ideas”, reflecting how vocabulary learning occurred through interaction and negotiation of meaning, rather than memorization (Nation, 2017).

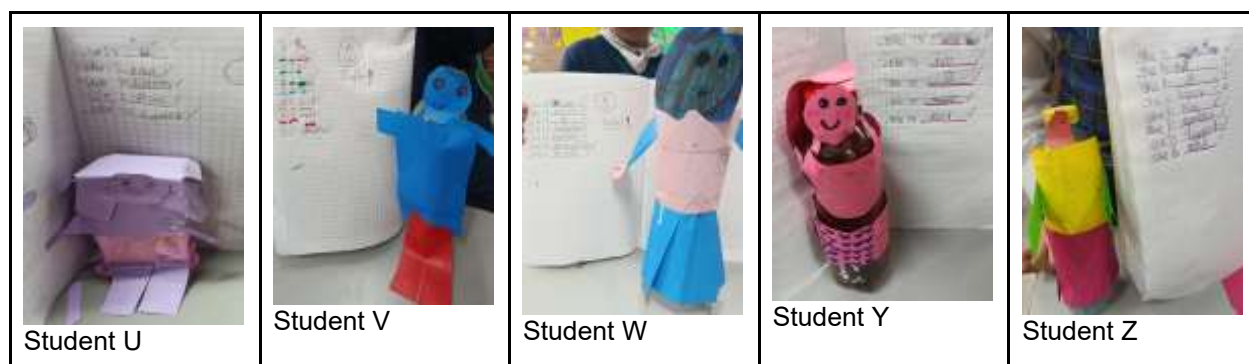


Table 6 - Samples of “Bottle Body”

Moreover, students' descriptions were consistently positive and empathetic, suggesting that identity construction was influenced by the affective classroom environment and peer relationships. They described each other naming themselves, identifying each other's age and height, and as smart, happy, fun, sad, kind, loyal, talkative, curious, and honest while making hearts and skirts, using different paper colors and happy faces. By selecting adjectives that represented their classmates, learners engaged in a process of social positioning, where they recognized both similarities and differences. This aligns with the understanding of identity as dynamic and relational (Norton, 2012)

The *Constellations: We are stars* activity marked the culmination of this process, as learners moved from describing others to constructing a collective identity. Using the structure “We are”, the students worked in pairs to select adjectives that represented both. According to the field diary (10 October 2025), this stage involved negotiation, as students discussed and agreed on shared characteristics; “some learners debated which adjectives to include, asking questions such as *¿somos buenos escuchando?* or suggesting alternatives until reaching consensus”, showing how language learning was embedded in collaborative decision-making (Vygotsky, 1978).

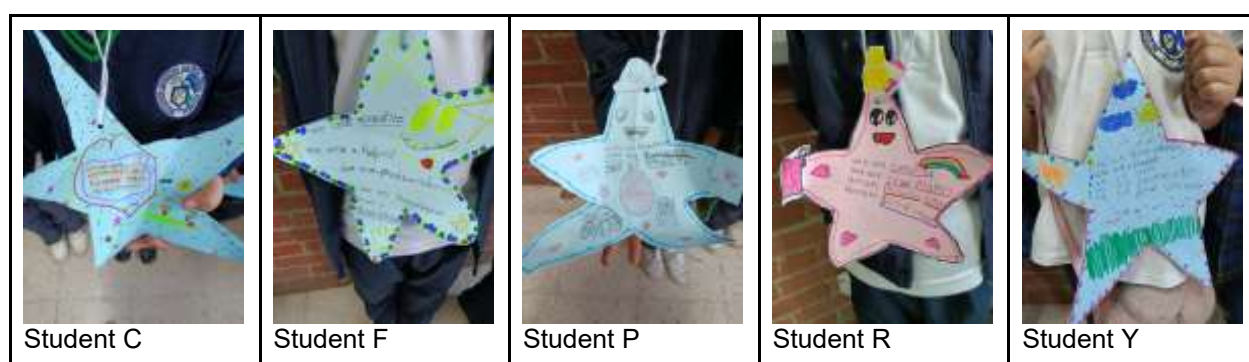


Table 7 - Samples of “Constellations: We are Stars”

The constellation metaphor itself reinforced the idea of belonging and interconnectedness, as each student contributed to a larger group representation, adding collaborative descriptions (“creative”, “team players”, “problem solvers”, “helpful”, “good listeners”, and “supportive”) while matching the linguistic expression with the visuals; drawings helping people (Student C), rainbows to describe creativity (Student R), and visuals of paintings, people helping each other and solving math problems, matching with “we are creative”, “we are problem solvers and we are supportive” (Student P).

Across these activities, consistent patterns emerged: peer interaction as the central mechanism for both identity development and language learning. They corrected and supported each other, asked questions to negotiate meaning, used language to describe, recognize and connect with others and collaborated to construct shared representations.

### ***Influence of Arts Education on Identity Expression***

It is a pedagogical space that enables learners to construct and express identity through creative and multimodal processes. The arts act as mediating tools that engage cognitive, affective, and identity dimensions, fostering emotional engagement, creativity, and deeper understanding (UNESCO, 2006, 2023; Dewey, 1934; Chi, 2017; Gullat, 2008). Within this project, the analysis explores how art-based tasks create conditions for identity expression, allowing learners to communicate experiences, emotions, and perspectives beyond linguistic limitations. This category is developed through the following subcategories.

#### **Subcategory 3: Multimodal expression**

This explores how meaning is constructed through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes. It emphasizes how learners compensate for limited linguistic resources by integrating visual and embodied forms of expression. Particular focus is placed on how these modes complement and reinforce their identity development journey. This also considers how multimodality enables more complex and personal communication, allowing it for a broader understanding of meaning-making (UNESCO, 2023; Chi, 2017).

In this project, multimodal expression emerged as a critical category for understanding how second-grade learners articulated identity through visual and performative arts. *The tasks Future Me, Self-Portrait Puzzle, My Superhero Identity, and My Dream Outfit* provided opportunities for the students to communicate ideas, feelings, and aspirations using multiple modes simultaneously (drawing, crafting, movement, and spoken or written English), allowing them to integrate visual, kinesthetic and linguistic channels; a co-equal arts-integration approach, where language becomes embedded in creative self-expression (Chi, 2017)

In the *The Future Me, Self-Portrait Puzzle*, the students drew themselves in their desired future professions, transforming their drawings into puzzles to be solved by peers. Field diary notes (09 May 2025) indicated that children engaged deeply with visual representation; “one student

initially stated he wanted to be a soldier ‘para pelear en la guerra’, but through guided reflection, he defined his purpose as ‘protect my country’, evidencing critical thinking and semantic negotiation of identity through language”. Here, the puzzle exchange became a key multimodal moment, as students interacted with peers’ representations by observing, interpreting visual clues, and verbally hypothesizing about identities and professions. Also, students’ discussions included diverse aspirations including non-stereotypical professions (waiter, Rappi driver), demonstrating authentic identity representation. In addition, a meaningful moment occurred when a student realized she could be both a dancer and a doctor, expanding her self-concept through language.

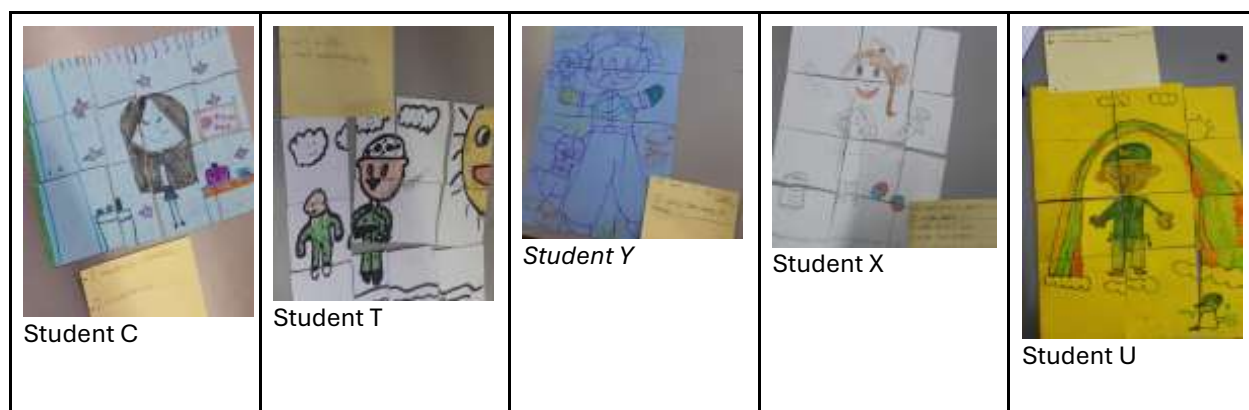


Table 8 - Samples of “The Future Me, Self-Portrait Poster”

Visually, drawings included symbolic elements related to professions and personal meanings (tools, uniforms, animals, and contextual details), showing learners encoded identity through images; these functioned as semiotic resources that peers had to interpret during the puzzle exchange, highlighting how meaning was co-constructed through multimodal interaction. Learners also showed respect toward all professions, reinforcing identity as socially valued.

Regarding *My Superhero Identity*, mask creations projected identity traits into symbolic representations when the students were asked to use “I can” and “I am”. Their artifacts included magical elements and cultural references (Goku, Kuromi, Twilight Sparkle), showing how visual choices served as identity markers, linking abilities with self-concept. Field notes stated “values

such as kindness, empathy, and helping others emerged strongly; the students identified actions like helping an old woman or a dog as forms of being a superhero” (field diary, 16 May 2025).

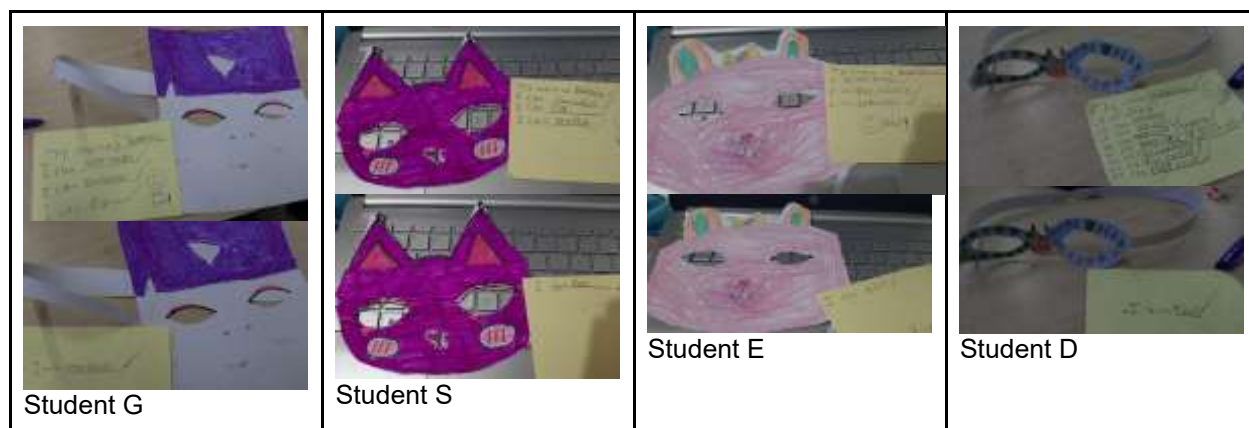


Table 9 - Samples of “My Superhero Identity”

These artifacts reflected effective and social dimensions of identity, as some students represented themselves through animals or caring figures; they described themselves as “magical”, “fun”, and “kind” while adding super powers such as using magic, teleporting, taking care of animals matching with their rabbit mask (Student E), having super strength, being invisible, while naming their superheroes as “Super Cinamonroll”, “Kuromi”, and “Super Goku”. The masks also enabled embodied interaction, as students used them with enthusiasm; this performative use of the masks reinforced meaning by allowing learners to enact their identities, not only describe them. These findings support the idea that artistic production allows learners to externalize emotions and values (Gullat, 2008) as language structures scaffold emerging self-expression.

In this line, *My Dream Outfit* activity provided evidence of multimodal literacy through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic engagement. The students used the structure “I am wearing” to describe their creations, successfully connecting expressions with personal preferences and identity. The artifacts were highly personalized: they drew accessories beyond the taught vocabulary (necklaces, gloves, headphones), asked for new words, and connected designs to real-

life experiences (field diary, 02 May 2025), showing active vocabulary expansion and ownership.

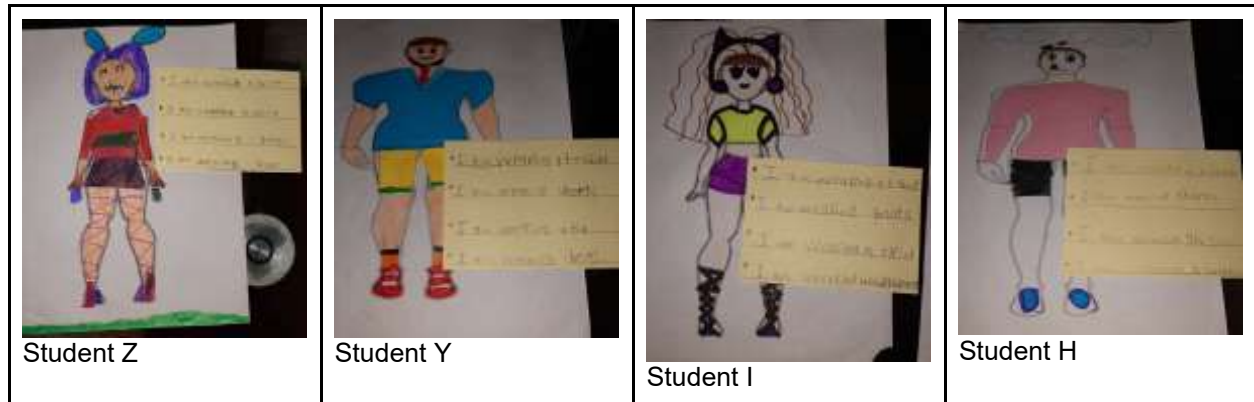


Table 10 - Samples of "My Dream Outfit"

Their designs included symbolic elements such as personal objects (headbands, ties, shoes, sheer stockings, glasses, comfy clothes) while adding their favorite colors and style, reinforcing clothing as a medium of identity expression. Socially, the students also observed and appreciated peers' work, sometimes drawing inspiration from others, reflecting collaborative meaning-making and respect for diversity.

Here, multimodal expression functioned as both process and outcome. The students integrated drawing, crafting, and language, enabling them to communicate identity beyond linguistic limitations. As Dewey (1934) suggests, art connects internal experience with the social world; students' creations became visible manifestations of identity mediated through language.

#### **Subcategory 4: Emotional and social outcomes**

This considers how the intervention creates opportunities for emotional expression and meaningful social interaction. It examines how learners communicate feelings, respond to peers, and participate in collaborative processes. Particular attention is given to signs of empathy, respect, and inclusion during shared activities, exploring how group dynamics influence participation and expression (UNESCO, 2006, 2023; Fiske, 1999; Erikson, 1968). This analysis focuses on the activities *My Identity Shield* and *Friend Silhouette Painting* and the semi structured interviews.

*My Identity Shield* fostered emotional engagement by encouraging learners to represent personal traits, preferences, and values through visual and linguistic elements while using structures such as “I am” regarding the family dimension. The students engaged in processes of reflection and meaning-making, connecting vocabulary with personal experiences and affective reality, aligning sociocultural views and learning as socially mediated processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Field notes stated that when prompted to think about meaningful family moments, “one student, despite reporting a difficult relationship with her mother, chose to represent a positive bond with her stepmother through a playful memory ‘jugando a las coquillas’” she said, revealing how artistic expression can mediate complex emotional experiences (field diary, 22 August 2025).

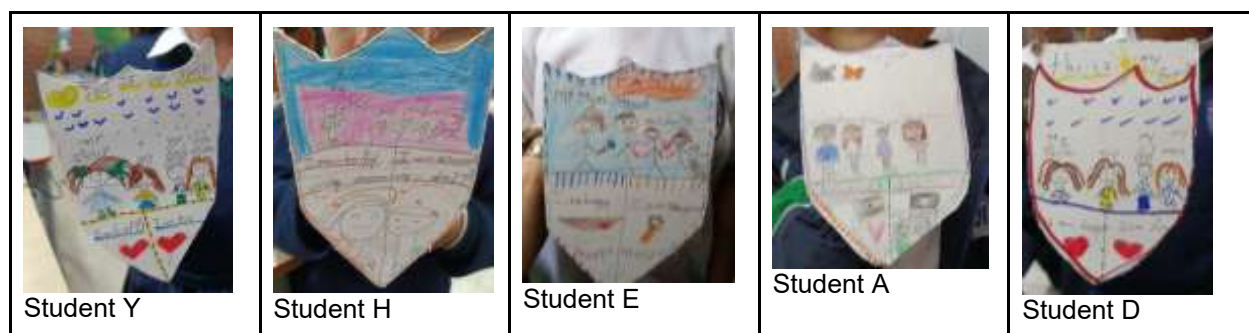


Table 11 - Samples of “My Identity Shield”

This suggests that the activity functioned as a safe space for emotional externalization, allowing students to selectively construct and communicate aspects of their identities relating to others. They drew their pets writing “My cat” (Students E and A); they expressed “I am happy/fun” (Students Y and D) or “I am happy/honest” (Student H) drawing their parents in a heart; “I am happy/magical” with a smile and a star representing magic (Student E); “I am kind/fun”, drawing videogames and hearts. These symbolic traits assigned personal meanings to their creations; “the students not only recalled English words but also represented aspects of their personal lives and relationships, taking into account the influence their family has regarding the chosen values they decided to write” (field diary, 22 August 2025). This task fostered emotional awareness, self-recognition, and a sense of belonging through shared experiences.

Similarly, the *Friend Silhouette Painting* promoted social awareness and empathy by shifting the focus from their family to peers. In this task, learners engaged in representing their friends, which required appreciation and recognition of other people’s qualities as they used the structure “You are” This interaction fostered a sense of respect and understanding among classmates. Notably, “their descriptions were accurate and respectful, and reflected real personality characteristics, given how much I know them, such as identifying peers as hardworking, friendly or shy” (field diary, 05 September 2025).

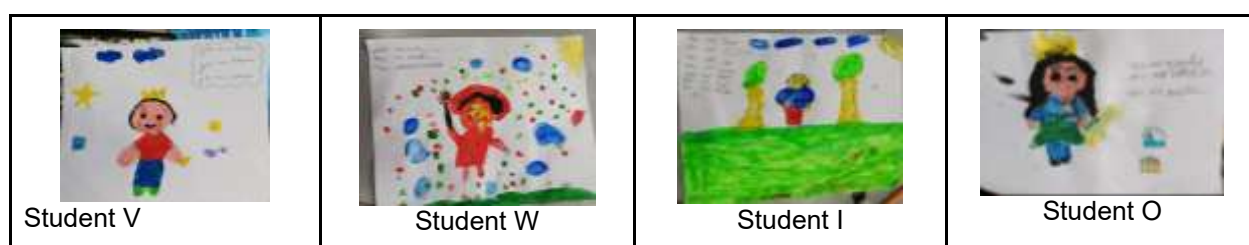


Table 12 - Samples of “Friend Silhouette Painting”

The students incorporated visual elements such as crowns on top of them, bright colors, wands, and personalized details such as clothing, which reflected “genuine care and recognition of each others’ identities” (field diary, 02 September 2025). These choices suggest that the artistic process enabled students to express empathy in tangible ways, reinforcing positive peer relationships. Also, collaborative behaviors demonstrate that the classroom environment supported cooperative learning; “the students collaborated actively, in supportive ways, which highlighted their growing sense of peer learning and responsibility” (field diary, 05 September 2025).

Semi-structured interview responses further support these findings. When asked if they learned something about themselves and others, Student A said: “*aprendí a ser amable, respetuosa, amorosa, honesta y obediente. También aprendí a esforzarme mucho y a ayudar a las personas. De los demás aprendí a respetarlos, amarlos, ayudarlos y a ser honesta*” and Student N affirmed: “*Sí, que todos somos valiosos, somos increíbles y que las amistades valen mucho y la familia. Y de mí que yo me debo de querer mucho así como soy y amarme*” (see the semistructured interview

in annex 7). These answers indicate an emerging awareness of social relationships, reinforcing the idea that collaborative and creative tasks can contribute to the development of empathy and inclusive classroom dynamics (Eisner, 2002).

## **Category 2: Vocabulary Learning in EFL**

This concept is understood as a developmental process in which children move from recognizing words to using them meaningfully in speech and writing. Besides, young learners benefit from contextualized, multimodal, and emotionally supportive input, especially when vocabulary is linked to concrete experiences and personal meaning (Krashen, 1982; Piaget, 1952; Nation, 2017; Webb, 2008). In this project, the analysis of vocabulary learning examines how the learners recognize, understand, retain, and use English words through art-based activities. This category is divided into receptive and productive vocabulary.

### ***Receptive vocabulary***

It refers to the words learners can recognize and understand in context before they are able to produce them actively. Webb (2005), Hu, and Nation (2000), and Schmitt (2000) explain that comprehension is foundational for language development, as it enables learners to construct meaning from input and supports later production. This process is strengthened through visual and contextual cues that facilitate understanding without reliance on translation. In this project, the analysis examines how learners interpret and recognize vocabulary within multimodal and meaningful contexts. This category is divided into the following subcategories.

#### **Subcategory 5: Recognition**

This subcategory identifies learners' ability to recognize target vocabulary in oral and written forms across different activities and examines how students associate words with meaning through images, instructions, and interaction. Recognition is analyzed as a foundational step that supports later production and use. Attention is given to consistency and responsiveness in comprehension tasks (Webb, 2005; Nation, 2017; Schmitt, 2000). This analysis focuses on learners' recognition

of vocabulary during the *Tasting Flavors* activity and the *Magic of Friendship: Values* workshop and listening comprehension, highlighting engagement, understanding, and responsiveness.

In the fruit tasting activity, students were exposed to vocabulary regarding flavors and textures through multimodal strategies. The words were presented visually and orally, modeling expressions for each flavor and texture. The students repeated the vocabulary aloud and participated in tasking exercises, identifying lemons as sour/soft while making faces due to the sourness; bananas, mangoes and watermelon as sweet/soft while smiling because they liked them; and lemon peels as bitter/hard, which some of them spit out with faces of disgust. Even when blindfolded, they were able to recognize the flavor and the texture while using English vocabulary. They also listened to peers to recall words they initially forgot. As the field diary stated:

I would ask the class to remind those students which was the correct word for the texture and flavor of X fruit, and they said “soft!” “Hard!” out loud. Besides, they all are so smart; when some fruits are supposed to be sweet but can be sour, they could identify that too—which is what can happen with mangoes or strawberries. (field diary, 14 March 2025)

This task linked sensory experiences to conceptual understanding as learners began to associate adjectives of taste and texture with personality traits later on. Peer support played a key role as they corrected and reinforced one another’s understanding, showing that recognition develops through social interaction as well as individual processing (Vygotsky, 1978).

In this line, the workshop on values and listening comprehension was significant in terms of matching values with their Spanish meaning, completing sentence structures such as “Fluttershy is \_\_\_\_ (kind) and I am \_\_\_\_” regarding the value they identified with, and answering a multiple choice listening comprehension section, also identifying the speaker, their favorite animal and one of their personality traits.

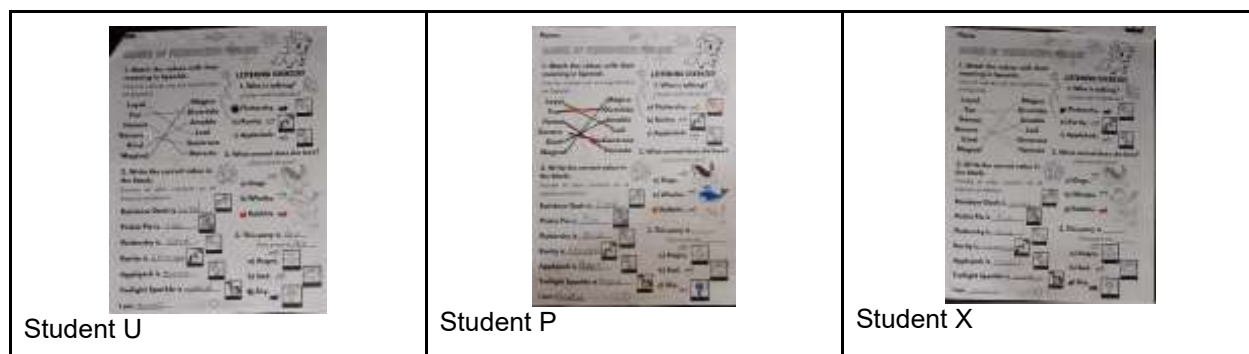


Table 13 - Samples of the workshop "Magic of Friendship: Values"

Recognition was evident as students correctly associated words with images, completed written exercises with no support, and answered the listening questions accurately. In the written part, some of them identify themselves as honest, fun and kind, and Student P in this case colored the character as described in the listening exercise.

Learners consistently demonstrated the ability to process and retain vocabulary across sensory, visual, and auditory channels. In the fruit tasting, they identified flavors and textures; in the workshop, they recognized written and spoken vocabulary in context. These patterns indicate that frequent exposure to language in context facilitates comprehension and gradually supports its transition into active use, as discussed in previous research (Webb, 2005; Nation, 2017).

#### **Subcategory 6: Contextual comprehension**

This section of the analysis examines how learners derive meaning from contextual elements such as visual cues, task design, and classroom interactions. It focuses on the emergence of understanding from use rather than isolated memorization. Evidence is drawn from how students respond appropriately within specific situations, closely considering the role of context in supporting comprehension as well as the influence of arts in such spaces (Hu & Nation, 2000; Krashen, 1982). In this EFL setting, learners demonstrated understanding by interpreting oral input, gestures and peer interaction within meaningful contexts and from guessing activities such as *Who is...?* for describing classmates and *Acting It Out* for collaborative adjectives.

First, during the *Who is...?* guessing activity, the students were exposed to descriptive input such as *he is short, he is eight, he is happy, he is honest, he is smart*, without giving the name of the person. Instead of being provided with explicit translations, learners relied on contextual elements including familiarity with classmates, prior vocabulary knowledge, and the teacher's use of gestures and real-life references. In this case, comprehension was evidenced through their ability to correctly identify the described peer. Importantly, when asked to justify their answers, the students began to connect linguistic input with specific traits; "*porque él es feliz y y tiene 8 años*" (field diary, 19 September 2025), and indeed that student is deemed as bright by the whole class. This suggests that meaning was not only recognized but also inferred through contextual associations, supporting the view that vocabulary development emerges from meaningful, experience-based interaction rather than isolated instruction (Hu and Nation, 2000).

Additionally, the teacher's use of body language to represent concepts such as "height" and "age" further support comprehension. For instance, the students inferred the meaning of "tall" and "short" through gestures and visual comparisons made with volunteers and the teacher, while age was contextualized through real personal information when the teacher said "I am 21" for them to guess (field diary, 19 September 2025). These multimodal cues allowed learners to interpret meaning without relying on L1 translation, reinforcing Krashen's (1982) notion of comprehensible input, where language is acquired when it is embedded in understandable and relevant situations.

Likewise, contextual comprehension was evident in the *Acting it Out* task, where new vocabulary such as "supportive", "helpful", "problem solvers", "good listeners", and "creative" was introduced through dramatization. In this case, meaning was constructed through embodied action and peer observation. For example, when the students acted out *supportive*, classmates interpreted the gesture as "*consolar a alguien*" o "*tranquilizarlo*", demonstrating that they were able to derive meaning from situational cues rather than direct instruction (field diary, 03 October

2025). This process highlights how learners negotiate meaning through interaction and shared understanding, which is central to contextual vocabulary learning.

Even when the students did not immediately produce the exact target word, they generated semantically related expressions “*ayudar*”, “*escuchar*”, “*solucionar*”, indicating partial comprehension supported by context. This is significant because it reflects an inferential process, where learners approximate meaning based on observable actions and prior knowledge. The teacher’s subsequent clarification and repetition helped consolidate this understanding, but the initial comprehension originated from the context itself (field diary, 03 october 2025). Considering both activities, the students showed that vocabulary comprehension was constructed through interaction with visual, social, and task-based cues. Their responses indicate that meaning emerged from participation and inference rather than from direct translation or memorization.

### ***Productive Vocabulary***

This involves the ability to actively use words in speaking and writing to communicate meaning. Webb (2008), Nation (2017), Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) highlight that production requires repeated exposure, meaningful practice and cognitive involvement, allowing learners to move from recognition to active use. This process is influenced by affective factors like motivation and confidence, which shape learners’ willingness to participate (Krashen, 1982). In this project, the analysis focuses on how learners integrate, apply, and adapt vocabulary in communicative contexts through art-based activities. This category is divided into the next subcategories.

#### **Subcategory 7: Retention & Integration**

This focuses on how learners retain and reuse vocabulary across different moments of the intervention. It examines whether previously introduced words reappear in new oral and written contexts. Particular attention is given to spontaneous use, which indicates meaningful internalization. These patterns reveal the durability of learning beyond immediate tasks (Nation, 2017; Webb, 2008), including accuracy in pronunciation, spelling, and grammar and addressing

the level of linguistic control in learners' spoken and written production as well as the expansion of vocabulary range as indicators of development (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). This section relies on the production stages of *My Name is Special* and *Festivities We Are*, drawing on field diaries and semi-structured interview data.

In *My Name is Special*, learners showed retention through the reuse of previously introduced vocabulary in meaningful written productions. The students incorporated descriptive adjectives such as “kind”, “loyal”, “magical”, “honest”, “generous”, and included “loud”, “pizza” into personalized sentences describing their identity, alongside the structures expressing origin (“I am from”).



Table 14 - Samples of “My Name Is Special”

As noted, the students expressed their origin successfully and included culturally meaningful vocabulary such as “arepas”, “tamales”, “orchids”, “bread”, “cheese sticks” and references to music (field diary, 11 April 2025). This indicates that vocabulary was not only remembered but recontextualized within personally relevant discourse, supporting Nation’s (2017) view that repeated exposure in meaningful contexts strengthens retention.

Retention was further evidenced by cross-modal transfer, as vocabulary practiced orally through repetition tasks reappeared in written form on the necklaces. Here, they could express previously learned values but now in relation to their roots, suggesting consolidation of form-meaning connections. Also, as noted in the field diary, “although some phonological difficulties persisted, particularly with magical and generous, where learners struggled with the /dʒ/ sound, guided repetition and explicit correction supported gradual improvement” (field diary, 11 April, 2025). These challenges reflect developing phonological control, which is part of deeper lexical integration (Webb, 2008).

Similarly, in the *Festivities We Are* activity, retention was observed through the integration of prior vocabulary into new grammatical contexts, particularly the structure “They are + verb-ing”. While oral production was limited, it was noted that several students naturally verbalized what they were drawing, saying “they are dancing” or “they are eating” (field diary, 17 October 2025). This spontaneous use indicates internalization beyond guided practice, a key marker of durable learning (Nation, 2017).

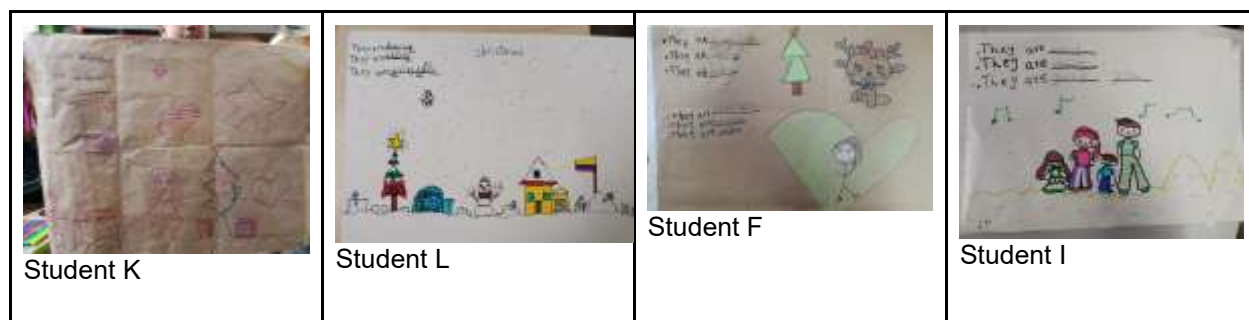


Table 15 - Samples of “Festivities We are”

Also, learners expanded their vocabulary with new action verbs such as “dancing”, “eating”, “marching”, “giving gifts” and “wearing costumes”, and connected them to familiar celebrations. For example, the students associated “giving gifts”, “dancing” and “eating” with Christmas, plus Student F (including Mother’s Day) and K added previously learned vocabulary when they wrote “they are happy”, demonstrating semantic network building (Webb, 2008). Their

artwork reflected comprehension and pride in their own cultural imagery, suggesting that retention was reinforced through meaningful cultural associations (field diary, 17 October 2025).

From a linguistic perspective, learners showed emerging accuracy and control. While some relied on isolated phrases, others successfully combined structures and vocabulary in context. Pronunciation practice, through repetition and peer correction, supported more stable production, even if not fully consolidated. This aligns with the idea that retention involves gradual refinement of both form and use (Nation, 2017).

In this scenario, the semi-structured interview provides further evidence of retention over time. The students consistently recalled vocabulary related to values such as “honest”, “loyal”, and “kind”. One student explained: *“porque eran un poco viejas pero todavía las hemos recordado y no me olvido de las ponies”* (see in annex 7, Student C), highlighting the role of repetition and emotional connection. Similarly, another one stated that words like “talkative”, “happy” or “magical” were memorable *“porque son de valores y porque es divertido decir esas palabras”* (annex 7, Student I), emphasizing affective engagement as a factor of retention.

Additionally, learners recalled not only isolated words but also structures and compound vocabulary, such as “we are”, “they are”, “hard-working”, “team players”, etc. As one student expressed, *“aprendí palabras como talkative, friendly, problem solvers, team players y fue importante porque cuando yo vaya a viajar las voy a saber y recordar”* (annex 7, Student C). This shows that vocabulary was integrated into a functional and transferable repertoire, supporting communicative goals beyond the classroom.

### **Subcategory 8: Contextual use (Appropriateness)**

This examines how learners select and apply vocabulary according to communicative purposes and specific contexts (Nation, 2017; Schmitt, 2000). The analysis focuses on how the students select and use vocabulary in contextually meaningful ways within their productions. It also examines the

extent to which their language choices align with the communicative purpose of each task, covering flexibility in adapting language to different scenarios. The analysis draws on production instances: a written section from the test ending cycles 1 and 2, and a *Who is it? Part 2* speaking task.

In the written section of the test designed for the end of the Cycles 1 and 2, learners were required to complete a structured self-description: “My name is \_\_\_\_, I am \_\_\_\_, I like \_\_\_\_, I want to be a \_\_\_\_”. This activity provided a controlled context in which lexical selection needed to match specific semantic categories (emotion/adjective, preference, profession).

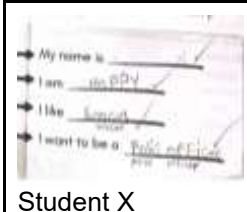
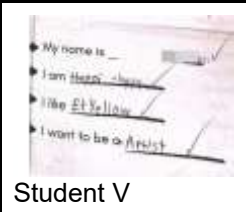
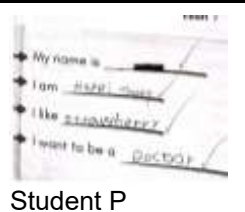
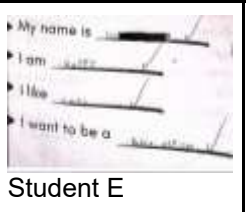
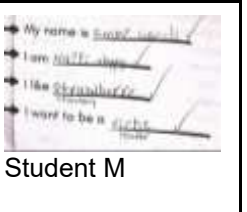
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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Student X                                                                         | Student V                                                                         | Student P                                                                         | Student E                                                                          | Student M                                                                           |

Table 16 - Samples of the final section for “Test for Cycle 1 & 2”

Overall, the students demonstrated a strong degree of contextual appropriateness, as their lexical choices aligned with the communicative purpose of each sentence. For instance, adjectives such as “happy” (and the variant “happi”) were correctly used to express emotional states, while nouns like “soccer” (written as “soocer”), “yellow”, “strawberry”, and “cats”, appropriately fulfilled the likes category. Similarly, professions such as “teacher” (“tiche”), “police officer” (and the variant “polis officer”), “doctor”, and “artist” were accurately selected for the final sentence.

Although orthographic inaccuracies were present, these do not undermine the appropriateness of lexical choice, as learners consistently selected words that matched the semantic and functional requirements of the task. This suggests that vocabulary knowledge was sufficiently developed at the level of meaning-use connection, even if form was still consolidating. According to Nation (2017) appropriate use of vocabulary involves not only knowing the word meanings but also selecting them correctly in context and learners successfully showed this ability. Also, the slight variations “happi” or “polis officer” indicate phonologically driven spelling, reflecting a development of interlanguage rather than lack of understanding.

In the speaking activity *Who is it? Part 2*, contextual appropriateness was observed through learners' ability to select relevant descriptors to identify a classmate, aligning vocabulary with the communicative goal of describing a specific person. All four students that volunteered produced sequences of sentences using the structure "He is", incorporating adjectives, physical descriptions, personality traits, and age. These lexical choices were contextually appropriate, as they provided sufficient and relevant information for peer identification.

| Student | Utterance                                                                                         | Observations                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | He is happy. He is seven años. He is (e)strong. He is alto... tall.                               | Epenthesis in <i>(e)strong</i> (/estrong/). L1 use ( <i>años</i> , <i>alto</i> ). Self-correction ( <i>alto</i> → <i>tall</i> ). Vowel substitution: /ɪ/ → /i/ in "is" (Spanish influence). |
| 2       | He is hardworking. He is happy. He is (e)strong. He is short.                                     | Epenthesis in <i>(e)strong</i> . Nice pronunciation, mostly accurate. Vowel substitution: /ɪ/ → /i/ in "is".                                                                                |
| 3       | He is hardworking. He is strong. He is honest. He is not talkative. He is eight. He is tall y ya. | Mostly accurate production. L1 closure ( <i>y ya</i> ). Vowel substitution: /ɪ/ → /i/ in "is".                                                                                              |
| 4       | He is not talkative. He is honest. He is loyal. He is six... perdón eight. He is shor(t)          | Self-repair ( <i>six</i> → <i>eight</i> ). Final consonant deletion in short (/shor/). L1 use ( <i>perdón</i> ). Vowel substitution: /ɪ/ → /i/ in "is".                                     |

Table 17 - Recording from the Speaking exercise in Lesson 16

For example, Student 3 combined multiple descriptors that reflect both personality and physical traits, indicating not only appropriate selection but also expansion and layering of meaning, which enhances communicative effectiveness. Similarly, Student 4 incorporated negation appropriately to refine meaning. At the same time, the data reveals developing accuracy within appropriate use. Instances such as seven *años* or *alto* tall (Student 1) show temporary reliance on L1; however, these were often accompanied by self-correction, suggesting that learners were aware of the contextual requirements to use English. This aligns with Schmitt's (2000) notion that vocabulary use develops gradually, moving from partial to more precise control. Additionally, phonological features such as *(e)strong* or *shor(t)* reflect L1 influence but do not impede the appropriateness of lexical choice itself.

Crucially, learners showed communicative sensitivity, selecting vocabulary that was meaningful for the task rather than random or disconnected. This means that vocabulary was being used as a functional tool for communication. Across both tasks, contextual use was supported by the alignment between task design and communicative purpose. The written section guided learners to map vocabulary onto specific semantic roles, while the speaking activity required them to adapt vocabulary dynamically to describe real individuals. Their ability to adapt lexical choices across written and oral contexts reflects an emerging capacity for functional language use, supporting the perspective that vocabulary learning is most effective when embedded in purposeful communication (Nation, 2017; Schmitt, 2000).

### **Subcategory 9: Motivation & Self-confidence**

This category considers learners' willingness to participate, take risks, and engage with English during the intervention. It examines observable behaviors such as initiative, persistence, and openness to expression. Particular attention is given to shifts in confidence when using new vocabulary (Krashen, 1982; Dornyei, 2001). It also considers how art-based activities contribute to reducing anxiety and fostering active participation while indicating a correlation between the learners' knowledge of new vocabulary and their engagement. This analysis draws on *Recognizing my Body with Playdough*, *Bottle Buddy*, and the semi-structured interview.

In the playdough activity, learners showed a notable positive response from the start, singing head, shoulders, knees and toes as the warmup went on. They were very excited to use the materials even before they were utilized and they loved using playdough while building and labeling their bodies (field diary, 21 march 2025). This enthusiasm is key because it suggests that the tactile and creative nature of the task lowered resistance and made students willing to engage while they learned the parts of their bodies, placing them on their creations.

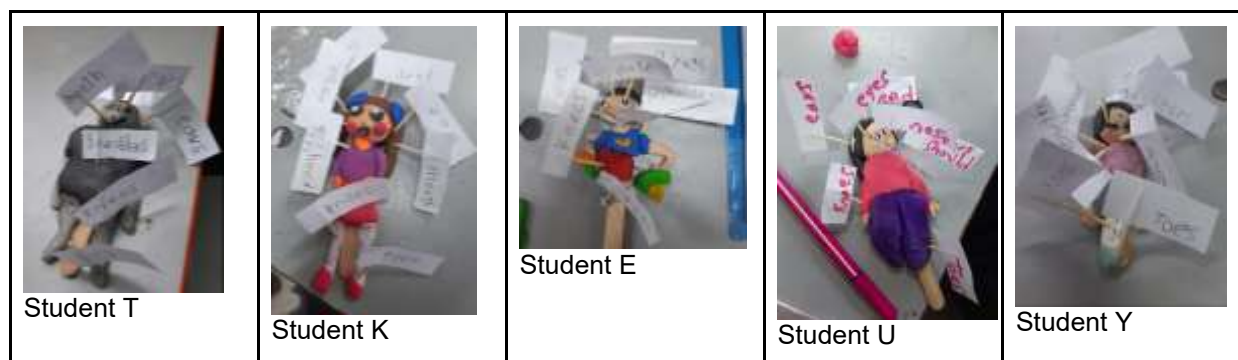


Table 18 - Samples of “Recognizing My Body with Playdough”

As observed, two students added to the figure fruits learned in the previous lesson, such as a lemon and a carrot (like Student E), which shows that prior vocabulary remained active and could be reused with confidence because when asked, the student said lemons. In this sense, that reuse matters because the students were not only remembering words; they were choosing to include them in a personal creation.

The interview data (see annex 7) supports this interpretation when they were asked what they felt regarding their creations. Student 2 said “*me emocioné porque vi cuando me había quedado bonito*”, and student J explained, “*me sentía como orgullosa de mí misma*” (because the teacher said the work was beautiful). These comments show that confidence was linked to the aesthetic result of the creation, but also to the feeling that the work represented who they were. Also, student C said she felt happy because she was working with her partner and helping her draw and write. That points to a second source of motivation: collaborative support (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, the students were not only motivated by the material itself, but also by the emotional value of making something personal and the social value of doing it with and for others.

The *Bottle Buddy* lesson showed a similar pattern and with a stronger link between vocabulary and participation. The field diary (19 September 2025) highlights that some students wrote more vocabulary confidently about their partners, while others produced fewer sentences. This contrast is important because it indicated that vocabulary knowledge and confidence moved together; the more words students had available, the more willing they were to expand their

descriptions (Schmitt, 2000). The diary also notes that even students who usually do not engage were trying, writing, and having fun while describing their classmates. In this line, the *Friend Silhouette Painting* further supports the relationship between their vocabulary knowledge and confidence in using them in their creations:

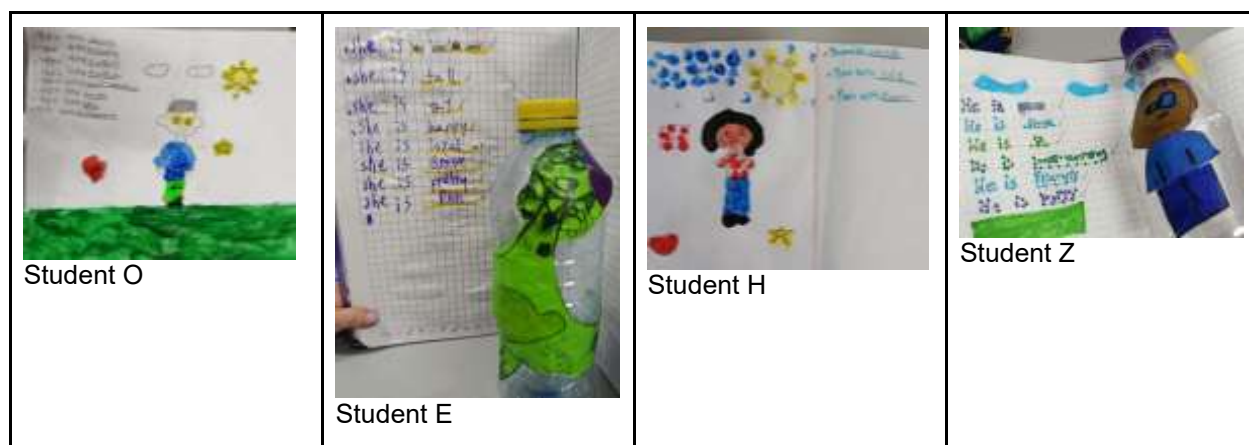


Table 19 - Samples of “Friend Silhouette Painting” and “Bottle Buddy”

In this case, there are students who move easily while describing (Student O and E), even asking for new words such as “*pretty*”, and the students that use less vocabulary but still recognizing it (Student H and Z). This supports the idea that when learners feel capable of expressing themselves accurately, they participate more and with less hesitation (Nation, 2017).

The semi-structured interview responses (see appendix 7) reinforce the role of aesthetics and personal relevance as well. Student B said their favorite activity was the friendship bracelet “*porque así me sentí como si le estuviéramos dando a la otra persona algo como de amabilidad*”, Student C said that it was the clothing activity because she liked dressing the character and choosing colorful paper. These answers show that motivation was tied to whether the task was visually appealing, emotionally meaningful, and directed toward someone else or toward a version of themselves (Eisner, 2002). That is exactly where confidence emerged: when the students felt that their work was attractive, personal, and worth sharing.

## Conclusions

This chapter presents the conclusions derived from the pedagogical intervention and the subsequent analysis of the data collected throughout the research process. The findings are discussed in relation to the research question, *What effects does art-based self-expression of identity have in enhancing second graders' English vocabulary learning?*, and are organized according to the objectives of the study. In this sense, this section shows how the categories of identity formation and vocabulary learning were intertwined throughout the implementation.

Regarding the first specific objective, *to implement art-based activities designed to encourage students' self-expression of identity and English vocabulary learning*, it can be concluded that the design and implementation of art-based tasks created meaningful conditions for participation and engagement. The integration of drawing, crafting, and symbolic creation allowed students to approach English from an experiential perspective, where language emerged from action and personal involvement. This aligns with experiential and arts-based views of learning that emphasize meaning-making through experience and creation (Dewey, 1934; UNESCO, 2023). This type of environment reduced resistance to language use and promoted sustained attention, as learners interacted with vocabulary through concrete and creative processes. The implementation shows that when tasks are structured around expression and creation, students are more willing to engage with language and remain involved in the learning process.

Additionally, the implementation of these activities established a classroom dynamic in which language learning was embedded in purposeful interaction. The tasks required students to produce artifacts that represented aspects of themselves or others, which positioned vocabulary as a tool for communication rather than as isolated content. This supports the understanding of language as a social and identity-related practice (Norton, 2013) and suggests that art-based work facilitates a shift from passive reception to active meaning-making, where learners assume a more

participatory role in their own learning while vocabulary use becomes more frequent and intentional within the classroom context.

In relation to the second objective, *to explore how students express their identity by using the visual arts and describing themselves in English*, it can be concluded that identity expression developed as a gradual and layered process supported by both visual and linguistic resources. The learners demonstrated the ability to represent personal preferences, emotions, values, and relationships through their artistic productions, indicating emerging self-awareness. This reflects the developmental perspective of identity as a process of self-recognition and construction over time (Erikson, 1968; Wilson and Ross, 2003). These representations were not random; they reflected meaningful choices that connected personal experience with the language being learned, revealing the role of language as a medium for constructing and expressing identity.

At the same time, identity expression extended beyond the individual dimension and incorporated social perspectives. The students described peers, recognized shared characteristics, and constructed collective representations, which shows that identity was understood relationally. This progression indicates that the use of visual arts can enable students to position themselves within a social context while using English to articulate those connections. The findings suggest that identity expression in the EFL classroom can be effectively supported when learners are given opportunities to create, represent, and reflect through multiple modes. This is consistent with views of multimodal learning and multiple intelligences that recognize diverse forms of expression (Gardner, 1999, as cited in Abdallah, 2010).

From this view, visual arts functioned as a mediating space for expression, where students could externalize ideas that exceeded their immediate linguistic capacity. Artistic mediation has been identified as a key element in fostering creativity, reflection, and meaning-making in educational contexts (Chi, 2017; UNESCO, 2023). The combination of images, symbols, and simple structures allowed learners to communicate meaning with greater depth. Consequently,

language use was grounded in personal relevance, which strengthened both expression and understanding.

Regarding the third specific objective, *to analyze the effects of art-based self-expression activities on students' English vocabulary learning processes*, it can be concluded that the intervention supported the development of both receptive and productive vocabulary. In terms of the former, learners showed the ability to recognize and understand words when they were presented through contextualized and multimodal input. Visual cues, gestures, peer interaction, and task design contributed to comprehension, allowing students to interpret meaning without relying exclusively on translation. This shows that vocabulary recognition was strengthened through meaningful exposure and contextual support, rather than from isolated memorization, suggesting that recognition operates as a dynamic process supported by multimodal input and peer interaction. This articulates with research highlighting the relevance of meaningful input and contextualized exposure in vocabulary acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Hu and Nation, 2000).

In relation to productive vocabulary, the findings show that students progressed toward active use of language across tasks. Learners reused previously introduced words, incorporated them into new context, and combined them with simple structures to express personal and social meanings. This progression indicates that retention was facilitated by repetition across activities and modalities, meaningful identity-based contexts, and opportunities for creative language use. The recurrence of words in different formats indicates that learning was not limited to immediate recall but extended over time.

Motivation and self-confidence were not separate from vocabulary learning; they were strengthened through it. As students became more familiar with the vocabulary, their willingness to participate increased. Confidence emerged through the creation of personal and meaningful products, which reduced anxiety and encouraged risk-taking in language use. This supports the role of affective and emotional dimensions in language learning processes (Krashen, 1982; Erikson,

1968). This illustrates that motivation and self-confidence are closely linked to the conditions in which vocabulary is learned and presented, particularly when those conditions allow for expression, creativity, and recognition.

Furthermore, the use of vocabulary within these activities demonstrates an emerging capacity for contextual use. The learners selected words that aligned with the communicative purpose of each task, even when linguistic accuracy was still developing. This showcases that vocabulary knowledge was functioning at the level of meaning and use, which is essential for communicative competence. The presence of error did not prevent communication; instead, it reflected a process of language development in which learners actively constructed meaning.

On the whole, these findings allow for the conclusion that art-based self-expression of identity has a positive effect on second graders' English vocabulary learning. The integration of artistic processes into language learning created conditions for meaningful engagement, supported identity expression, and facilitated vocabulary development across recognition, peer interaction and cooperation, retention, and use. This underscores the value of arts for integral, meaningful learning (Dewey, 1934; UNESCO, 2023) while positioning language as a tool for communication and self-representation.

This study suggests that vocabulary learning in EFL contexts is enhanced when it is connected to personal meaning and supported by multimodal experiences. Arts-based activities provide a framework in which learners can explore who they are while developing linguistic resources to express that understanding. As a result, language learning becomes a process that integrates cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions, contributing to a more holistic educational experience.

This project faced some limitations as well. First, learners' emerging literacy in their L1, particularly in reading and writing, constrained the depth of written production and may have limited the extent to which vocabulary learning could be expanded through more complex literacy-

based tasks; with a more literate population, these dimensions could have been further developed. Second, some technical issues with audio and projection equipment restricted the consistent use of audiovisual resources, affecting the planned integration of multimodal input despite prior preparation. And third, participants' age and beginner EFL level narrowed the scope of the thematic exploration; while the project prioritized identity self-expression as developmentally appropriate, working with older or more proficient learners could allow for the incorporation of more complex perspectives, such as gender-related discussions, in future implementations.

As for recommendations, this study opens possibilities for further research that continues exploring the relationship between art-based pedagogy, identity expression, and language learning. While this project focused on vocabulary development, further studies could expand this approach to other language skills, such as writing and extended oral production, allowing learners to construct more complex narratives about themselves and others. In this sense, English could be further explored as a bridge for meaning making rather than as a detached or imposed system, enabling students to connect the foreign language with their cultural contexts, personal histories, and world views. Future pedagogical proposals might also incorporate a wider range of multimodal texts and artistic forms to deepen students' communicative possibilities and forms of expression.

Moreover, future research could further analyze how identity-based and art-centered activities contribute to the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, and peaceful coexistence in the classroom. Designing pedagogical spaces that encourage reflection on self and others may support both language learning and the construction of more inclusive and respectful social dynamics. It would be relevant to explore how such approaches can challenge limiting gender stereotypes and fixed notions of childhood, recognizing identity as a cultural and evolving process. This view could contribute to educational practices that promote equity, critical awareness, and the formation of learners who are able to express themselves freely while engaging with others in more conscious and non-dominant spaces.

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|                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                        |             |                |
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| <br>MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN<br>DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE ASESORIA TECNICA | <b>FORMATO</b><br><b>ACTUACIÓN/INTERVENCIÓN DE CADA PERSONA EN Y DESARROLLO DE</b><br><b>EL ROL</b><br>(SE CUMPLE EN EL DESARROLLO DE) |             |                |
|                                                                                                                                                       | Fecha de Ejecución: ____/____/____                                                                                                     | Versión: 01 | Página: 1 de 2 |


**FORMATO**  
**AUTORIZACIÓN TRATAMIENTO DE DATOS PERSONALES Y DE MENORES DE EDAD**  
Resolución No. 001 del 15 de mayo de 2018  
**FOROESM**      Fecha de Aprobación: 15-06-2018      Versión: 01      Página 2 de 2

- Students

[illegible]

★ 8. ¿Qué se puede hacer en la fiesta infantil? Píntalo en este pape que te damos! ★ 8



★ 9. ¿Qué se puede hacer en la fiesta? Píntalo en este pape que te damos! ★ 9

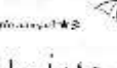


★ 10. ¿Se pueden ver en esta fiesta cosas bonitas o cosas feas? Píntalo en este pape que te damos! ★ 10





jugos  
dones  
Kojolado  
P.



de la jaja  
Pito  
Ca Tala



de la jaja  
dones  
Kojolado  
P.

¡Muchas gracias a todos!

¡Gracias por venir a la fiesta! ¡Que se diviertan todos! ¡Que se diviertan todos! ¡Que se diviertan todos!

## • Teacher

5. ¿Qué actividades o dinámicas consideran que favorecen los estudiantes de primera enseñanza?

*La foto de su familia, su historia, su grupo, su familia, su casa, su barrio, su escuela, su ciudad, su país, su mundo.*

6. ¿Cómo creen que mejor los estudiantes? (Individualmente, en grupo, o trabajo de grupo, con material concreto, etc.)

*Trabajo en grupo, con material concreto, con fotos, con dibujos, con videos, con música.*

7. ¿Qué estrategias utilizan para que los niños participen más en clase, especialmente en actividades de aula libre y creativa?

*Desde la motivación, con actividades que les gustan, con actividades que les interesan, con actividades que les desafían.*

8. ¿Cuáles creen que son las principales fortalezas de los estudiantes de primera?

*La creatividad, la curiosidad, la capacidad de aprender, la capacidad de trabajar en grupo, la capacidad de trabajar en equipo.*

9. ¿Cómo describirías a tus alumnos? Algunos ejemplos:

*Curiosos, creativos, trabajadores, participativos.*

10. ¿Hay alguna forma o estrategia que les gusta o les interesa más con los estudiantes, como dibujar, escribir, etc.?

*La escritura y el dibujo.*

6. ¿Cuáles creen que son las principales fortalezas de los estudiantes de primera en cuanto a su identidad y cómo se ven o se sienten?

*En su casa, en su familia, en su escuela, en su ciudad, en su país, en su mundo.*

12. ¿Cómo creen que los roles de género influyen en la forma en que los niños y las niñas se comportan o participan en clase? ¿Qué opinas sobre cómo eso podría afectar su desarrollo personal o académico?

*Los roles de género influyen en la forma en que los niños y las niñas se comportan o participan en clase, pero eso no debería afectar su desarrollo personal o académico.*

13. ¿Hay observaciones interesantes en general sobre los niños y niñas en la forma en que interactúan o juegan? ¿Cómo los describes?

*Los niños y niñas interactúan de diferentes maneras, pero eso no debería afectar su desarrollo personal o académico.*

14. ¿Crees que al ser profesor o profesora tienes alguna herramienta útil para que los estudiantes expresen su identidad o jueguen? ¿Por qué?

*Al ser profesor o profesora tengo muchas herramientas para que los estudiantes expresen su identidad o jueguen, pero eso no debería afectar su desarrollo personal o académico.*

Me gusta en mi familia, en mi escuela, en mi ciudad, en mi país, en mi mundo.

Tu nombre: *Prof. María Elena M.*

1. ¿Cómo crees que se ven o se sienten? *En su casa, en su familia, en su escuela, en su ciudad, en su país, en su mundo.*

2. ¿Cómo crees que se comportan o participan en clase? *En su casa, en su familia, en su escuela, en su ciudad, en su país, en su mundo.*

3. ¿Qué opinas sobre cómo eso podría afectar su desarrollo personal o académico? *Los roles de género influyen en la forma en que los niños y las niñas se comportan o participan en clase, pero eso no debería afectar su desarrollo personal o académico.*

4. ¿Hay observaciones interesantes en general sobre los niños y niñas en la forma en que interactúan o juegan? *Los niños y niñas interactúan de diferentes maneras, pero eso no debería afectar su desarrollo personal o académico.*

5. ¿Cómo describirías a tus alumnos? *Curiosos, creativos, trabajadores, participativos.*

## Annex 3. Diagnosis

Participant Observation: Diagnosis

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Observer's Name                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Institution for the observation     | College of Arts, University of Chile                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Observed Group & Date               | First Graders - 1st Group<br>Date: Thursday, November 17, 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Activity to be observed             | Diagnosis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Activity Objective                  | To assess first graders' ability to understand and express their own identity, including their own name, family, and community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| General description of the activity | The diagnosis activity consisted of five different and interactive exercises to assess first graders' understanding of their own identity, including their own name, family, and community. The first exercise was an icebreaker where students had to introduce themselves to the class. The second exercise was a drawing activity where students had to draw their own family. The third exercise was a writing activity where students had to write their own name. The fourth exercise was a drawing activity where students had to draw their own community. The fifth exercise was a writing activity where students had to write their own name. The diagnosis activity was designed to be fun and interactive, and to help first graders understand and express their own identity. |

4.1 First Graders: Understanding Identity

The first exercise was an icebreaker where students had to introduce themselves to the class. The teacher asked each student to say their name, and then to say one thing they liked to do. The students were very shy at first, but they gradually became more comfortable as the teacher encouraged them to participate. The teacher also asked each student to say one thing they liked to eat, and then to say one thing they liked to wear. The students were very happy to participate, and they all enjoyed the activity.

4.2 Second Graders: Drawing Identity

The second exercise was a drawing activity where students had to draw their own family. The teacher gave each student a piece of paper and a set of drawing materials. The students were very excited to draw, and they all drew their own family. The teacher walked around the room, looking at each student's drawing and asking them questions about their family. The students were very happy to draw, and they all enjoyed the activity.

4.3 Third Graders: Writing Identity

The third exercise was a writing activity where students had to write their own name. The teacher gave each student a piece of paper and a set of writing materials. The students were very excited to write, and they all wrote their own name. The teacher walked around the room, looking at each student's writing and asking them questions about their name. The students were very happy to write, and they all enjoyed the activity.

4.4 Fourth Graders: Drawing Identity

The fourth exercise was a drawing activity where students had to draw their own community. The teacher gave each student a piece of paper and a set of drawing materials. The students were very excited to draw, and they all drew their own community. The teacher walked around the room, looking at each student's drawing and asking them questions about their community. The students were very happy to draw, and they all enjoyed the activity.

4.5 Fifth Graders: Writing Identity

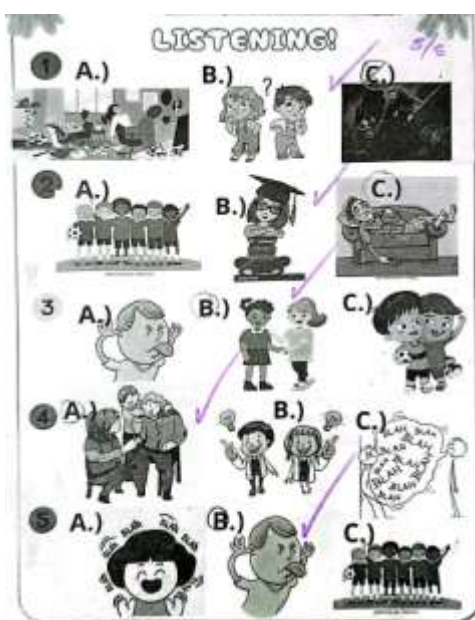
The fifth exercise was a writing activity where students had to write their own name. The teacher gave each student a piece of paper and a set of writing materials. The students were very excited to write, and they all wrote their own name. The teacher walked around the room, looking at each student's writing and asking them questions about their name. The students were very happy to write, and they all enjoyed the activity.





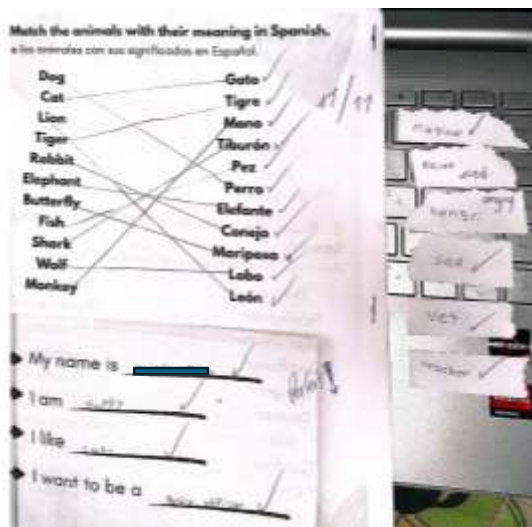
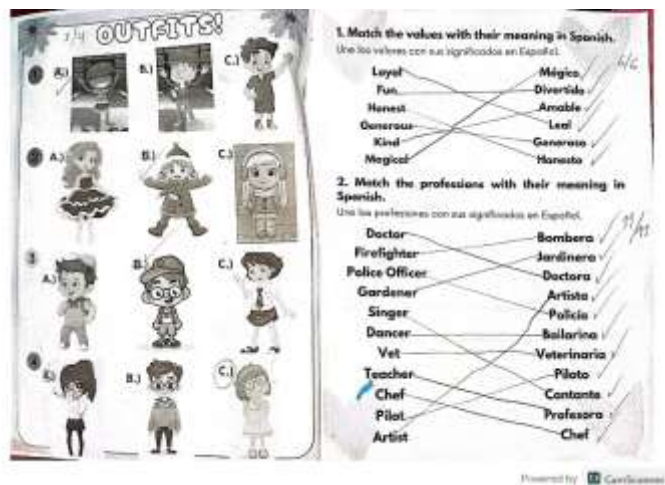
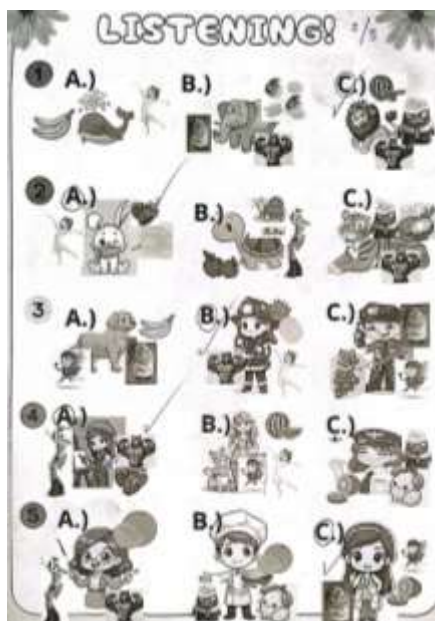


## Annex 6. Vocabulary Assessment: Cycle Test 3





## Annex 8. Worksheets



## Annex 9. Intervention Plan

## INTERVENTION PLAN FOR SECOND GRADERS

| Lesson                                                                                                         | English Vocabulary - Topics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | TOPIC                                             | Art Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Evidence: Student's Production                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CYCLE 1: 'WHO AM I?'</b><br><i>Self-identity through colors, adjectives, animals, likes &amp; emotions.</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1                                                                                                              | <b>• Prerequisite Adjectives</b><br><b>• Colors</b><br><b>• Likes</b><br><br>-- Structure Use:<br>I am ____ (adjectives: happy, sad, angry, scared).<br>I like ____ (colors: pink, red, purple, yellow, black, white, green, orange, blue, brown).<br>I like ____ (likes: soccer, music, books, painting, videogames, animals/pets).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | First approximation to likes and characteristics. | <b>• Self-Portrait Drawing – My Identity Drawing:</b> Students color and draw their identity in the outline of an empty drawing of a person. They could draw a happy face, strong arms, colorful clothes, etc. And around them they could draw instruments, books, sports, etc. In these drawings, they will write the learned structure regarding colors, emotions and likes.                                                                                                                                                                             | • Student's self-expression through their identity drawings.<br>• Student's use of visuals and symbols to convey identity.<br>• Student's use of simple language structures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 2                                                                                                              | <b>• Emotional &amp; Predicate Adjectives</b><br><br>-- Structure Use:<br>I am ____<br>I feel ____<br>(happy, proud, excited, sad, tired, frustrated, strong, powerful, brave, scared, shy, nervous, angry, fatigued)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Feelings and mood.                                | <b>• Identity Emojis – Expanding Emotional Vocabulary:</b> Each student receives a paper plate to design their own emoji. <u>Students will choose an emotion from the new vocabulary.</u> On the back of the paper plate, students write a short description "I am ____" and "I feel ____".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | • Written: Short descriptions of their emoji.<br>• Oral: Describing and presenting their emoji in pairs or to the whole class.<br>• Creativity: art, vocabulary use, sentence structure.<br>• Emoji selection patterns: Identifying which emojis students choose most frequently and what this reveals about their self-perception and emotional tendencies.<br>• Consistency between verbal and nonverbal expressions: Comparing whether students' spoken explanations match their emoji choice and physical expressions. |
| 3                                                                                                              | <b>• Physical Adjectives</b><br><b>• Animals</b><br><b>• Colors</b><br><br>-- Structure Use:<br>I am ____ (physical adjectives: big, small, fast, slow, strong).<br>I am a ____ (animals: fish, fish, deer, butterfly, lion, bee, monkey, horse, whale, frog, bird, elephant, tiger, shark, rabbit, turtle, cow, wolf, cat, dog).<br>I am ____ (colors: pink, red, purple, yellow, black, white, green, orange, blue, brown).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Personality traits                                | <b>• My Identity Mask Animal:</b> The teacher will give each student a mask template on cardboard paper. Students choose an animal that represents them and decorate their mask accordingly. Once finished, students write on a piece of paper the following structures while describing their animal:<br>I am a ____ (animal) or<br>This is a ____<br>I am ____ (physical adjective).<br>I am ____ (color).<br>• Mini presentations: Each student wears their mask and introduces themselves. For instance: <b>"I am a lion, I am strong and yellow."</b> | • Creative mask creation: How they usually communicate their identity through art, shapes, colors and decorations.<br>• Oral descriptions using target structures.<br>• Personal representation through animal choice: How students connect their chosen animal to their personality, emotions, or characteristics.<br>• Symbolism and meaning: What their chosen animal and adjectives say about how they see themselves.                                                                                                 |
| 4                                                                                                              | <b>• Fruits</b> (apples, bananas, grapes, watermelons, lemons, strawberries, oranges, mangoes, pineapples, oranges, kiwis)<br><b>• Opinion adjectives</b> (sweet, bitter, soft, delicate, hard)<br><br>-- Structure Use:<br>I like/don't like ____ (fruit).<br>I think/don't like ____ (opinion adjectives).<br>I like/don't like ____ people. (opinion adjectives).<br><br>For example: I like strawberries. I like sweet fruits. I like sweet people.<br>I don't like lemons. I don't like bitter fruits. I don't like bitter people.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Personality traits                                | <b>• My fruits &amp; my people!</b> Students will create a fruit that represents their preferences using modeling clay. They will then pair that fruit with the correct adjective to describe the type of flavor they like and do not like, as well as the type of people they like and do not like.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | • Students' creative self-representation through artistic and linguistic expression.<br>• Students' artistic choices (color and shape) reflect how they identify their preferences and characteristics in others, drawing art with language and self-expression, self-reflection and understanding relationships.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 5                                                                                                              | <b>• Commands</b> (dance, jump, sit down, touch up, hands down, clap)<br><b>• Body parts</b> (head, shoulders, knees, toes, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, legs, hands, arms)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | My body                                           | <b>• Movement &amp; Expression – Recognizing my body with Playdough:</b> Students will take to make while following symbols of commands and body parts for them to learn and recognize the vocabulary. Furthermore, students create a mini sculpture of their body parts. Each part is going to be labeled by them writing on little pieces of paper.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | • Artistic representation of body parts and accuracy labeling in English as a form of self-expression.<br>• Emotional and identity-related elements in their sculptures (size, shape, added personal details).<br>• Reflection on their body and identity through artistic expression.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 6                                                                                                              | <b>• Body parts</b> (head, hair, shoulders, knees, toes, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, legs, arms, hair, arms, legs, voice, skin, eyes color)<br><b>New vocabulary:</b> hair, smile, laugh, voice, skin, eyes color.<br><br>-- Structure Use:<br>I like ____ (body parts).<br>I like my ____ (body parts + new vocabulary).<br>I love my ____ (body parts + new vocabulary).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Self-expression and body appreciation             | <b>• My Body, My Identity Poster:</b> Students will draw fingerprints on a large sheet of paper like a poster and represent themselves with colors. They will label body parts with pre-written word cards, and write simple sentences to appreciate their bodies, such as "I like my eyes/teeth/laugh/face." This activity helps them learn body vocabulary and use the "I like" and "I love" structures while fostering self-expression and body appreciation.                                                                                           | • Expression of personal identity through representation.<br>• Ability to write and structure sentences using the target language.<br>• Creativity and personal reflection in self-appreciation.<br>• Personal details in each one of the posters (colors, shapes, fingerprints, clothes, accessories, other important elements).<br>• Oral presentation skills when explaining their work to peers.                                                                                                                       |
| 7                                                                                                              | <b>• Colors</b> (pink, red, purple, yellow, black, white, green, orange, blue, brown).<br><b>• Likes</b> (soccer, music, books, painting, videogames, animals/pets).<br><b>• Emotional, Predicate &amp; Physical Adjectives</b> (sweet, bitter, soft, delicate, hard, big, small, strong, fast, slow, happy, proud, excited, sad, tired, frustrated, strong, powerful, brave, scared, shy, nervous, angry, fatigued).<br><b>• Fruits</b> (apples, bananas, grapes, watermelons, lemons, strawberries, oranges, mangoes, pineapples, oranges, kiwis).<br><b>• Body parts</b> (head, hair, shoulders, knees, toes, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, legs, arms, hair, arms, legs, voice, skin, eyes color).<br><b>• Animals</b> (fish, lion, deer, butterfly, lion, bee, monkey, horse, whale, frog, bird, elephant, tiger, shark, rabbit, turtle, cow, wolf, cat, dog).<br><br>-- Structure Use:<br>I love ____.<br>I feel ____ I am ____.<br>I like ____.<br>I like my ____ | Self-recognition.                                 | <b>• My favorite things - Collage:</b> Students create a collage of things they like/love using colored paper and magazine cutouts. In the back of their big creations, they will practice the structure sentences covered in the first cycle.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | • Student's artistic choices and written self-expression: Colors, images, and elements they use to represent themselves, and how they articulate identity through the sentence's structures: "I love", "I feel", "I am", "I like", "I like my".<br>• The way they visually and verbally present their identity will reveal their ability to connect English vocabulary with personal meaning and self-expression.                                                                                                          |

| CYCLE 2: WHO AM I BECOMING?                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identify through my name, professions, family, adjectives & clothing                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Descriptive Adjectives (kind, generous, honest, magical, loyal, fast)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My name is _____</li> <li>I am from _____ (city), (country) (country)</li> <li>I am _____ (kind, generous, honest, magical, loyal, curious)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Exploration of personal identity through values and self-description</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>My Name is Special:</b> Each child will create a personalized name badge decorated with colors, symbols, and drawings that represent their personality, origins, and things they love. They will also practice simple English structures to describe themselves.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual representation of their identity and personal factors (colors, symbols, drawings)</li> <li>Accuracy in writing the target structures</li> <li>Creativity and personal expression through art</li> <li>Emotional connection with their creation (subject of identity)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 10                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Clothing (shirt, fabric, pants, dress, shoes, cap, glasses, skirt, jacket, scarf, boots, sweater, gloves, shorts, dress)</b></li> <li><b>Colors (color): pink, red, purple, yellow, black, white, green, orange, blue, brown</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am wearing _____ (white shirt, black glasses, a blue cap, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                       | <b>Clothing and color-based self-representation</b>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>My Dream Outfit:</b> Children will express their identity through clothing. They will create and decorate paper clothing items (or use pre-made cutouts) and choose an adverb on the board with their "dream outfit." As they do this, they will practice simple English structures.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Creative Self-Expression:</b> How the child chooses colors, styles, and items to represent themselves. Their choice in clothing as an extension of their identity, taste, and personality.</li> <li><b>Written Language Production:</b> Ability to correctly name clothing items in a basic sentence.</li> <li>Integration of vocabulary and personal self-representation through visual arts.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 10                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Professions (firefighter, doctor, teacher, gardener, pilot, police officer, artist, vet, dancer, chef, singer)</b></li> <li><b>Adverbs - Verbs (fly, save people, dance, work, take care of, teach, draw, paint)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I want to be a _____ (creative professions).</li> <li>I could _____ (ability - verbs)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                               | <b>Future identity and aspirations through professions and personal abilities</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Future Me, Self-portrait puzzle:</b> Students will explore self-expression and identity by imagining their future selves in a fun and unique way. Each child will draw themselves in the profession they dream of (firefighter, firefighter, doctor, etc.) on foam. Then, they will cut their drawings into puzzle pieces and exchange them with classmates, who must guess the puzzle and guess the profession.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Visual Representation and Creative Expression:</b> Connection between drawing and written job (e.g., drawing a firefighter with a hose). And the use of relevant symbols or tools (e.g., a vet with animals, a chef with food).</li> <li><b>Written Language Accuracy:</b> Proper use of the structures "I want to be a ____" and "I could ____". Also, tag ability, correct spelling of key words (puzzled).</li> <li><b>Oral Interaction and Spontaneous Speech:</b></li> <li><b>Peer Collaboration and Respect:</b> Turn-taking and mutual respect during puzzle exchange. Also, sensitivity to different dreams and identities (knowledge when guessing).</li> <li><b>Self-Concept and Identity Construction (critical intercultural dimension):</b> Evidence of thoughtful, personal aspirations. Also, representation of non-stereotypical roles (permeated, not imposed). And the reflection of diversity in imagined futures (gender-neutral roles, care-based professions, etc.).</li> </ul> |
| 11                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Modal Verb (Ability): CAN</b></li> <li><b>Verbs that express ability related to superpowers (fly, teleport, save people, protect people, take care of animals, read minds, run faster, be invisible, use magic...)</b></li> <li><b>Descriptive Adjectives (kind, generous, honest, magical, loyal, curious, strong, powerful)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can _____ (ability verb) because I am _____ (descriptive adjective).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <b>Connecting personal qualities to imagined abilities through a superhero identity</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>My Superhero Identity:</b> Students will create a superhero eye mask, using craft materials. Then, they will imagine a unique superpower that represents their identity, strengths, and personality.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Creative representation of identity in the mask.</b> + Correct use of the structure "I can ____" because I am ____.</li> <li>Selection of verbs and adjectives that match their superpowers.</li> <li>Sentence construction and basic writing ability.</li> <li>Oral explanation or sharing of superhero identity.</li> <li>Independence and completion of the task.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| TEST                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Emotions</b></li> <li><b>Functional, Physical &amp; Predicate adjectives</b></li> <li><b>Animals</b></li> <li><b>Professions</b></li> <li><b>Fruits</b></li> <li><b>Clothing</b></li> <li><b>Body parts</b></li> <li><b>Commands</b></li> <li><b>Values</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My name is _____</li> <li>I like _____</li> <li>I am _____</li> <li>I want to be a _____</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                     | <b>Evaluating previous knowledge</b>                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Listening:</b> The students used a worksheet with drawings (ABC options) and pointed to the correct image while listening to the teacher's description (animals, professions, adjectives, colors, emotions).</li> <li><b>Listen &amp; Repeat - Secret Drawing Game:</b> A student drew a unique word on the board, and classmates guessed it individually. The teacher recorded the guesses (draw, animal, professions).</li> <li><b>Listen &amp; Move - TPR &amp; Song:</b> The students followed movement commands and performed the song "Head, shoulders, knees, and toes".</li> <li><b>Listening:</b> The students used a worksheet with options (ABC options) and chose the one that matched the words described by the teacher (clothing).</li> <li><b>Reading &amp; Matching:</b> The students matched words in English to their Spanish meaning on a worksheet (values, animals, professions).</li> <li><b>Writing:</b> Students wrote chosen vocabulary words (values, emotions, professions) on small slips and submitted them.</li> <li><b>Mini Identity Portfolio - Writing:</b> Students completed a short written form: My name is ... I am ... I like ... I want to be ...</li> </ul> | <b>TEST CYCLE 1 &amp; 2</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| CYCLE 3: I AM WHO I AM                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Final reflections on self-expression and identity through the recognition of myself and others |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 12                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Family members (mom, dad, sister, brother, grandfather, grandmother, cousin, aunt, uncle, pet)</b></li> <li><b>Values - Description Adjectives (love, respect, kindness, friendship, honesty, generosity, responsibility, order)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is my _____ (family members)</li> <li>My family shared arguments _____ (values)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                |                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>My Family Shield:</b> Students will create a family shield to represent their family values and members. They will decorate it with symbols, drawings, and colors that reflect what is important to their family. This helps them connect self-expression, identity, and values while practicing English vocabulary. In this regard, they will present their family to the class and say what represents them regarding values.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drawings representing their family</li> <li>Written short sentences</li> <li>Sentence construction</li> <li>Reading attempts for key words</li> <li>Creativity and effort in visual representation</li> <li>Willingness to share identity with peers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 13                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Values - Descriptive Adjectives (fast, loyal, honest, magical, generous, kind)</b></li> <li><b>Emotions (happy, sad, scared, strong, angry, etc)</b></li> <li><b>Friendship expressions (my best friend, my friend)</b></li> <li><b>Phrases (I &amp; You)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am _____ (emotions, values, friendship expressions)</li> <li>You are _____ (emotions, values, friendship expressions)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                    | <b>Friendship, Values &amp; Positive Identity Expression</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Friendship Bracelet:</b> Students create a bracelet for a classroom jigsaw unit at the base. They cut small paper shapers (pennies) that represent the other and describe. Also, they write a small friendship card with simple sentences using the correct pronoun, and they attach these cards to the bracelet and exchange it with their partner.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral output competency (single words or full sentences)</li> <li>Confidence and affective response (joy, proud, anxious, expressive)</li> <li>Creativity and meaning-making in the chain (symbols, drawings, choices of words)</li> <li>Communicative intent (are they just repeating, or do they genuinely try to share about themselves?)</li> <li>Evidence of identity expression in English, however limited personal choices, emphasis on certain relations, emotional tones)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 14                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Personality adjectives (funny, curious, patient, shy, friendly, talkative, hard-working, etc)</b></li> <li><b>Phrases &amp; Structures (You are)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are _____ (personality adjectives)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Recognizing peer's personality traits</b>                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Friend Silhouette Pasting:</b> Students use painting tools to decorate each other while describing with English expressions. Also, they use the structure "You are + adjective and paint on a piece of paper their chosen peer, using different colors, paint brushes and even their hands to represent what they write.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral production: Fluency and correct use of "You are ..."</li> <li>Written production: Correct sentence formation, spelling, and use of adjectives</li> <li>Critical thinking: Ability to choose adjectives that fit peers</li> <li>Creativity &amp; artistic expression: Design and use of colors/paints</li> <li>Social skills: Collaboration, peer respect, and presentation</li> <li>Engagement: enthusiasm, focus, and pride in work</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 15                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Personality adjectives (funny, curious, patient, shy, friendly, talkative, hard-working, etc)</b></li> <li><b>Emotions, Colors, Likes &amp; Values</b></li> <li><b>Phrases &amp; Structures (She is &amp; He is - She Has &amp; He Has)</b></li> <li>— Structure Use:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She/He is _____ (personality adjectives, likes, emotions, values)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                            | <b>Describing classmates' likes and personalities</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Wacky Fortune Teller:</b> Students fold a simple paper fortune teller (origami game). Inside the flaps, they draw small pictures representing their (good, activities), and personality traits (plus values or emotions). Then, in pairs, they play: partner chooses a number, flip reveals a drawing and the student forms a sentence using He/She + values.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oral production: accuracy in using He/She + values</li> <li>Creativity: Drawings made using</li> <li>Social skills: Turn-taking, collaboration</li> <li>Fluency &amp; confidence: Spontaneous speaking while playing</li> <li>Critical thinking: Connecting drawings to sentences</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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| 16   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Personality adjectives</b> (brave, curious, patient, shy, friendly, industrious, hard-working, shy, smart, rich, adventurous, introverted)</li> <li>• <b>Pronouns &amp; Structure</b> (She/He is + name, age, height – tall or short, adjectives)</li> </ul> <p>— Structure Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She/He is _____ (personality adjectives, name, age, height)</li> </ul>                     | Describing classmates' physical & personality traits   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bottle Buddy:</b> Students use a plastic bottle as the base and decorate it with paper, clay, markers, and tape to create a Bottle Buddy representing their chosen person. Then, they will describe their using descriptive sentences referring to their names, age, height and personality traits.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral production: 4 complete the/He is... sentences.</li> <li>• Written production: Short description sentences.</li> <li>• Artistic production: Decorated bottle buddy.</li> <li>• Collaboration: Pair work.</li> <li>• Critical observation: Whether students respect &amp; positively describe their peers.</li> </ul> |
| 17   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adjectives related to collaboration</b> (team players, creative, supportive, helpful, problem solvers, good listeners)</li> <li>• <b>Pronoun &amp; Structure</b> (We are)</li> </ul> <p>— Structure Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are _____ (personality adjectives, collaboration adjectives)</li> </ul>                                                                                         | Group Identity, Collaboration and Describing the class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Constellations - We are Stars:</b> Students make a cardboard star, decorate it with drawings and symbols, and describe themselves with their classmates using short sentences. All stars are then assembled into one big class constellation on the board or put together with wool.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accuracy in using the structure We are + adjective.</li> <li>• Pronunciation during presentations.</li> <li>• Collaborative decision-making in pairs (intercultural &amp; identity expression).</li> </ul>                                                                                                               |
| 18   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Festivity actions</b> (dancing, eating, wearing costumes, marching, giving gifts)</li> <li>• <b>Pronoun &amp; Structure</b> (They are)</li> </ul> <p>— Structure Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are _____ (festivity actions)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                         | Festivities & describing actions                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Festivities We are:</b> Students choose a celebration (Carnival, Christmas, Mother's Day, Birthday) and draw it on a craft paper, representing what people do in that festivity. Then, they will describe using short sentences and then paste all drawings together to form a class festivities mural.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of They are + verb-ing correctly in written form.</li> <li>• Artistic representation of the chosen festivity (connection between language and art).</li> <li>• Oral reading of sentences for pronunciation and fluency.</li> <li>• Evidence of intercultural awareness and self-expression.</li> </ul>               |
| TEST | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family members</b></li> <li>• <b>Pronouns</b> (I, You, He, She, We, They)</li> <li>• <b>Verb to be - Combination Structures</b></li> <li>• <b>Personality adjectives</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaboration adjectives</b></li> </ul> <p>— Structure Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am _____</li> <li>• You are _____</li> <li>• She/He _____</li> <li>• We are _____</li> <li>• They are _____</li> </ul> | Evaluating previous knowledge                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Listening:</b> The students listen to some sentences and select the correct drawings on their worksheet (ABC options: (pronouns, personality adjectives, collaboration adjectives).</li> <li>• <b>Reading &amp; Matching:</b> Students match short sentences to pictures and write one sentence about themselves (pronouns, personality adjectives, collaboration adjectives).</li> <li>• <b>Writing &amp; Drawing:</b> Students draw their family naming family members in English and write sentences describing them using the correct structure (personality adjectives &amp; collaboration ones).</li> <li>• <b>Speaking:</b> The teacher whispers to the students a classmate's name and each student describes the person and joins game (height, age, personality adjectives, collaboration adjectives).</li> <li>• <b>Writing:</b> Students complete two prompts and add a small drawing while reflecting on themselves and the group (pronouns, personality and collaboration adjectives).</li> </ul> | TEST CYCLE 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |